

PROPOSED INTERNAL WORKS AT PLANT FARM

HOLCOMBE, METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF BURY



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

GARRY MILLER
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GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

Garry Miller is a heritage consultant, architectural historian and published author who has spent more than 40 years studying and working with buildings of town and countryside, in particular those of North West England. His career as a consultant began in the mid-1980s with the Preston-based Nigel Morgan Historic Building Consultancy, of which he became a partner in 1992 upon its rebranding as Datestone. In 1997 he was commissioned by the Heritage Trust for the North West, a buildings preservation trust based at Barrowford, Lancashire, to produce an in-depth regional study of vernacular houses in southwest Lancashire: the result, *Historic Houses in Lancashire: The Douglas Valley, 1300-1770* was published in 2002. The book was described as ‘scholarship as its best’ by *Country Life* (June 2003), and ‘well analysed and presented’ in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* (Vol 48, 2004); and was widely cited in the 2006 *Buildings of England* volume on Liverpool and Southwest Lancashire. Extensive research on the houses of Georgian and Regency Liverpool has also been undertaken, with a view to future publication. Following the success of his Douglas Valley book, Garry Miller established his own consultancy, producing analytical and interpretive reports on historic buildings, in particular the heritage assessments required to support planning applications affecting the historic environment. His area of operation encompasses the North West, Midlands, North Wales and parts of Cumbria and North and West Yorkshire. Several local authorities have cited his assessments as examples of best practice, and reports on more than 150 buildings or sites are produced annually.

THIS REPORT

Date of issue: February 2024

Purpose: for planning submission

Text: Garry Miller

Site survey: Garry Miller, Peter Miller

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at Plant Farm, Cross Lane, Holcombe, within the Metropolitan Borough of Bury, Greater Manchester. Plant Farmhouse is a small 18th century farmhouse, now private residence, that is listed at Grade II and stands within Holcombe Conservation Area.

Listed Building Consent is sought from Bury Metropolitan Borough Council for internal works at the property. The heritage issue arising is the impact upon the significance (heritage interest and value) of the listed building; the conservation area is unaffected as the internal works do not form part of its character and appearance. By the same token, the setting of an adjacent Grade II listed barn is unaffected. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify the significance of the listed building, and to assess how this will be affected by the proposal.

The building is notable for being built in two phases: an original two-unit house of 1739 with a further bay added at the southwest end in 1793. While the exterior retains its historic character, the interior was vastly altered probably in the late 20th century and thereafter, and a single-storey lean-to added at the southwest end.

The Grade II designation of the listed building denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this intrinsic special interest, which can be summarised as follows:

- Its architectural interest as a small, rugged moorland farmhouse of yeoman status
- The similar interest of its two distinct building phases, the original 1739 element notable for its eclectic combination of near-symmetry along with conservative wide mullioned windows
- The historical interest of its connection with the Plant and Woodcock families, each responsible for the separate building phases
- The group value it shares with its adjacent former barn, which is separately listed at Grade II. separately listed barn

The architectural significance is essentially embodied in the external envelope of the listed building, given the extensive alteration of the interior, most of which is likely to be late 20th century and thereafter. The external envelope is also the embodiment of the listed building's positive contribution to Holcombe Conservation Area. As a result of this alteration, the interest of the interior has been greatly devalued and hence its contribution to the significance of the listed building is low because essentially it is largely non-historic. The late 20th century lean-to is also of low significance.

The proposal seeks to make minor alterations to the layout of the first bay to create a WC and cloakroom on the ground floor and a bathroom, along with a bedroom and ensuite on the first floor. This involves removal and replacement of non-original partitions that have been used to create the present room configuration. These works

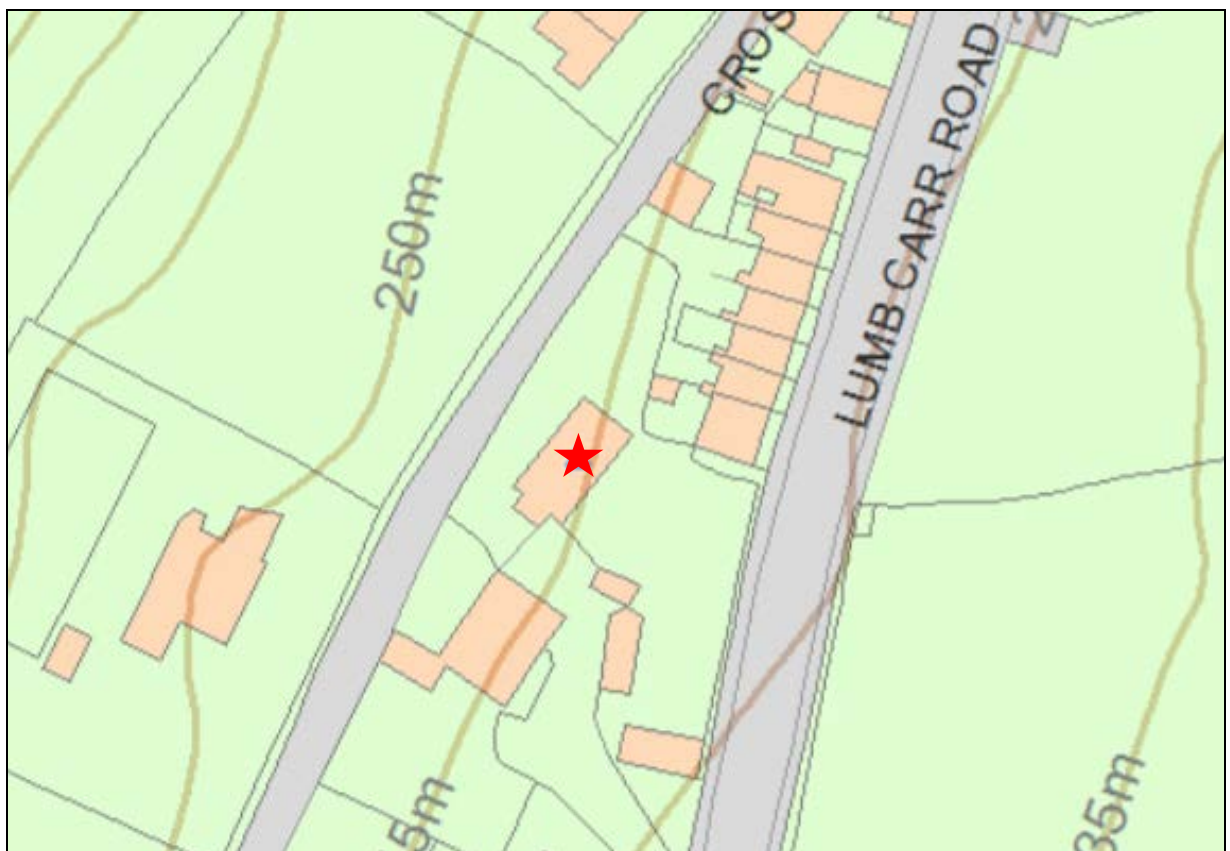
therefore cannot be considered harmful as no historic fabric is lost and they represent alterations to already-altered spaces. Additionally, the crosswall between the first and middle bays is to be opened up to allow the space to function as a through kitchen/dining area. Nibs of the crosswall, along with a downstand, are to remain, thus allowing the wall to remain legible as the division between the original 1739 house and the 1793 addition. This legibility will be reinforced externally by the quoins which denote where the 1739 building terminated. The effect of the opening is therefore not adverse.

In summary, as the significance of the listed building derives from its exterior envelope this will remain unaffected by the proposal. The interior has been altered and therefore much devalued, so consequently the proposed works ought not to be considered harmful in this context. Essentially the scheme will sustain the significance of the listed building and hence is in accordance with national guidance and the relevant local plan policy.

The application therefore merits approval without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application building is located in the moorland village of Holcombe in the Metropolitan Borough of Bury, Greater Manchester. Plant Farmhouse is located on Cross Lane and is a small farmhouse, now private residence, built in the 18th century on the lower slopes of Harcles Hill. The site also contains two small outbuildings while to the south is the former barn, now converted to a separate dwelling.



Map 1. The application building

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Designations

The application property is listed at Grade II, having been first designated in 1985. It also stands within Holcombe Conservation Area, to which the property contributes by means of its external envelope only. The adjacent former barn is also separately listed at II.

3.2 Proposed development

Listed Building Consent is sought from Bury Metropolitan Borough Council for internal works at the property.

3.3 Heritage impact

The heritage issue arising is the impact upon the significance (heritage interest and value) of the listed building; the conservation area is unaffected as the internal works do not form part of its character and appearance. By the same token, the setting of the adjacent listed barn is unaffected.

3.4 Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 194 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised, July 2021) states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the particular significance of the heritage asset. The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the listed building, and to assess how this will be affected by the proposal. **In accordance with paragraph 194, the level of detail is considered proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset, and no more than necessary to understand the impact of the proposal.** The report is to be read in conjunction with other documentation supporting the application.

3.5 Report structure

This is as follows:

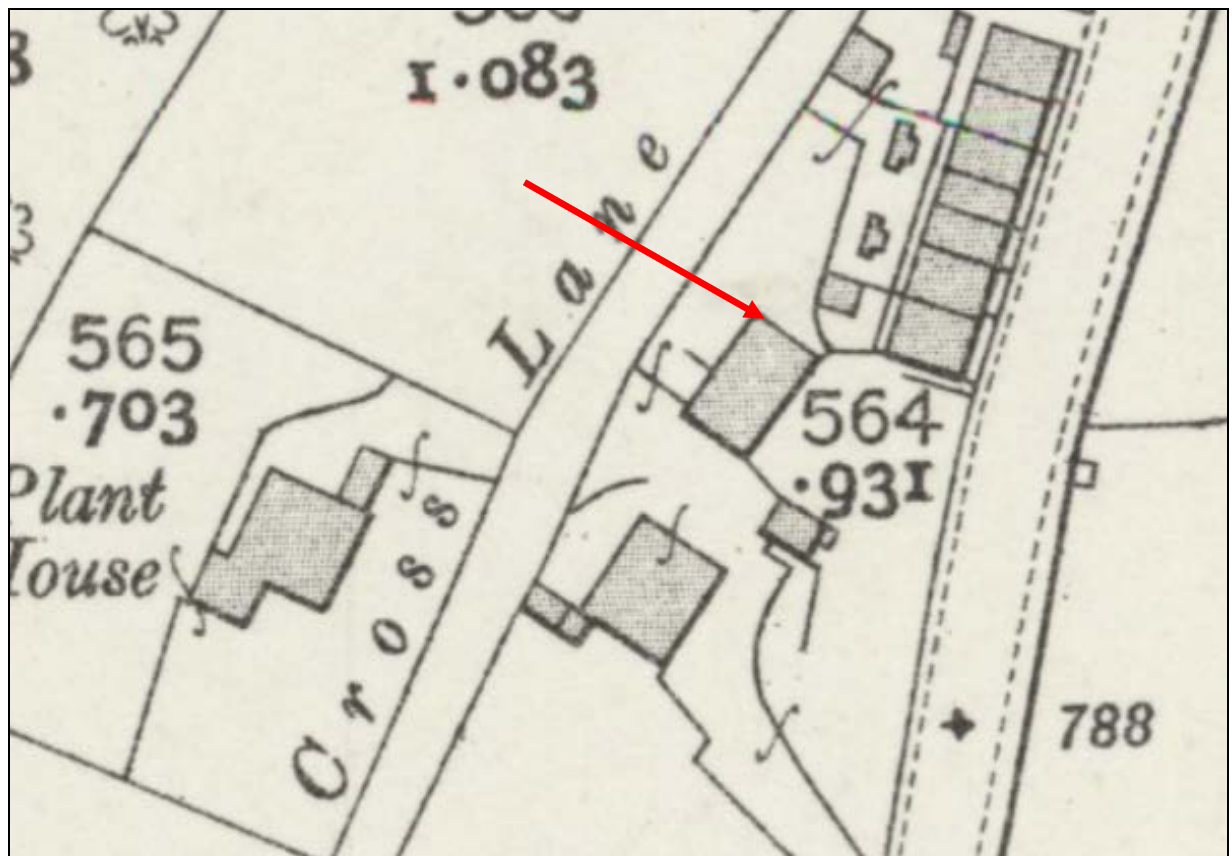
1. A summary of the historical background relating to the site (Section 4)
2. A concise, proportionate description of the application building (Section 5)
3. A summary of the heritage significance of the application building (Section 6)
4. A summary of the planning policy context in which the application will be determined (Section 7)
5. Evaluation within this context of the impact of the proposal upon the significance of the listed building (Section 8).

4: HISTORICAL SUMMARY

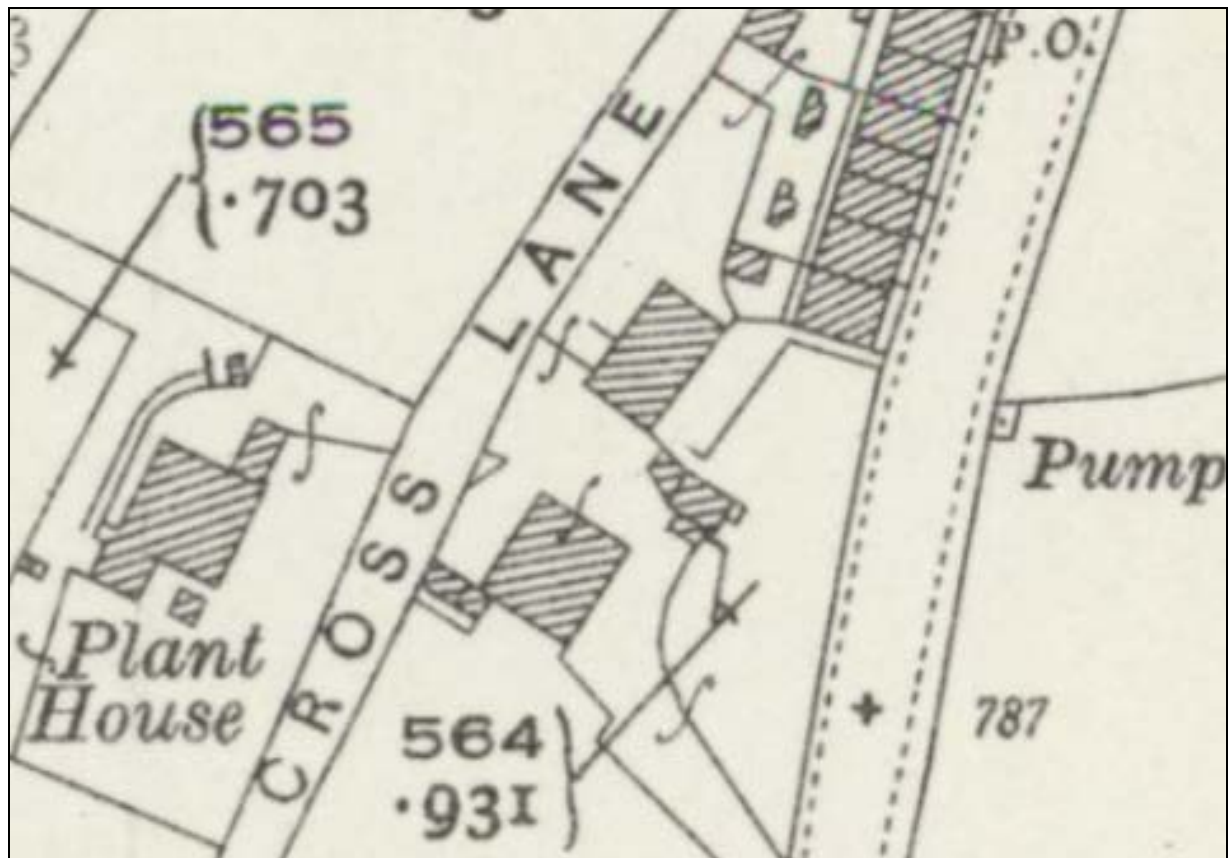
The property was historically a small moorland farmstead of likely yeoman (rural middle class) status. It was built in two stages, the earliest being the present main body of the house, which is dated 1739 and built by William Plant, from whom it takes its name. The second stage dates from 1793 and was built by the Woodcock family, who acquired the property by marriage. The six-inch OS map of the mid-1840s (Map 2, below) shows the site comprised principally the house and its barn to the south; the house is shown as having a staggered footprint, with a projection on the front elevation, although there is today no physical evidence of this on the building. By 1908 (Map 3) the present rectangular footprint is shown. One of the outbuildings is shown on this edition, and it had been extended by 1927 (Map 4).



Map 2. The six-inch OS map surveyed 1844-1847 shows the house with a staggered footprint



Map 3. The 25-inch edition of 1908 records the house in its present rectangular footprint



Map 4. No change is denoted by the edition of 1927

5: THE LISTED BUILDING

5.1 Overview

Small moorland farmhouse of 1739 and 1793 with altered interior.

5.2 List description

The National Heritage List for England description, probably compiled at the time of designation in 1985, describes the exterior only:

1739, extended 1793. Coursed rubble in 2 builds, that of 1793 in larger, squared courses. 2 storeys. Original, right-hand section has 2 windows of 4 lights with flush mullions and surrounds. Drip-moulds over ground floor windows, the left-hand of which is taller, the sill having been dropped, perhaps in 1793. Doorway on left with large lintel inscribed "P/WA/1739" (referring to William Plant). Ledged door. Flush quoins. Height of this section raised by 3 courses in same build as later left-hand section. This has 2 double-light windows on ground floor and 3-light window centrally above, all with flush mullions. Flush quoins. Datestone "WM/W/1793" refers to Woodcock family who married into Plant family. Stone slab roof. Rear has less regular mullioned windows, including transomed stair window.

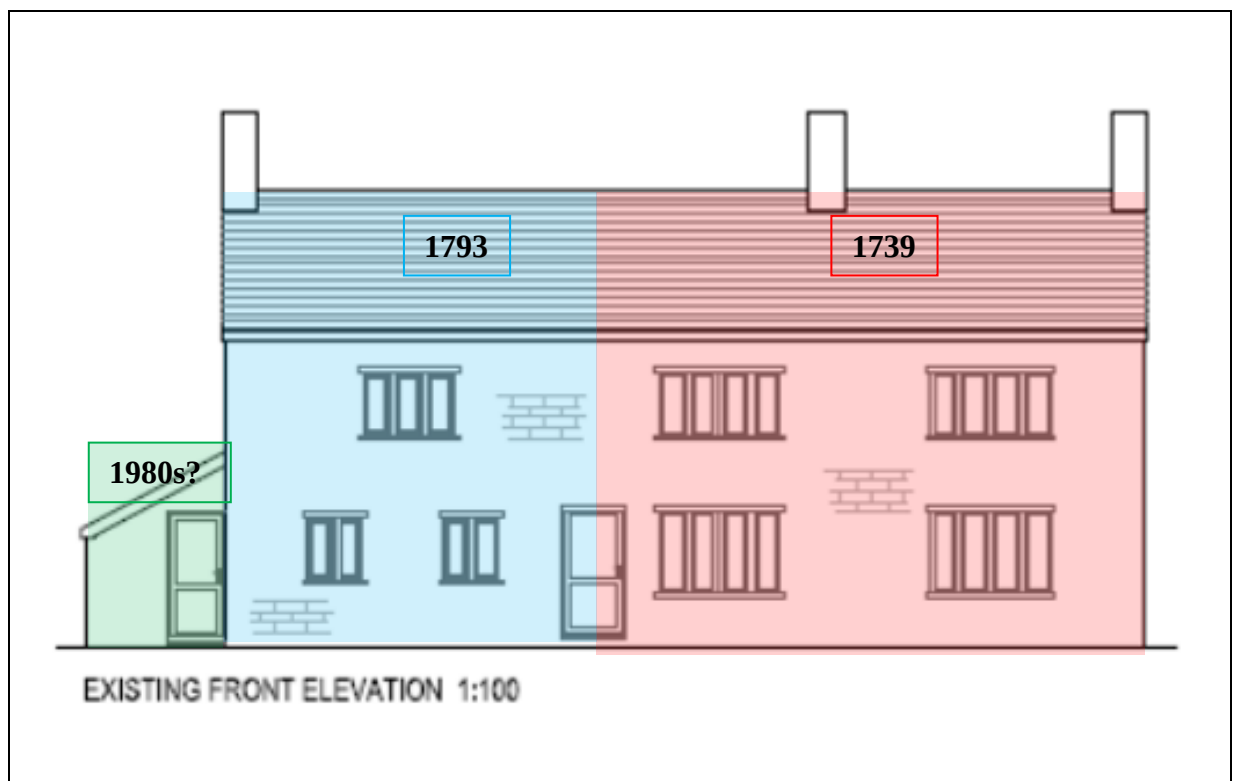
5.3 Further analysis: exterior

The main interest of the property resides in its external envelope given extensive alteration of the interior (see 5.4 below). It is from the exterior that our understanding of the character and evolution of the property is derived, and it reveals that it began life as a small two-unit house of 1739, enlarged in 1793. The earlier portion is notable for its eclectic combination of a near-symmetrical façade – typical of the mid-18th century – with highly-conservative large mullioned windows with individual dripstones, features that are more characteristic of the previous century. A further bay added to its southwest end in 1793, and at the same time the original house was heightened. A single-storey lean-to was added to the 1793 bay in the late 20th century, probably in the later 1980s as there is no mention of it in the list description.

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1. Front elevation of the listed building



2. The respective building phases



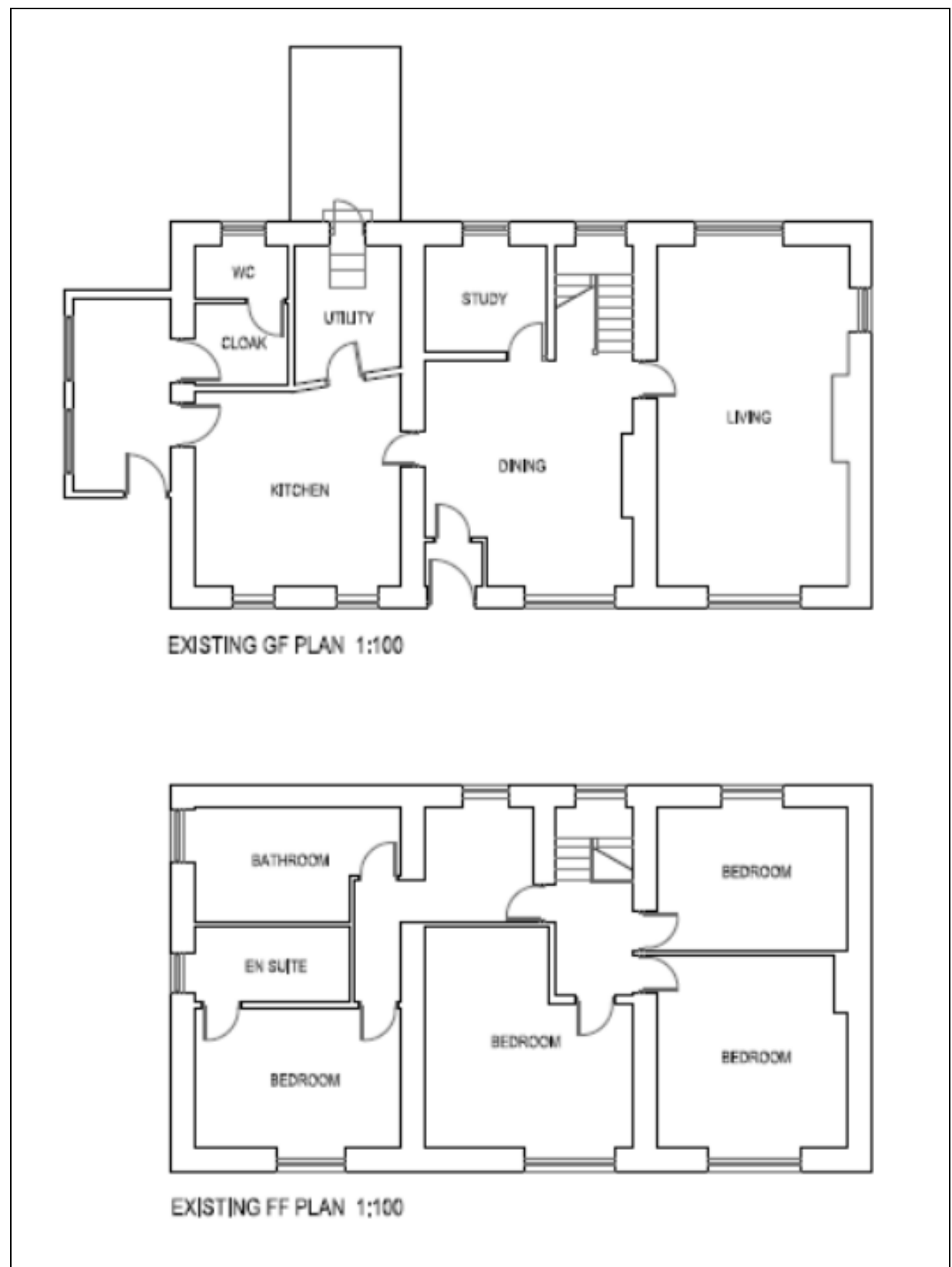
3. *Rear, viewed from the northeast*



4. *Lean-to on southwest elevation, probably 1980s*

5.4 Interior

- a. **Overview.** As noted above, the interior has experienced extensive alteration prior to acquisition by the current applicant. While much of this probably occurred in the late 20th century and later, there is evidence of some 19th century change also. This has resulted in hardly any historic features remaining within, and the original room layout in certain areas is not clear.
- b. **Ground floor.** The original 1739 house was probably of double-depth plan, i.e. with principal rooms to the front and service rooms to the rear. This arrangement appears to survive in the middle bay, which has a dining room to the front and staircase and a small store at the rear. The third (northeastern) bay has however been entirely opened up to form a single space; previously, there was probably a small service room at the rear. The original arrangement of the 1793 first bay is unclear. The existing layout involves a kitchen to the front, and a WC, cloakroom and utility room to the rear, the latter with doorway to a cellar. This arrangement is probably late 20th century or thereafter and may date from when the lean-to at this end was added.
- c. **First floor.** Here the layout has also been altered. The original layout would have mirrored what existed on the ground floor, with one room leading directly into another as was the typical arrangement in houses of this type and status in the 18th century. In the middle bay, the stair landing has been enlarged, and the first bay subdivided to form a bathroom and ensuite. The third bay has also been subdivided and while this was probably the case originally, the present dividing wall may be 19th century as it runs into a shared chimneybreast whose firegrates appear to be of this date.
- d. **Features.** As noted above, hardly anything historic remains. The staircase is not original; neither is the fireplace on the ground floor of the third bay, and that in the middle bay appears altered. As noted above, the two fireplaces in the first floor rooms of the third bay have a 19th century appearance, but this is not to say they are definitely original to the property and may have been imported given the level of alteration elsewhere. While the main crosswalls between the bays are of stone, secondary internal walls, such as those in the staircase area and on the first floor of the third bay, are of 19th century or later brick.



5. Existing ground and first floor plans



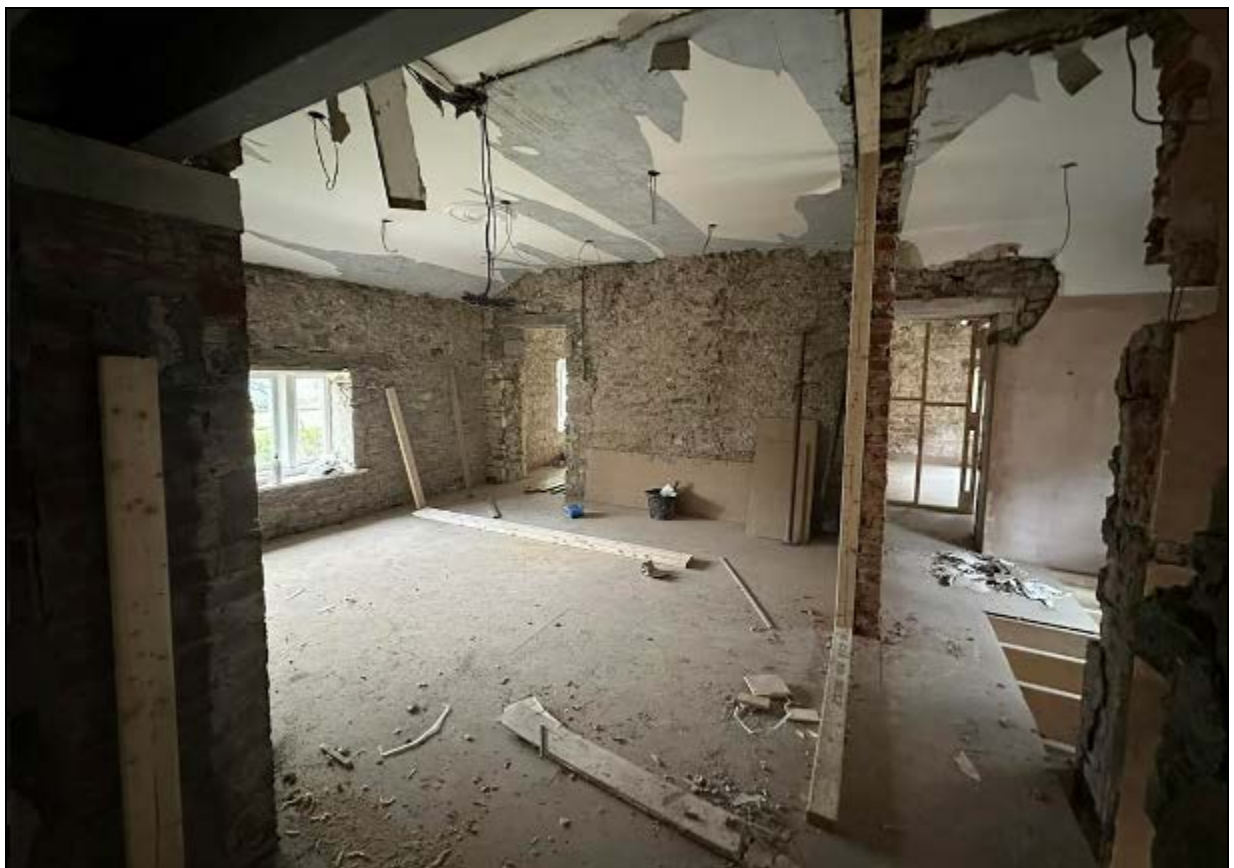
6. First bay, looking to rear and entrance to cellar



7. View from first into the second bay



8. Third bay, showing non-original fireplace



9. First floor, looking from third towards second and first bays



10. First floor view from second bay towards third bay, showing its division wall and fireplaces

6: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LISTED BUILDING

6.1 Rationale

Paragraph 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework states local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, and take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal in order to avoid or minimize conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Significance is defined in the NPPF Glossary as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

6.2 Summary

The Grade II designation of the listed building denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this intrinsic special interest, which can be summarised as follows:

- Its architectural interest as a small, rugged moorland farmhouse of yeoman status
- The similar interest of its two distinct building phases, the original 1739 element notable for its eclectic combination of near-symmetry along with conservative wide mullioned windows
- The historical interest of its connection with the Plant and Woodcock families, each responsible for the separate building phases
- The group value it shares with its separately listed barn

The architectural significance is essentially embodied in the external envelope of the listed building, given the extensive alteration of the interior, most of which is likely to be late 20th century and thereafter. The external envelope is also the embodiment of the listed building's positive contribution to Holcombe Conservation Area. As a result of this alteration, the interest of the interior has been greatly devalued and hence its contribution to the significance of the listed building is low because essentially it is largely non-historic. The late 20th century lean-to is also of low significance.

7: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

7.1 Statutory duty

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to give special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

7.2 Relevant guidance and policies

Chapter 16 of the Revised National Planning Policy Framework (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*, July 2021) provides the guidance on how the statutory duty is to be put into practice. Paragraph 197 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

Regarding designated heritage assets, paragraph 199 states that ‘*great weight*’ should be given to their conservation and the more important the asset, the greater that weight should be. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

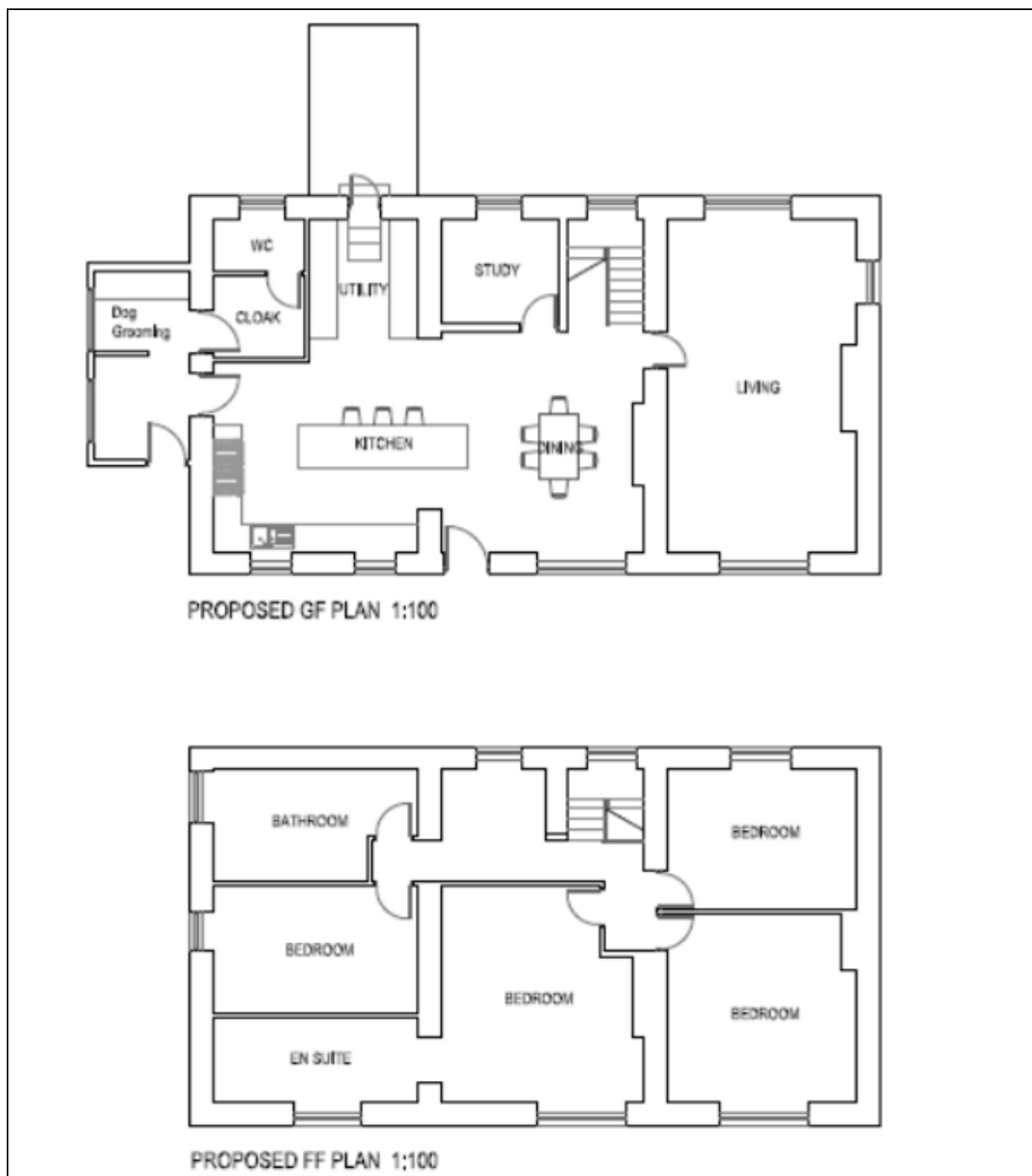
Locally, the relevant heritage policies are those retained by Bury MBC from its Unitary Development Plan, adopted 1997, which remain in force until replaced by policies of the emerging Local Plan. Relevant to this application are:

- Policy EN2 (*Conservation and Listed Buildings*), which aims to preserve the borough's built heritage through the control of development, especially that affecting conservation areas, listed buildings and areas of local historical importance.
- Policy EN2/3 (*Listed Buildings*), which states that the council will actively safeguard the character and setting of listed buildings by not permitting works, alterations or changes of use which would have a detrimental effect on their historical or architectural character and features.

8: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

8.1 Summary of the scheme

The scheme proposes limited changes to the interior of the listed building, as detailed on the submitted drawings.



11. Ground and first floor plans as proposed

8.2 *Effect of the works*

The works are proposed in the context that the original interior arrangement of the building has previously been altered, most likely in the late 20th century and thereafter. The proposal seeks to make minor alterations to the layout of the first bay to create a WC and cloakroom on the ground floor and a bathroom, bedroom and ensuite on the first floor. This involves removal and replacement of non-original partitions that have been used to create the present room configuration. **These works therefore cannot be considered harmful as no historic fabric is lost and essentially they represent alterations to already-altered spaces.** Additionally, the crosswall between this bay and the middle bay is to be opened up to allow the space to function as a through kitchen/dining area. Nibs of the crosswall, along with a downstand, are to remain and will allow the crosswall to remain legible as the division between the original house and the 1793 addition. This legibility will be reinforced externally by the quoins which denote where the 1739 building terminated. **The effect of the opening is therefore not detrimental to the significance and understanding of the listed building.**

8.3 *Concluding statement*

The significance of the listed building derives from its exterior envelope. This will remain unaffected by the proposal. The interior has been altered and therefore much devalued, so consequently the proposed works ought not to be considered harmful in this context. Essentially the scheme will sustain the significance of the listed building and hence is in accordance with national guidance and the relevant local plan policy. The application therefore merits approval without delay.