

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed Replacement Dwelling at Clough Farmhouse

Clough Lane, Prestwich, Manchester M25 3JD

Within the St Mary's Conservation Area, Prestwich

Prepared by: Cadence Architecture | On behalf of: Peter Purcell

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1. Introduction

This Heritage and Conservation Area Statement has been prepared by Cadence Architecture in support of a full planning application for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a replacement dwelling at Clough Farmhouse, Clough Lane, Prestwich, Manchester.

The site lies within the St Mary's Conservation Area, Prestwich, and within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The application has therefore been assessed with careful regard to the statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area pursuant to Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Describe the site and its immediate context within the St Mary's Conservation Area
- Assess the significance of the Conservation Area and the contribution of the existing building to that significance
- Explain the design approach and how it responds to the character of the Conservation Area
- Assess the impact of the proposed development on heritage significance
- Demonstrate compliance with national and local planning policy

This statement should be read alongside the accompanying Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement, which address design principles, Green Belt policy, and wider planning considerations.

2. Site Description

2.1 The Application Site

The application site comprises Clough Farmhouse, a detached two-storey dwelling of brick and render construction with an attached lower ground floor element, together with a detached garage and associated residential curtilage. The property is accessed via a narrow cobbled track off Clough Lane and sits within a heavily wooded setting, enclosed by mature boundary vegetation and established stone wall and fence treatments. The site has been in continuous residential use and is shown as 'Prestwich Clough Farm' on Ordnance Survey mapping from 1891 onwards.

The land falls from north to south, with a level change of approximately 4.3 metres across the site. The existing dwelling sits at the north-western corner of the curtilage, positioned close to Clough Lane, presenting a prominent rendered elevation to the public realm. The site frontage is enclosed by timber fencing and railings, with mature trees and vegetation providing a degree of screening along the lane.

The total curtilage extends to 0.23 acres and is enclosed on all sides by established boundary treatments. The site does not form part of any identified public open space, key landscape asset, or allotment land.

2.2 Immediate Setting

The site sits within a wooded, informal part of the St Mary's Conservation Area where built form is subsidiary to the landscape. The immediate setting is characterised by mature tree cover, a narrow rural lane with a cobbled surface, allotment gardens to the south, and the open Prestwich Clough park beyond. This is not a conventional residential grain of detached and semi-detached houses; it is a landscape-dominated setting where buildings are glimpsed through vegetation rather than openly presented to the highway. The Landscape Analysis (Fig. 67, Chris Burnett Associates January 2009) specifically identifies the woodland character of the site's immediate surrounds as 'a good area of woodland – secondary or ancient? (oak, beech, sycamore plus holly/hawthorn understorey)'.

The wider Conservation Area contains four defined character areas: the Historic Core/Church Lane; St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough; the Commercial Gateway and Rectory Lane; and Prestwich Park Road South/St Ann's Road. The application site falls within the St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough character area, which is defined by open and wooded land forming a large green swathe across the centre and west of the conservation area. In this character area, built form is secondary to landscape structure and the Clough represents ancient woodland with a clear identity and important physical and landscape value.

3. Description and Significance of the Conservation Area

3.1 Overview

The St Mary's Conservation Area, Prestwich, was designated to protect the special architectural and historic interest of an area centred on the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and its associated open spaces. The Conservation Area Appraisal (Woodhall Planning and Conservation / Bury MBC, 2009, hereinafter 'the Appraisal') identifies the overall impression of the area as one set in a treed landscape where landscaping is a dominant feature and building groups are fairly well hidden by mature street trees. This is reinforced by the St Mary's Conservation Area Landscape Appraisal (Chris Burnett Associates, January 2009, hereinafter 'the Landscape Appraisal'), commissioned by Bury MBC in 2008.

3.2 Character of the St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough Character Area

The Appraisal describes the St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough character area as providing a large green swathe of land running across the middle and to the west of the conservation area. The area is crossed by paths through both open and wooded terrain. The Clough is described as ancient woodland with a clear identity, a clear boundary edge, and an important physical and landscape structure with significant opportunities for enhancement.

The significance of the Conservation Area in this character zone derives primarily from:

- The landscape structure of the Clough, its ancient woodland, and mature tree cover
- The strong visual containment created by topography and planting, whereby development is often screened or partially obscured
- The filtered and layered views shaped by vegetation and landform rather than open exposure
- The spatial relationships between the wooded landscape and the glimpsed built form
- The historic Edwardian Clough walk and associated features, including stone-walled stream channels, bridges, and the former bandstand and tearooms sites

The Landscape Appraisal's analysis map (Map 6, Fig. 67) specifically identifies the site's entrance from Clough Lane as 'poor quality' and the surrounding woodland as of secondary or ancient character. The landscape character at this edge of the conservation area is informal, rural and wooded, not urban or closely built.

3.3 Materials and Built Character of the Wider Conservation Area

Across the Conservation Area as a whole, the Appraisal identifies brick and slate as the dominant building materials, with red brick predominating. Stone is found in heads, sills, string courses and boundary wall treatments. The streetscene character is defined significantly by boundary walls fronting the highway, with a combination of brick and coursed stone random walls, stone copings, and stone gate piers. The Appraisal notes that even on sites that have been redeveloped, boundary walls and gate piers often remain, illustrating the primacy of boundary definition to the area's character.

Render is described in the Appraisal as primarily a modern material and is not characteristic of the area's traditional built form. Some original brick elevations have been faced in render, which is identified as a form of alteration that damages the area's character. The Management Plan (Policy 3) specifically resists the external cladding or rendering of walls as out-of-character alterations.

4. Significance of the Existing Building

The existing dwelling at Clough Farmhouse is not listed, is not identified in the Appraisal as a significant building making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area's character, and does not appear in the list of buildings considered for statutory protection. An assessment of the building's significance using Historic England's four categories is set out below.

4.1 Evidential Value

The existing building has some evidential value in its role as a surviving residential structure on a site historically associated with Prestwich Clough Farm, shown in OS mapping from 1891. However, the D&A Statement's structural inspection confirms the building has been substantially altered over time, with render cladding applied over original brickwork and modern interventions throughout. The evidential value of the fabric is therefore limited.

4.2 Historical Value

The site retains some historical interest as the last remnant of Prestwich Clough Farm within what was formerly a larger agricultural holding. The D&A Statement's historical map analysis traces the farm's presence from at least 1891 through to its current reduced curtilage. This historical narrative is of moderate interest and is associated with the site rather than the specific fabric of the existing building, which has been significantly altered from any original agricultural character.

4.3 Aesthetic Value

The aesthetic value of the existing building is low. It presents a rendered elevation to Clough Lane that is out of character with the stone and brick built form identified by the Appraisal as characteristic of the area. The building sits prominently close to the lane without adequate boundary definition or landscape integration, and its condition is poor, with render in deteriorating condition and modern alterations throughout. The Appraisal identifies render as a modern material not reflective of the area's traditional character, and the existing dwelling's rendered finish places it in the category of negative features that have begun to erode the basic character of the area.

The existing building is assessed as making a neutral to negative contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

4.4 Communal Value

The site has no identified communal value. It is a private residential curtilage with limited visibility from the public realm, no public access, and no community use. The Landscape Appraisal identifies the site's entrance as of poor quality.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 National Policy

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a statutory duty on the local planning authority, when exercising planning functions with respect to buildings or other land in a conservation area, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) sets out that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets. Paragraphs 200–202 establish the framework for assessing the impact of proposals on designated heritage assets, requiring that the harm or benefit to significance be weighed in the planning balance. Where a proposal results in no harm to significance, or where it preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area, the statutory duty is satisfied and the NPPF supports approval.

5.2 Local Policy

Bury MBC's local planning policies require development within the Conservation Area to preserve or enhance its character or appearance, in accordance with the statutory duty. The St Mary's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2009) sets out the following directly relevant policies:

Policy 1

All proposals for demolition, re-development, re-building, change of use or other alteration of land and premises in the conservation have to be considered in the light of the statutory duty to preserve and enhance the conservation area. With this duty in mind, there will be a presumption against the demolition of all listed buildings and those referred to within the management plan as significant or making a positive contribution to the area's character.

Policy 3

Where planning permission is required, the following proposals should be resisted – over-large, prominent, or out of character extensions; out of character dormer windows; non-traditional materials; the external cladding of walls; out of character building alterations; loss of historic building fabric; the building of out-of-character gates and walls.

Policy 5

Planning and conservation area consent applications will only be acceptable if the submitted information is clear, complete and comprehensive and includes full drawings of the proposals and a thorough design and access statement. The Council will expect any proposal for a development within the Conservation Area to include a full analysis of the surrounding area and justification of why the proposals are appropriate in the context of the area's character. Proposals should respond to the surrounding development in terms of scale, height, massing, detail and materials.

Policy 7

Trees make a significant contribution to the character of this conservation area. They are protected from removal by both the conservation area status and particular tree preservation orders. The Council will generally resist proposals to cut down, top or lop trees that contribute in this way. When trees are removed or die they should be replaced with new trees of appropriate species and size.

Policy 15

When considering planning applications and development proposals the duty to enhance the conservation area may be addressed through the achievement of the following – the planting of trees and hedges where appropriate; the provision or reinstatement of walls and railings; reinstatement of doors and windows and other original architectural detail.

The Landscape Appraisal (Chris Burnett Associates, January 2009) additionally recommends improvements to the entrance to Prestwich Clough from Clough Lane and the management of the woodland boundary to protect views and reinstate the landscape structure. The proposal directly supports these objectives.

6. Design Principles and Response to Conservation Area Character

6.1 Landscape-Led Approach

The design has been developed in direct response to the landscape-dominated character of this part of the Conservation Area, where the Appraisal confirms that built form is secondary to landscape structure. The following principles have guided the design:

- Existing vegetation along Clough Lane is retained and reinforced with additional native planting, strengthening the wooded character identified as the primary contributor to significance in the St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough character area
- A new natural stone boundary wall with hedge planting behind is introduced along the Clough Lane frontage, reinstating the strong boundary definition characteristic of the wider Conservation Area and directly addressing the improvement objective identified in the Landscape Appraisal for the Clough Lane frontage
- The dwelling is repositioned further from Clough Lane and set below the natural slope, reducing its visual presence within the street scene and allowing the landscape to read as the primary element from public viewpoints

6.2 Respect for Spatial Character

The replacement dwelling is contained entirely within the established residential curtilage. The development does not encroach on the open Prestwich Clough, the allotment gardens, or any other identified open space or landscape asset. The proposal avoids the overdevelopment of the curtilage and maintains the landscape-

first character of this edge of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policy 2 of the Management Plan.

6.3 Visual Containment

The Appraisal identifies visual containment as a key characteristic of the St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough character area, noting that development is often screened or partially obscured and that the area is experienced through layered views rather than open exposure. The proposed development responds directly to this character:

- A significant proportion of the accommodation is set below ground level, integrated into the natural slope. This element is not perceptible from Clough Lane and does not contribute to perceived bulk or prominence
- The building's repositioning away from Clough Lane reduces its visual relationship with the public realm, improving the perception of openness along the lane frontage
- The reinforced stone boundary wall and retained mature vegetation ensure the dwelling reads as a contained form within woodland rather than as an exposed frontage
- The moderated roof form and controlled eaves heights limit the apparent height of the building when viewed from the lane

6.4 Materials and Built Character

The proposed replacement dwelling is constructed in natural stone with a zinc upper element and timber accents — a restrained and recessive material palette that responds positively to the established character of the Conservation Area. This is a significant improvement upon the existing rendered finish, which the Appraisal identifies as a modern material not characteristic of the area's traditional built form. The use of natural stone directly reflects the stone boundary wall treatments and structural character identified throughout the Appraisal as defining features of the area's streetscene.

The proposal also references the agricultural history of the site through its massing — a simple pitched roof form evoking the farmhouse and agricultural building typologies historically associated with Prestwich Clough Farm — while delivering a high-quality contemporary interpretation appropriate to a new dwelling in this setting.

The Appraisal notes that the Management Plan resists non-traditional materials and out-of-character alterations (Policy 3). The proposed natural stone palette is entirely consistent with the traditional material character of the Conservation Area and represents a marked improvement on the existing render-clad dwelling.

6.5 Trees and Ecology

Policy 7 of the Management Plan requires that trees contributing to the character of the Conservation Area are protected and that removed trees are replaced with new trees of appropriate species and size. The proposal retains the majority of existing trees on the site. Where trees of low quality are removed, mitigation is provided through new native tree and hedge planting along the Clough Lane frontage and within the courtyard. This reinforces the woodland character of the site's edge and is consistent with the Landscape Appraisal's recommendation to better manage tree growth and improve the landscape structure along the Clough Lane boundary. Policy

15 specifically identifies the planting of trees and hedges as a means of enhancing the Conservation Area — this proposal directly delivers on this objective.

7. Assessment of Impact on the Conservation Area

7.1 Landscape Character

The proposal preserves and reinforces the landscape-led character of the St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough character area. There is no loss of open space, allotment land, or any identified landscape asset. The existing tree cover is substantially retained and reinforced. The new stone boundary wall and hedge planting along Clough Lane directly enhances the boundary definition characteristic of the Conservation Area, consistent with the Landscape Appraisal's enhancement objectives for the Clough Lane frontage.

7.2 Visual Impact

The proposed dwelling will be experienced within the established pattern of filtered views, tree-lined lane, and enclosed woodland setting that characterises this part of the Conservation Area. The development will not appear more prominent than the existing building; given the repositioning away from Clough Lane, the sub-terrain accommodation, the reinforced landscape buffer, and the recessive stone and zinc material palette, it will be considerably less visible from public viewpoints than the current rendered dwelling.

There will be no harmful impact on key views within or from the Conservation Area. The setting of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary is not affected, as the site lies within a distinct character area well removed from the church and its principal views.

7.3 Spatial Character

The proposal maintains the landscape-first spatial character of this part of the Conservation Area. Development remains confined to the existing residential curtilage and does not encroach on any open land or landscape asset. The consolidation of built form — with the detached garage removed as a separate structure — reduces the number of discrete built elements on the site and simplifies its relationship to the surrounding woodland.

7.4 Materials

The replacement of a render-clad building with a dwelling constructed in natural stone directly addresses one of the identified negative features of the Conservation Area. The Appraisal is explicit that render is a modern material not characteristic of the area, and that its application to original brick elevations has begun to erode the basic character of the area. The proposed natural stone construction represents a clear enhancement of the material quality of this part of the Conservation Area.

7.5 Summary Heritage Impact Conclusion

The existing dwelling makes a neutral to negative contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, by reason of its rendered finish, prominent siting close to Clough Lane, poor boundary definition, and general condition.

The proposed replacement dwelling:

- Replaces a neutral/negative contributor with a building of significantly higher architectural quality
- Uses natural stone construction in place of render, directly addressing an identified negative feature of the Conservation Area
- Reinstates strong stone boundary definition along Clough Lane, enhancing the streetscene character identified as a key feature throughout the Appraisal
- Reinforces the tree and hedge cover along the site boundary, strengthening the landscape-led character of this part of the Conservation Area
- Reduces the visual prominence of the dwelling from Clough Lane through repositioning, sub-terrain accommodation, and landscape containment

There is no harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. The proposal preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the St Mary's Conservation Area in accordance with the statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

8. Planning Balance

As the proposal results in no harm to the significance of the Conservation Area, and positively preserves and enhances its character and appearance, the statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the 1990 Act is satisfied. The NPPF supports the granting of planning permission in such circumstances.

The scheme accords with:

- Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Paragraphs 200–202 of the NPPF (December 2024)
- Bury MBC Policy EN2/2 – Conservation Areas
- The St Mary's Conservation Area Management Plan (2009), Policies 1, 3, 5, 7, and 15
- The objectives of the St Mary's Conservation Area Landscape Appraisal (Chris Burnett Associates, January 2009)

The proposal represents appropriate and high-quality development within the Conservation Area that will deliver a net enhancement to its character and appearance. Planning permission should be granted.

9. Conclusion

This statement has assessed the proposed replacement dwelling at Clough Farmhouse, Clough Lane, Prestwich against the character and significance of the St Mary's Conservation Area. The site falls within the St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough character area, where significance derives primarily from landscape structure, ancient woodland, mature tree cover, and visual containment rather than from built form.

The existing dwelling makes a neutral to negative contribution to the Conservation Area by reason of its rendered finish, prominent siting, and inadequate boundary treatment. The proposed replacement delivers a substantial improvement in design quality, material character, boundary definition, and landscape integration.

The proposal preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the St Mary's Conservation Area in accordance with the statutory duty, national planning policy, and local conservation guidance. Planning permission should be granted.

Document References

- St Mary's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, Bury Metropolitan Borough Council / Woodhall Planning and Conservation, 2009
- St Mary's Conservation Area Landscape Appraisal, Chris Burnett Associates, January 2009
- St Mary's Church and Churchyard Conservation Management Plan, Kathryn Sather Associates / ECUS Ltd / Byrom Clark Roberts, March 2008
- National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 72(1)
- Historic England, Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance, 2008
- Ordnance Survey mapping: 1891, 1910, 1932, 1952, 1963 (referenced in accompanying D&A Statement)