

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT 121-131 BELL LANE

BURY, GREATER MANCHESTER



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 35 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

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at numbers 121-131 Bell Lane, Bury, Greater Manchester. The site is currently occupied by a late 19th century terrace that has been converted to retail premises.

Proposals have been submitted to Bury Metropolitan Borough Council for alterations to the application building to create nine flats in total on the ground and first floors alongside the existing retail use.

The site lies within the setting of the Grade II* listed Lower Chesham, which stands north of Bell Lane. The heritage issue arising is the proposal's impact upon the setting and therefore the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the listed building. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify this significance and evaluate how it will be affected by the proposal.

Lower Chesham is a fragment of what was a large gentry house which originally occupied an isolated site amid the town's rural hinterland, but today lies subsumed within an urban townscape. Grade II* designation denotes it is of particular importance in the national context for its special architectural and historic interest; only 5.8 percent of the country's listed stock is graded thus. Its significance essentially derives from this intrinsic special interest, which is that of a fragment of an early 18th century gentry house built in a conservative, 17th century manner. The contribution made by its setting to this significance is minimal. This is because the listed building no longer occupies its original isolated rural setting but lies within tightly-built urban surroundings populated by commercial, industrial and residential premises of the 19th and 20th centuries.

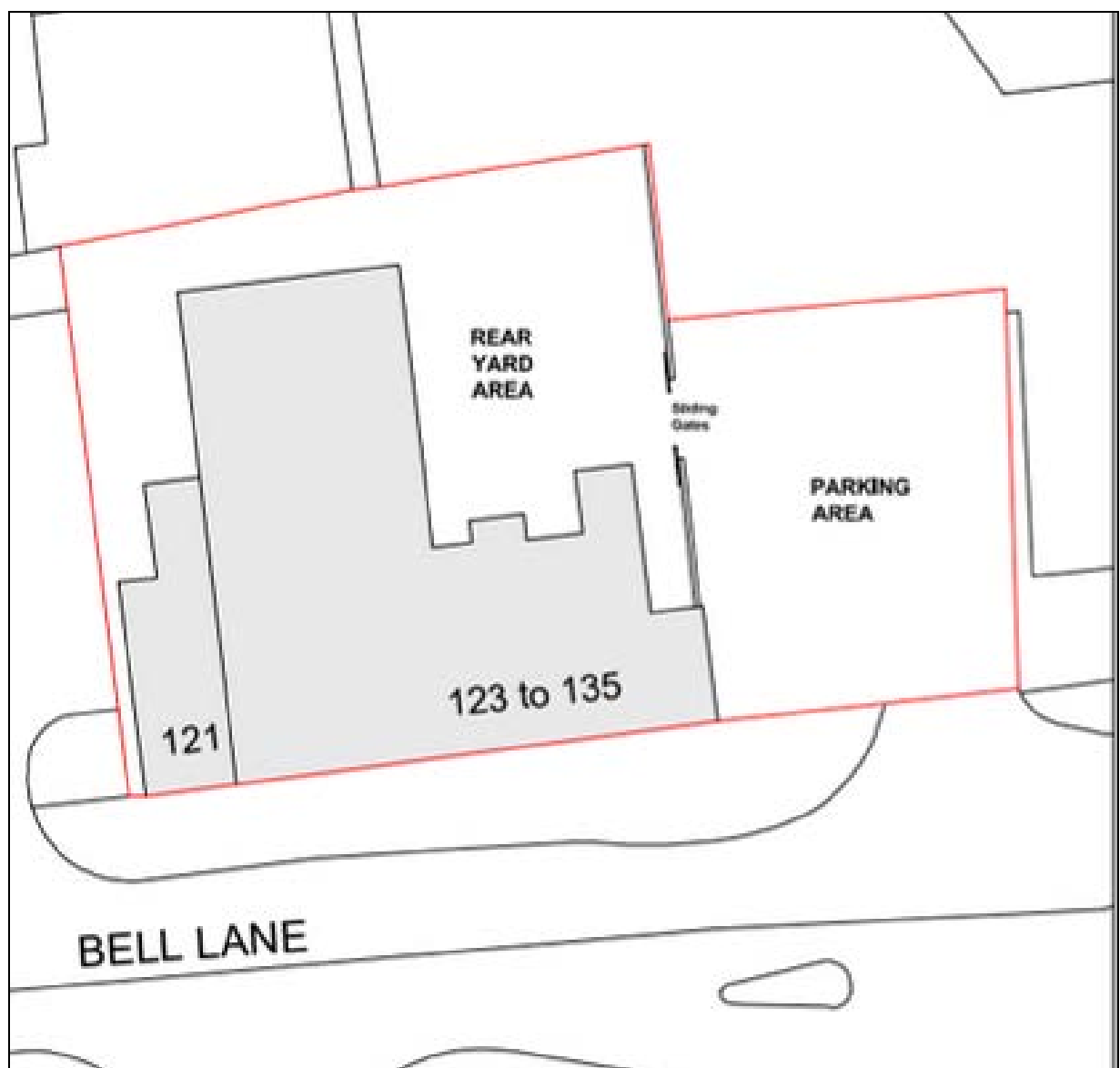
The proposal building forms part of these surroundings and owing to its altered character and the lack of intervisibility between it and Lower Chesham, its contribution is marginal and of low importance. The role of the property within the setting of the listed building is therefore a neutral one.

A previous application for redevelopment of the site to create a new mixed use building with ground floor retail space and 24 apartments was approved by Bury MBC in 2022 (planning reference 67625) with no objections from the council's conservation officer. The current submission is preferable however as it allows the existing building to remain, with relatively little alteration, and therefore its contribution to the mixed streetscene in which Lower Chesham stands will be sustained. The effect of the application will therefore be positive.

In summary, the proposal will preserve the setting, and therefore the significance, of the listed building and thereby meets the requirements of both national guidance and the local development plan. The application therefore merits approval without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application site is located in Bury, Greater Manchester, around one kilometre northeast of its centre. Numbers 121-131 Bell Lane are a 19th century terrace now converted to retail premises. The property stands on the north side of the lane close to a staggered junction with Chesham Crescent, from which it is separated by a car park, and Parsonage Street. It stands within a locality east of the town centre that is characterised by a mix of commercial, industrial and residential properties.



Map 1. The proposal site as existing



1. The application site, looking northwest from the Bell Lane/Chesham Crescent/Parsonage Street junction



2. Looking west along Bell Lane towards the site

3: THE PROPOSAL/PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 The proposal

Proposals are being submitted to Bury Metropolitan Borough Council for alterations to the existing property to create nine flats on the ground and first floors, alongside the existing retail use.

3.2 Designation

The site lies within the setting of the Grade II* listed Lower Chesham, which stands off Chesham Crescent.



Map 2. Location of the listed building (blue star) relative to the proposal site (red star)

3.3 Heritage impact

The heritage issue arising is the proposal's impact upon the setting and therefore the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the listed building.

3.4 Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 200 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) of the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised December 2023) states local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected, including their setting. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify the significance of the listed building and the contribution of the site to its setting, and to assess how this will be affected by the proposal. In accordance with paragraph 200, it is considered the level of detail presented is proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset and no more than is necessary to understand the impact of the proposal.

3.5 Report structure

This is as follows:

1. A description of the listed building (Section 4)
2. Analysis of the contribution made by the application site (Section 5)
3. A summary of the heritage significance of the listed building and its setting (Section 6)
4. A summary of the national guidance and local heritage policies against which the application will be assessed (Section 7)
5. Analysis within this policy context of the proposal's impact upon the setting and significance of the listed building (Section 8)

4: THE LISTED BUILDING

4.1 Overview

Fragment of what was a large early 18th century rural gentry house now subsumed within an altered, urban setting.

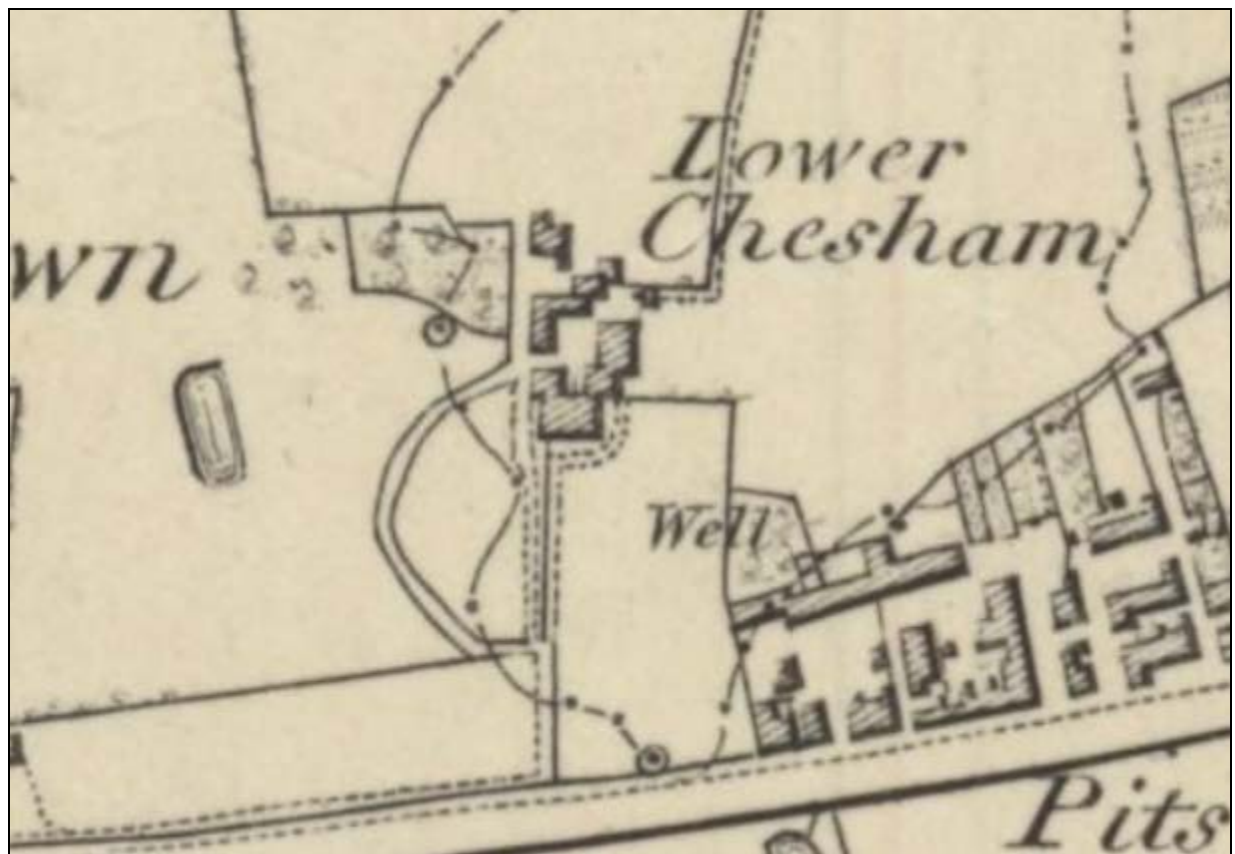
4.2 List description

The National Heritage List for England description, compiled during the resurvey of the 1980s, reads:

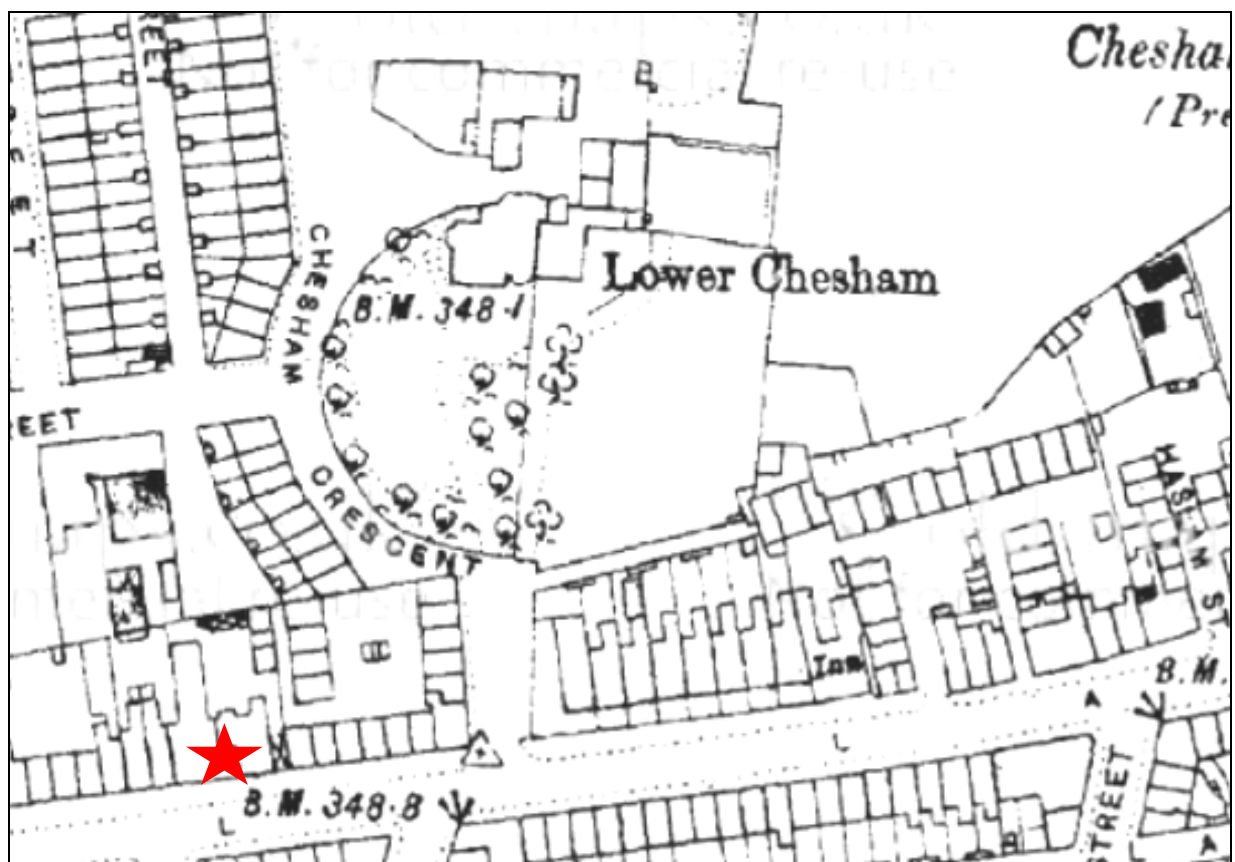
Part of large house, built in 1713 (Diary of Richard Kay). In C17 style. Coursed squared store. Three storeys. Two windows (but top right-hand one absent): four-light mullioned on ground floor, three-light above; transversed except on top storey. Blocked doorway, to left with moulded architrave surround. Two string courses and cornice. Stone slab roof; coped gables with ball finials at angles and apex. Interior said to include amongst features of note a fine staircase and decorated plaster ceiling. Mullioned stair window has leaded lights.

4.3 Setting

The presently-day setting of the listed building is vastly changed from the original surroundings. It originally occupied an isolated site amid the town's rural hinterland, as depicted by the OS mapping of the mid-1840s (Map 3, following page). By the end of the century, working class terraces had intruded into its aristocratic isolation (Map 4). Today the building is subsumed within a tightly-built district that comprises the survivors of the terraces along with 20th century housing and industrial and commercial units.



Map 3. Rural setting of Lower Chesham as recorded by the OS map surveyed 1844-1847



Map 4. By 1893, its isolation had been invaded by rows of terraces, including the application properties (starred)

5: THE APPLICATION SITE

The application site comprises an altered terrace of probably 1880s/1890s date which is now dominated by a modern ground floor commercial frontage. It is itself of no interest other than to document historically the late 19th century terraced development along Bell Lane. In terms of distance, it lies around 100 metres southwest of the listed building and is physically and visually separated from it by trees, railings and intervening properties including a 19th century villa (now care home) and late 20th century housing. The site is therefore entirely marginal to the setting of the listed property.



3. Aerial view showing buildings between the application site and Lower Chesham



4. Looking from the application site towards the listed building, which is hidden from view



5. Trees and a 19th century care home conceal the listed building, which lies beyond: view from Bell Lane into Chesham Crescent

6: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LISTED BUILDING

6.1 Rationale

Paragraph 201 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 particular importance in the national context for its special architectural and historic interest: only 5.8 percent of the country's listed stock is graded thus. Its significance essentially derives from its intrinsic special interest, which is that of a fragment of an early 18th century gentry house built in a conservative, 17th century style. The contribution made by its setting to this significance is minimal. This is because the listed building no longer occupies its original isolated rural setting but lies within a tightly-built, mixed character urban landscape populated by commercial, industrial and residential premises of the 19th and 20th centuries. The proposal building forms part of these surroundings and owing to its altered character and the lack of intervisibility between it and Lower Chesham, its contribution is marginal and of low importance. The role of the property within the setting of the listed building is therefore a neutral one.

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 policies

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides the guidance on how the statutory duty is to be put into practice. Paragraph 203 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 205 states that ‘*great weight*’ should be given to their conservation and the more important the asset, the greater that weight should be; and that significance can be lost through development within its setting.

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 Assessment

A previous application for redevelopment of the site to create a new mixed-use building with ground floor retail space and 24 apartments was approved by Bury MBC in 2022 (planning reference 67625). No objections were made by the council's conservation officer. The current submission is preferable however as it allows the existing building to remain, with relatively little alteration, and therefore its contribution to the mixed streetscene in which Lower Chesham stands will be sustained. The majority of the works are internal and hence have no effect on the setting of the listed building. External works involve insertion of additional windows to serve the new spaces created internally, in particular on the side elevations which at present are largely blank. On the front elevation, the creation of a door and window on the ground floor (see illustration 7, following page) will make the property's historic role as a terrace more legible. The result is that its neutral contribution to the mixed streetscene in which Lower Chesham stands will be sustained. The effect of the proposal will therefore be positive.



6. Proposed site plan



7. Creation of door and window on front elevation will improve the building's legibility as a former terrace

8.2 Conclusion

In summary, the proposal will preserve the setting, and therefore the significance, of the listed building and thereby meets the requirements of both national guidance and the local development plan. The applicant therefore merits approval without delay.