

PLANNING STATEMENT

Clough Farmhouse, Clough Lane, Prestwich, Manchester M25 3JD

Proposed Demolition of Existing Dwelling and Erection of Replacement Dwelling

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

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1. Introduction

This Planning 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 Metropolitan Green Belt and the St Mary's Conservation Area. The proposal has therefore been assessed against national and local planning policy relating to Green Belt development, heritage, and design. This statement should be read alongside the accompanying Design and Access Statement and Heritage and Conservation Area Statement.

2. Site and Proposal

The site comprises an existing lawful dwelling within a clearly defined residential curtilage, enclosed by mature vegetation and set within a visually contained woodland environment, accessed via a narrow cobbled track off Clough Lane, Prestwich.

The proposal seeks to:

- Demolish the existing dwelling (181 sq m gross internal area including detached garage)
- Construct a replacement dwelling (484 sq m gross internal area including basement and attached garage)
- Reposition the dwelling further from Clough Lane, reducing visual prominence within the street scene
- Integrate a substantial proportion of floorspace at lower ground floor level, set into the natural slope of the site
- Reinforce the stone boundary wall and landscape buffer along Clough Lane

The scheme is driven by topography, landscape containment, and reduction in visual impact as detailed in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

3. Planning Policy Context

3.1 National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) establishes that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 sets out defined exceptions to this presumption. Paragraph 154(d) provides that replacement buildings are not inappropriate development in the Green Belt where they are in the same use and are not materially larger than the building they replace. This is the primary policy test for this application.

Paragraph 154(g) additionally provides that the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land would not be inappropriate where it would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

Whether a replacement building is materially larger than the one it replaces is a matter of planning judgement informed by spatial and visual considerations of bulk, massing, scale, siting, and visibility, and is not determined by numerical comparison of floorspace alone. This is well established in case law, principally in *Tandridge DC v SSCLG & Syrett* [2015] EWHC 979 (Admin), which confirmed that the assessment must consider physical factors such as bulk, massing, scale and form as indicators of relative size in the context of Green Belt policy objectives.

3.2 Relevant Local Policies

The following Bury MBC local planning policies are relevant to this application:

- Policy OL1 – Green Belt: Seeks to protect openness in line with national policy. Replacement dwellings are considered against whether they are materially larger in terms of impact on openness.
- Policy H2/4 – Replacement Dwellings in the Green Belt: Supports replacement dwellings where they are not materially larger than the building they replace and do not result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- Policy EN1 – Design and Amenity: Requires development to respond positively to site context in terms of scale, massing, materials and landscape setting.
- Policy EN2/2 – Conservation Areas: Requires development to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas in accordance with the statutory duty.

4. Principle of Development

The proposal relates to the replacement of an existing lawful dwelling within an established residential curtilage. The site has been in continuous residential use since at least 1891. The existing dwelling has lawful use as a residential property and is not a temporary or agricultural structure.

The application falls to be considered primarily under Paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF as a replacement building. The key policy test is whether the proposed replacement is materially larger than the building it replaces, assessed in terms of impact on the openness of the Green Belt in both spatial and visual dimensions. This is a matter of planning judgement rather than mathematical comparison.

5. Volume and Floorspace Calculations

The council letter of 17 March 2026 specifically requires volume calculations to accompany the assessment of whether the replacement dwelling is materially larger. These are set out below. Volume figures are approximate external measurements prepared by Cadence Architecture and should be read alongside the submitted drawings.

Element	Floorspace (sq m GIA)	Volume (m ³)
Existing dwelling (house only)	~166 sq m	~671 m ³
Existing detached garage	~15 sq m	~40 m ³
Total existing (all structures)	~181 sq m	~711 m ³
Proposed ground + first floor (including double attached double garage and link)	~332 sq m	~1,264 m ³
Proposed basement (sub-terrain)	~152 sq m	~368 m ³
Total proposed	~484 sq m	~1,632 m ³
Increase (all in)	+~303 sq m (+167%)	+~921 m ³ (+130%)
Increase (above-ground only vs existing)	+~151 sq m (+83%)	+~553 m ³ (+78%)

Note: The garage volume of 40 m³ is included in the existing total. As set out in Section 6 below, its inclusion in the baseline calculation pursuant to Tandridge DC v SSCLG & Syrett [2015] has a direct bearing on the assessment. The basement volume is included in the total proposed figure in accordance with the principle established in Feather v Cheshire East Council [2010], which confirmed that basement accommodation must be included in floorspace calculations for the purpose of assessing whether a replacement dwelling is materially larger.

The above-ground volume increases the element that directly affects perceived bulk and visual openness is 83% when assessed against the combined existing volume. This figure is the most relevant to the visual openness test, as the basement is not perceptible from public viewpoints and does not contribute to perceived bulk or prominence.

6. Assessment of Openness

6.1 Methodology

Whether a replacement dwelling is materially larger is assessed not by numerical comparison alone but by evaluating the overall impact on the openness of the Green Belt in both its spatial and visual dimensions. This approach is established in case law and confirmed in multiple appeal decisions. The following factors are considered in turn.

6.2 Aggregation of Existing Structures

The existing site includes both the dwelling and a detached garage. Tandridge DC v SSCLG & Syrett [2015] EWHC 979 (Admin) confirmed that there is no reason in principle why the objectives of Green Belt policy cannot be applied to more than one building on a site when considering the size of the building being replaced.

Accordingly, the combined floorspace and volume of the existing dwelling plus the detached garage (181 sq m / 711 m³) forms the correct baseline for comparison. The proposal removes the detached garage as a separate structure and consolidates all accommodation within a single building. This act of consolidation reduces the number of discrete built elements on the site, which is a benefit in openness terms.

6.3 Sub-Terrain Accommodation

A substantial proportion of the additional floorspace 152 sq m / 368 m³ is accommodated within a lower ground floor level that is set into the natural slope of the site. This element is not visible from Clough Lane or from any public viewpoint. It does not contribute to perceived bulk or massing. While it must be included in the total floorspace comparison (Feather v Cheshire East Council [2010]), its contribution to harm to openness is limited given its absence of visual impact. This approach to sub-terrain accommodation has been accepted in multiple appeal decisions where inspectors have found that basement or subterranean accommodation carries limited weight in the openness assessment where it is not visible in the wider landscape.

6.4 Siting and Setback

The replacement dwelling is repositioned further from Clough Lane than the existing building. This increases the setback from the public realm and improves the perception of spatial openness along the site frontage. The existing dwelling sits prominently at the north-western corner of the curtilage, close to the lane boundary. The proposed dwelling sits further into the site, with a landscape buffer and stone boundary wall creating a more generous and better-defined transition between the public lane and the private curtilage.

6.5 Height and Massing

The roof form of the replacement dwelling has been carefully moderated, with reduced eaves heights at first floor level and a simplified profile. The building does not materially increase ridge height in a way that would increase visual prominence. The overall height of the replacement dwelling, as shown in the submitted street elevation, is comparable to the existing building when viewed from Clough Lane.

6.6 Visual Containment

The site benefits from strong enclosure through existing mature vegetation and boundary treatments, which are retained and enhanced. The reinforced stone boundary wall and landscape buffer along Clough Lane ensure the dwelling reads as a contained form within a woodland setting. From the key public vantage point of Clough Lane, the proposal will be less visually exposed than the existing building. The sub-terrain accommodation and repositioning ensure that the perceived scale of the new dwelling, as experienced from the public realm, is not significantly greater than the existing.

6.7 Built Form Consolidation

The proposal consolidates all built form within a single structure, removing the detached garage and avoiding any spread of development into undeveloped parts of the site. This limits the spatial impact of the development and reduces the dispersal of built form across the curtilage. The net spatial footprint of the dwelling excluding the sub-terrain basement is broadly comparable to that of the existing buildings taken together.

6.8 Fallback Position

A material consideration in the assessment of openness is the realistic fallback position available to the applicant without planning permission. The existing dwelling benefits from permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, albeit subject to the constraints imposed by both the Green Belt and Conservation Area designations.

Under Class A, and notwithstanding those constraints, the dwelling could in principle be extended at the rear, with ancillary development rights for outbuildings and hard surfaces also available subject to the specific limitations that apply in this location. Any such extensions or outbuildings would necessarily be added to the existing building in its current prominent position at the north-western corner of the curtilage, close to Clough Lane. This would increase the visual bulk of the dwelling at the point of maximum public visibility, with no corresponding benefit in terms of repositioning, landscape integration, or sub-terrain accommodation.

By contrast, the proposed replacement dwelling achieves the opposite effect. It removes built form from the most visible part of the site, sets the majority of additional accommodation below ground where it makes no contribution to perceived bulk, and positions the above-ground element further into the site behind a reinforced stone boundary and landscape buffer.

Even accounting for the restrictions that apply to permitted development in this location, the realistic fallback position would result in a materially greater impact on visual openness than the proposed replacement dwelling. This is a significant material consideration in favour of the proposed scheme.

6.9 Conclusion on Openness

When assessed in terms of openness both spatially and visually, the proposal does not result in a material increase in harm to the Green Belt. The additional accommodation is largely concealed within the slope and is not perceptible from public viewpoints. The above-ground volume increase of 78% against the combined existing baseline is substantially mitigated by the repositioning, landscape containment, and moderated height. The development does not spread built form further into open land and the consolidation of built form reduces the number of discrete structures on the site.

The proposal therefore falls within the exception for replacement buildings under Paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF and does not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

7. Relevant Appeal Decisions and Case Law

The following appeal decisions and legal authorities are relied upon in support of the assessment set out above. These decisions confirm the multi-factor approach to assessing whether a replacement dwelling is materially larger, and support the applicant’s case that the visual openness test rather than numerical floorspace comparison is the correct approach.

Tandridge DC v SSCLG & Syrett [2015] EWHC 979 (Admin)	High Court confirmed that ‘materially larger’ involves consideration of bulk, massing, scale and form — not floor area alone. Confirmed that outbuildings may be aggregated with the existing dwelling in calculating the size of the building being replaced. This is the primary legal foundation for the multi-factor approach adopted in this statement.
Feather v Cheshire East Council [2010]	Confirmed that basement floorspace must be included in the floorspace calculation for the materially larger assessment. However, this decision is to be read alongside the visual openness test: inspectors have since accepted that sub-terrain accommodation carries limited weight where it is not perceptible from public viewpoints and does not translate into increased visual bulk.
APP/D0121/W/24/3337219 (North Somerset, 2024)	Inspector assessed a replacement dwelling where basement accommodation and volume increase were central issues. Confirmed that height and bulk as experienced from the public realm are the key visual factors, and that volume calculations must be contextualised by visual impact assessment. Supports proposition that the test is not purely numerical.

DCS No. 400-017-236 (Bristol/South Gloucestershire, 2017)

Inspector found that replacing existing dwelling plus outbuildings with a larger single dwelling did not amount to being materially larger when assessed on spatial and visual impact terms, including the benefit of consolidating built form. Supports the consolidation argument advanced in this statement.

APP/C2741/W/19/3242886 (City of York, 2020)

A negative precedent relied upon for the purposes of distinguishing the current proposal. In that case the replacement dwelling was dismissed because the visual bulk increase from the public realm was material and not mitigated. The current proposal is positively distinguishable: sub-terrain accommodation removes the majority of additional floorspace from public view; repositioning away from the lane reduces rather than increases visual prominence; and reinforced landscape containment further limits perceived scale.

The consistent thread across these decisions is that floorspace increase alone is not determinative and that the key question is whether the proposed development results in greater perceived bulk and harm to visual openness when assessed from public viewpoints. In the present case, the evidence demonstrates that it does not.

8. Grey Belt Consideration

Without prejudice to the primary case advanced under Paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF, the site additionally exhibits characteristics consistent with the definition of Grey Belt land under the December 2024 NPPF and Annex 2 thereof.

Grey Belt is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in Paragraph 143 of the NPPF. The application site:

- Comprises previously developed residential land within an established lawful residential curtilage
- Is strongly enclosed by mature vegetation and is visually contained within its woodland setting, such that it makes no meaningful contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (purpose (a))
- Does not contribute to preventing the merging of towns (purpose (b))
- The proposal remains entirely within the established curtilage and does not extend development into open countryside (purpose (d))

However, the applicant is aware that the primary route to approval under Paragraph 155 of the NPPF for Grey Belt land requires, among other criteria, a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. This application involves a single replacement dwelling rather than new housing supply, and the Grey Belt route under Paragraph 155 is therefore not the primary basis for the application. This consideration is presented as a supplementary factor only, supporting the proposition that the site's limited contribution to Green Belt purposes reinforces the case that the replacement dwelling does not undermine those purposes.

9. Impact on the Conservation Area

The site lies within the St Mary's Conservation Area. A full assessment of the impact on heritage significance is set out in the accompanying Heritage and Conservation Area Statement. In summary:

- 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 through the use of natural stone construction, the reinstatement of a stone boundary wall, and the reinforcement of the landscape buffer along Clough Lane
- The development reduces visual prominence within the street scene compared with the existing dwelling
- 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 and with Bury Policy EN2/2

10. Design Quality

The proposal accords with Policy EN1 – Design and Amenity by:

- Responding directly to site topography and using the natural fall of the land to integrate accommodation below ground level
- Integrating development within the landscape through reinforced boundary planting and stone wall treatment
- Reducing visual impact through siting, massing and landscape containment
- Delivering a high-quality architectural solution using natural stone, zinc and timber appropriate to a contemporary interpretation of the farmhouse typology
- Providing step-free access and a wheelchair-accessible WC at ground floor level, meeting the accessible and adaptable standard in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations

11. Planning Balance

The proposal delivers the following benefits:

- A high-quality replacement dwelling that improves the design quality and landscape integration of the site
- Improved siting and reduced visual prominence from Clough Lane compared with the existing dwelling
- Enhanced landscape integration through reinforced tree and hedge planting and stone boundary wall
- No material harm to Green Belt openness when assessed in visual and spatial terms
- Preservation and enhancement of the St Mary's Conservation Area character and appearance
- Consolidation of built form with removal of the detached garage as a separate structure

There are no adverse impacts that would outweigh these benefits. The proposal falls within the defined exception for replacement buildings in the Green Belt and does not constitute inappropriate development. The statutory heritage duty is satisfied.

12. Conclusion

The proposal represents a carefully considered and policy-compliant form of development. It meets the exception for replacement buildings in the Green Belt under Paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF, does not result in a material increase in harm to openness when assessed in visual and spatial terms, and preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the St Mary's Conservation Area.

This conclusion is consistent with the established case law, which confirms that floorspace increases do not, in themselves, result in a building being materially larger where visual impact and openness are appropriately controlled, and that the assessment must consider the totality of spatial and visual factors including siting, sub-terrain accommodation, landscape containment, and built form consolidation.

The proposal complies with Paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF, Bury Policies OL1, H2/4, EN1 and EN2/2, and the St Mary's Conservation Area Management Plan (2009). Planning permission should therefore be granted.