



Planning Appeal Statement

Project Address:

Leonards Farm , Hot Lane , Biddulph Moor , Staffordshire , ST8 7HP

Application Ref:

SMD/2025/0374

Site Address:

30 Rudyard Road, Biddulph Moor, Staffordshire, ST8 7JN

Proposal:

Demolition of a steel-framed building and derelict farmhouse, and construction of a four-bedroom replacement farmhouse

Appellant:

Mr Charles Gibson

1.0 Introduction

This appeal is made against the refusal of planning permission for the demolition of a derelict farmhouse and detached steel framed building and the erection of a replacement dwelling at Leonards Farm, Hot Lane, Biddulph Moor.

The reasons for refusal relate to alleged harm to the Green Belt, character and appearance, and the loss of a non-designated heritage asset. It is respectfully submitted that these conclusions are not supported by the facts of the site, the proposal as a whole, or a balanced application of national and local planning policy.

The proposal represents a logical and sensitive consolidation of built form within an established farmstead, results in a reduction in overall built footprint, improves openness within the Green Belt, removes visually harmful elements, and delivers a high-quality replacement dwelling rooted firmly in local vernacular.

2.0 Site Context and Existing Situation

Leonards Farm is an established rural farmstead comprising a derelict 19th century farmhouse, a detached converted steel framed barn, a range of agricultural buildings, and a static caravan currently occupied by the applicant and their family.

The existing farmhouse has been vacant for over 20 years and is in a severe state of disrepair, including collapsed floors, a collapsed roof, broken windows, extensive cracking, and long-term exposure damage. This condition is clearly documented within the submitted Design and Access Statement and accompanying photographs.

The applicant currently resides in a static caravan on the site, which is clearly visible from the public highway. This element has a materially greater impact on openness and visual amenity than the proposed replacement dwelling.

3.0 Green Belt Assessment

The Council has concluded that the replacement dwelling is materially larger than the existing dwelling and therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This conclusion is based on an artificially narrow assessment of what constitutes the existing built form.

The proposal must be assessed in the round, taking account of all existing lawful residential buildings associated with the dwelling, including the converted detached barn which currently provides domestic storage and garage accommodation. When assessed on this basis, the proposal results in a net reduction in total built footprint.

As set out within the Design and Access Statement, the existing built form comprises:

- Existing farmhouse ground and first floor area
- Detached converted barn used in association with the dwelling

The proposed dwelling consolidates this floorspace into a single structure with a smaller - combined footprint than the existing farmhouse and detached barn together. This consolidation removes a standalone building located further into the field and relocates all residential floorspace back alongside the main cluster of farm buildings, thereby reducing sprawl and visual dispersion. In addition, the proposal facilitates the removal of the static caravan, resulting in a clear and measurable improvement in openness within the Green Belt.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF allows for replacement buildings in the Green Belt provided they are not materially larger than the building they replace. When assessed properly against the full extent of existing residential built form on site, the proposal complies with this exception.

Even if the Inspector were to conclude limited definitional harm, the following very special circumstances clearly outweigh that harm:

- Removal of a long term derelict and unsafe dwelling
- Removal of a visually intrusive static caravan
- Removal of a detached building projecting further into open fields
- Consolidation of development within the existing farmstead cluster
- A net reduction in overall built footprint
- Significant improvement to openness and visual coherence

4.0 Character, Appearance, and Design

The refusal asserts that the proposal is a prominent intrusion and at odds with vernacular architecture. This assessment fails to properly consider the siting, orientation, and visibility of the proposal.

The front elevation is traditional in composition and materiality, directly referencing the existing farmhouse through the reuse of stone, traditional chimney detailing, roof form, rainwater goods, and window proportions. This elevation faces into the farmstead and is read as part of the existing built group.

The more contemporary elements, including larger areas of glazing and the balcony, are confined to the rear elevation. These elements face south and west across the applicant's own land and are screened from public viewpoints by existing farm buildings. They are not visible from the public highway or public rights of way and therefore do not result in any harm to landscape character or public perception of the Green Belt.

Balconies and roof terraces are a common feature within Biddulph Moor and the surrounding Staffordshire and Cheshire uplands, reflecting the elevated topography and long-distance views. Examples are referenced within the submitted Design and Access Statement.

The design approach represents a deliberate and balanced response, traditional where publicly visible and more contemporary where private and screened. This is entirely consistent with good rural design principles.

5.0 Heritage Considerations

The existing farmhouse is acknowledged as a non-designated heritage asset. However, its significance has been severely eroded by prolonged vacancy, collapse, and surrounding unsympathetic development.

The proposal does not result in an unjustified loss. Instead, it records, salvages, and reuses the historic fabric, including stone, chimney forms, and architectural detailing, ensuring the character of the original building is carried forward in a manner that allows for continued viable use.

The alternative, retention of the existing structure, is not feasible and would lead to continued deterioration and eventual loss with no public or heritage benefit.

The proposal therefore represents a balanced and proportionate response in accordance with paragraph 215 of the NPPF.

6.0 Pre-application Engagement

It is also material that a verbal pre application meeting was held with the Local Planning Authority, during which officers expressed support for the principle of the scheme, including the inclusion of floorspace from the converted barn. The refusal decision represents a clear departure from that advice, without any material change in proposal or policy context.



7.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

The proposal:

- Reduces built footprint and development spread
- Improves openness in the Green Belt
- Removes unsightly and harmful structures
- Delivers a high-quality, well-designed replacement dwelling
- Respects local character and heritage
- Has no adverse impact on visual amenity, privacy, or landscape

The reasons for refusal rely on a narrow and overly rigid interpretation of policy that fails to consider the site as it exists today and the tangible benefits of the proposal. When assessed properly against national policy and the real characteristics of the site, the proposal is compliant and should be granted planning permission.

The appeal is therefore respectfully requested to be allowed.

Kind Regards,

Tom Ford
Tom Ford Architecture Ltd

For and on behalf of the Appellant