

3/25/0580

Heritage statement
to support planning application for barn conversion at
Holmes Farm, Balderstone

May 2025

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B u i l d i n g s A r c h a e o l o g i s t

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been produced to support a planning application to Ribble Valley Borough Council for the conversion of the redundant barn at Holmes Farm to two dwellings, etc. It has been written by Stephen Haigh MA, on the instruction of the applicants, following a site visit made by the writer on 24 December 2024, and subsequent receipt of pre-application advice from the council dated 7 March 2025¹. Reference should be made to the proposal drawings by AW+A Architects.
- 1.2 The statement comprises an assessment of significance of the existing site, together with an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development on that significance.

2 Relevant heritage assets

- 2.1 The site proposed for development contains a number of traditional agricultural buildings, of which the barn is identified by the council in the pre-application advice as a non-designated heritage asset.
- 2.2 No other heritage assets, designated or not, are relevant to the application.

3 The existing site

- 3.1 Holmes Farm stands on the north-west side of Higher Commons Lane in Balderstone civil parish (NGR: SD 64166 31642). Buildings at the property include a detached farmhouse, a detached pigsty (shown as "store" on site plan), and a barn which adjoins Holmes Cottage (previously known as Holmes Farm Cottage) to the north-east. The barn was formerly a longer structure, part of which was converted to additional domestic accommodation for the cottage, circa 1997, under planning approval 3/1997/0700. The barn runs alongside Higher Commons Lane and there is a gateway at its south-west end, which leads into a concrete farmyard (see photo 1, below).
- 3.2 Historic Ordnance Survey maps suggest that the barn was standing in some form by the mid 19th century, but that there were significant changes made at the site between 1846 and 1892 (figures 1 & 2). These included the replacement of the farmhouse on a slightly different site further from the road², and the creation of an enclosed yard on the north-west side of the barn, containing the present pigsty. The scale of the 1848 map is too small to determine the nature

¹ ref: RV/2025/ENQ/00008

² the present owner believes the farmhouse to date from about 1880

of any changes to the footprint of the barn which may have been carried out since that date.



Figure 1: OS 1:10,560 map, 1848

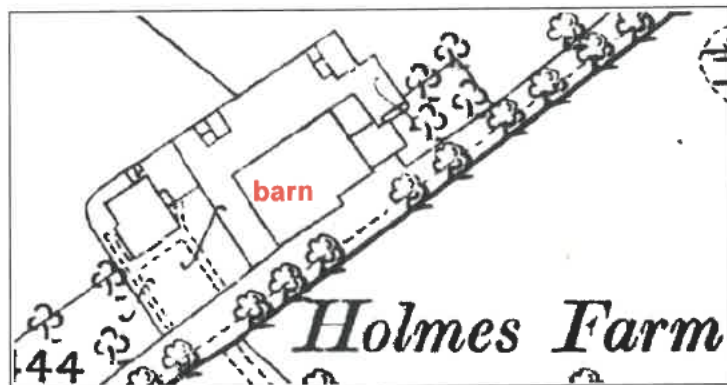


Figure 2: OS 1:2500 map, 1893

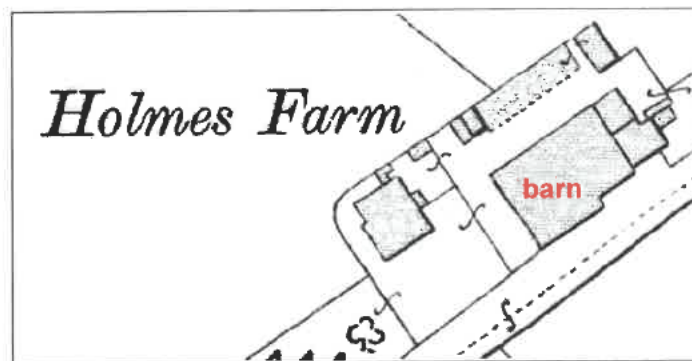
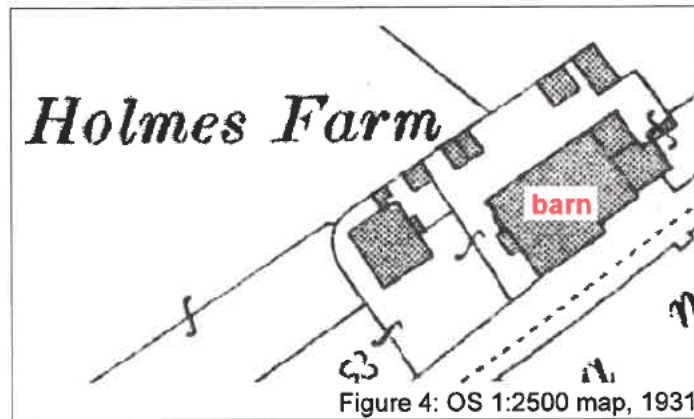


Figure 3: OS 1:2500 map, 1911



- 3.3 An entry in the Historic England Archive catalogue notes that the farm was put up for sale in 1919 as one of numerous lots within the "Outlying Portions of Major JHG Feilden's Witton Estate"³.

Barn

- 3.4 The building proposed for conversion is incomplete as an historic structure because of the previous conversion of its north-east end, but the unconverted part survives as a slightly unusual example of a combination barn, and appears to date predominantly from the mid or late 19th century, albeit perhaps with earlier origins.
- 3.5 The building is built of random sandstone rubble for the most part, with bold, punch-faced dressings, but the roadside elevation is distinguished by squared but uncoursed stonework of rather more modern appearance, and rock-faced quoins. A nearby quarry at Mellor is believed to have been the source of the stone, and some of the stone dressings incorporated as ventilators and suchlike within the barn walls appear to have been intended originally as drainage gullies.
- 3.6 The barn faces north-west onto the yard (photo 2), where its cart entrance is set within a two-storey, gabled wing (roofed with stone slate), which also contains the entrances to a stable and hayloft over (photo 3). There are shaped kneelers to the gable, and to the right, a substantial lean-to shippon adjoins, the stonework of which appears to continue seamlessly with that of the stable, implying it is an original part of the building.
- 3.7 The single-storey lean-to shippon was extended in the mid 20th century by a concrete water tank and another small lean-to, which contains two small rooms for use as a dairy. Both lean-tos have blue slate roofs (photo 4).

³ See sale particulars noted in Historic England Archive, ref: SC00612 <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/volume/SC00612>

- 3.8 Along the roadside, the building's south-east elevation projects about 1.6m from that of the adjoining property, and the obvious contrast between the two types of stonework suggests this could be the result of extension or rebuilding. Modern concrete tiles cover the roof over this side of the barn (photos 5 & 6).
- 3.9 Arrangements inside the building are not typical and point to a relatively late date for the barn's internal appearance, though it is again worth noting this might result from modification of an earlier, more traditional structure. The previous conversion of the barn's north-east end, involving the insertion of a blockwork wall across the main body of the structure, has obviously reduced the size of the interior and consequently reduced significance.
- 3.10 Notable features within the present barn include the manner in which the pair of doors within the cart entrance are accommodated within recesses when in the open position, and the use of brickwork for both internal walls and the pier which supports one part of the roof truss (photo 7). The hayloft within one bay of the two-storey structure (photo 8) and lack of a rear winnowing doorway both suggest that the barn was intended primarily to support dairy farming rather than a more mixed regime, although the two-stall stable (photo 9) would have housed workhorses. The long lean-to shippon along the south-east side (with modern stable divisions inserted in recent years) seems to have provided the only livestock housing, though more was probably accommodated within the previously converted north-east part of the building.
- 3.11 Features of the barn which are of particular interest include the overall plan-form which is made up of three main blocks, the pattern of doorways and windows in the north-west side, different walling styles, and stone detailing to kneelers and around openings.

Pigsty

- 3.12 The double pigsty situated on the north-west side of the farmyard remains largely intact externally, albeit the roof has been replaced with concrete tiles (photo 10). It has a pair of pens on the south-west side enclosed by upright flagstones, and its low ground floor openings are characteristic for the building type, while a loft within the building very likely housed poultry. It is a good example of a mid to late 19th century pigsty, a building type closely associated with the dairy farming then thought to have been practised at Holmes Farm.

Other features

- 3.13 The stone wall enclosing the farmhouse garden from the road and farmyard, distinguished by its half-round coping, makes a small positive contribution to the site's significance. The boundary wall between the farmyard and the rear garden of Holmes Cottage is a modern, brick structure which does not contribute positively.

4 Statement of heritage significance

- 4.1 The group of buildings represents an incomplete farmstead, truncated by the previous conversion of part of the barn. The group appears to date primarily from the 19th century, though the barn might have earlier origins, albeit well concealed by later changes, and all the components have a low level of heritage significance, arising from their architectural and historic interest in the local context.
- 4.2 Aspects which contribute particularly to the significance of the site include:
- the dominant barn, as the largest and most complex member of the group
 - the tripartite nature of the barn, as seen externally
 - the barn's pattern of openings, particularly in the north-west elevation, which indicate the different historic functions within the building
 - the detached location of the farmhouse, partly surrounded by its stone boundary wall
 - the largely unaltered pigsty.

5 Proposals

- 5.1 The proposed development would involve alterations to the existing highway access to the farmyard, and the creation of a new, second access for the farmhouse. The barn would be converted to two dwellings, the small lean-to and water tank on the south-west elevation along with the detached pigsty would be demolished, and three new garages would be built, while there would also be associated landscaping.

6 Impact of proposals

- 6.1 The proposed changes would have a slight negative impact on the significance of the site, primarily through the elevational changes to the barn and the demolition of the pigsty, though many principal features of the barn, such as the large north-west entrance and the first floor doorway, would be retained. However, given the redundant nature of the barn as an agricultural structure and

the obvious consequent deterioration in its condition, continued disuse poses a more fundamental threat to the building's future and instead, the residential conversion offers a sustainable use which would preserve its salient features in a viable manner.

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27 May 2025

photos below

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Photo 1: Farmhouse and barn, seen from the south, along Higher Commons Lane



Photo 2: Barn, from the west



Photo 3: Gabled wing in north-west elevation of barn, containing cart entrance and doorways to stable and hayloft



Photo 4: Barn, from the south. Lean-to shippon with later dairy on south-west end. Garden boundary wall in foreground.



Photo 5: Roadside elevation of barn, in distinctly modern style of stonework



Photo 6: Holmes Cottage, incorporating previously converted part of barn



Photo 7: Barn interior, looking south-east from cart entrance



Photo 8: Barn interior: hayloft next to cart entrance



Photo 9: Former stable, next to cart entrance



Photo 10: Pigsty, looking north