

***WOODFORD
HERITAGE AND
CHARACTER
ASSESSMENT***

LOCALITY

AUGUST 2016

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Report Title

| Rev No | Comments | Checked by | Approved by | Date |
|--------|--|------------|--------------|----------|
| 3 | Historic map added | Jon Rooney | Ffion Batcup | 15/08/16 |
| 2 | Updated following further comments from forum | Jon Rooney | Ffion Batcup | 09/08/16 |
| 1 | Updated following forums and Locality's comments | Jon Rooney | Ffion Batcup | 18/07/16 |

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Job No: 60504464

Reference: DR-00734-Woodford- AS4 HCA

Date Created: July 2016

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1 Introduction and Approach

1.1 Introduction

This report presents a summary of the history and character of the Woodford neighbourhood area of Stockport Metropolitan Borough. It has been prepared by consultants at AECOM on behalf of Locality, working closely with the Woodford Neighbourhood Forum and is based on a detailed appraisal of the area carried out through desk study and fieldwork.

Characterisation is a recognised approach to understanding the context and special qualities of a place which make it distinctive from other places. The information generated through the process of characterisation can then be considered in the planning and design process.

The purpose of this report is to succinctly describe the historical development and key characteristics of Woodford which combine to form the unique character of the area. This process is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework, which states that neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies based on an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics (DCLG, 2012). In doing so, policies can ensure that developments respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

1.2 Approach

The approach followed in developing this study has been tailored to meet the specific needs of the neighbourhood planning process and draws on best practice guidance including:

- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England 2014);
- Using Historic Landscape Characterisation (Historic England 2004);
- Character and identity Townscape and heritage appraisals in housing market renewal areas (Historic England and CABE 2008); and
- Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice (Historic England 2010).

This study builds upon previous work carried out by the Woodford Neighbourhood Forum including The Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Annual Progress Report 2015 and The Woodford Neighbourhood Plan Exhibition 2015, produced by The Forum Management Committee. The documents outline the vision for Woodford which is to *'manage and support beneficial change whilst retaining and enhancing Woodford's rural identity, character, quality of life and sense of community.'* The vision is supported by six objectives relating to environment, community, development, movement, employment and integration.

2 Context

2.1 Location

This section of the report describes the location and context of Woodford and summarises local planning policies which are relevant to the study.

Woodford is located in the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport in Greater Manchester. It lies 8.4km south of Stockport, 9.2km north-northwest of Macclesfield and 17.2km south-southeast of Manchester as shown on Figure 1. The Woodford neighbourhood area is bounded in the west by the River Dean and in the south follows the boundary of the Woodford Aerodrome Site. The Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road forms the boundary to the north although the Woodford Recreation Ground lies beyond of this road.

Most of the settled area of Woodford is between 88m and 92m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The highest points are found in the east and around Hilltop farm in the centre of the area, which lies at 93-98m AOD. The land falls away towards the River Dean in the west to around 70m AOD.

2.2 Planning Policy Context

Key planning documents of relevance to heritage and character include the following:

Stockport Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), Adopted 17 March 2011

This strategy is the most important document in the Local Development Framework. It sets out an overall strategy and vision and outlines the main aims and objectives for the land in Stockport.

Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review (UDP), Adopted 31 May 2006

The Stockport UDP is still relevant following the adoption of the Core Strategy UDP. The Core Strategy supersedes many but not all policies in the UDP. A schedule of the UDP policies that are replaced and no longer apply are set out in Appendix B of the Core Strategy.

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Proposed Changes (Consultation Draft), March 2016

Cheshire East Council revised their Local Plan and it is now open to public consultation. The revised plan will have implications on Woodford and the surrounding area as it includes a number of proposed development sites within the surrounding greenbelt.

This report is also informed by a number of other studies relevant to the local area as follows:

- Neighbourhood Plan Housing Policy Advice Woodford Neighbourhood Forum (AECOM, 2015);
- Woodford Movement Study (Peter Brett Associates, 2015); and
- Woodford Garden Village Presentation (Redrow, 2015).

3 Historical Development

The earliest reference to Woodford appears in 1180, as one of the estates of Sir John Aderne. By 1248 the manor of Woodford was one of several in the Barony of Stockport. In the late 13th century land was cleared and improved for agriculture and a corn mill was constructed, possibly on the River Dean, by 1296. In the 14th century, Woodford was a subordinate manor in Poynton held by the Stokeports but in 1355 the land was granted to the Davenport family. During the medieval period Woodford was thus a small hamlet on the edge of the Macclesfield Forest.

Over the 16th and 17th century Woodford remained largely agricultural as several farmhouses were built, some of which survive including the 17th century grade II listed buildings of Lane Side Farmhouse and what is originally known as Deanwater House. The most notable development of the period was the Woodford Old Hall Farmhouse, constructed during the 16th and 17th centuries. The building was owned and extended by the Davenports. Woodford Old Hall Farmhouse still stands today on Old Hall Lane and is a grade II listed building. A number of cottages which still remain were constructed during the 17th century as well including the grade II listed Pear Tree Cottage located on Church Lane and 475 Chester Road. In the 1720s the local branch of the Davenport family left their Woodford home for the grander surroundings of Capesthorne Hall (Arrowhead 112).

By the 19th century, Woodford began to diversify as many residents became involved in trade and industry. A brickworks on Wilmslow Road, a blacksmith, and calico printing mill were all constructed during this time and silk weaving, a domestic industry, was undertaken in a number of homes. Whitegates, 195 Moor Lane, was originally a pair of cottages with a silk weaving room between. In 1837, the Deanwater calico printing mill was built at the intersection of Wilmslow Road and the River Dean. The opening of this print works probably accounts for the rise in Woodfords population from 403 in 1831 to 564 ten years later, as the figure decreased to 430 in 1851 following a fire (Arrowhead 156). Deanwater House, now the Deanwater Hotel, was built as the print works' manager's house and cottages for the workforce were built in King Street. However, the mill does not feature on the first edition OS map of 1873 as it was closed in 1848 and eventually burnt down in 1851. The second edition map (Figure 2) displays several other new developments along Chester Road including a schoolhouse, built in 1847, and the original Davenport Arms Public House, which was replaced after a fire, and remains a historic pub known locally as the 'Thief's Neck'. The grade II listed Christ Church, completed in 1841, at the corner of Wilmslow Road and Old Hall Lane is also shown on the second edition map.



Deanwater House (NHLE1241642)



Christ Church (NHLE 1241641)

The local electric tram system was developed in the early 1900s and the growth of motor transport facilitated suburban growth, particularly in the western and southern districts of Stockport during the interwar period. Archaeologist Peter Arrowsmith writes, "New residences were erected in Bramhall and in neighbouring Woodford, where the population nearly doubled between 1921 and 1931, from a mere 413 to 801" (Arrowsmith, 242). Many of these new residences were made possible during the 1920s due to the sale of part of the historic Bromley Davenport Estate, resulting in small developments along the main streets, such as Chester Road and Moor Lane, which were originally country lanes. The interwar period also saw the creation of the Woodford Aerodrome, which was opened in 1924 and expanded in the 1930s. Run by Avro, one of the first aeroplane manufacturing company, the factory was eventually responsible for the construction of some 4,000 Lancaster Bombers during World War Two, over half the total number built. In 1953 the Woodford War Memorial Community Centre was built on Chester Road as a memorial to those who lost their lives during World War II.

In 1939 Woodford was incorporated within the Hazel Grove and Bramhall Urban District, leaving the Macclesfield Rural District. However, the urban district was abolished in 1972 and in 1974 Woodford was incorporated into the Borough of Stockport. Since the 1970s several motorways have been constructed throughout the borough to relieve congestion; yet the A6MARR, originally conceived to be part of the outer ring road to relieve congestion along the A6, was never built and would have linked up with the Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road, part of which has already been constructed in Woodford. Woodford never received a railway station, but does have a regular bus service to Manchester. The biggest employer at the turn of the 20th century was the Woodford Aerodrome which employed some 3,000 people on the site by 1989.

Although located outside of the designated neighbourhood area, the most important development of the 21st century in Woodford thus far has been the decision to redevelop the former Woodford Aerodrome site; closed in 2012. Harrow Estates purchased the land in the same year and have demolished the existing buildings on the site to accommodate over 900 new homes. The new site includes provisions for a new shopping centre, school, and the now operational Avro Heritage Museum.

There are ten grade II listed buildings within the Neighbourhood Plan area. These are:

- Peartree Cottage (NHLE 1241427);
- Number 387 and right hand bay only of Number 385, Chester Road (NHLE1241499);
- Old Hall Farmhouse (NHLE1241579);
- Barn to north east of Old Hall Farm (NHLE1241580);
- Christ Church (NHLE 1241641);
- Deanwater House, timber framed wing at rear only (NHLE1241642);
- Lychgate at Christ Church (NHLE1260398);
- 475, Chester Road (NHLE1260397);
- Lane Side Farmhouse (NHLE1241493); and
- Moor Farm (NHLE1241577).

There are five non-designated buildings within this area. These are:

- The Old Vicarage, Wilmslow Road;
- The Davenport Arms, Chester Road;
- White Rose Cottage Moor Lane;
- School House Farm, Chester Road;
- 195, Moor Lane; and
- Woodford (former) Primary School, Chester Road



House Barn to north east of Old Hall Farm (NHLE1241580)



195, Moor Lane



Lychgate at Christ Church (NHLE1260398)



Moor Farm (NHLE1241577)

4 Key Characteristics

This section of the report summarises the key characteristics of the area with reference to the pattern of streets, buildings and open spaces, land use, views and heritage assets, as shown on Figure 3.

- Strongly rural area dominated by pastoral farming creates a quiet and remote character, which generally results in a high degree of tranquillity away from urban areas;
- Fields are medium size and irregular in pattern, distinguished by hedgerows and scattered trees. Mature oaks are a common feature in the area;
- Enclosure is created by tree cover focused around residential areas, within private boundaries, along streets, field boundaries and the River Dean;
- Number of Public Rights Of Way (PRoW) through the open countryside linking the residential areas;
- Views across the surrounding countryside, which is designated as greenbelt, and the South Pennines beyond are apparent throughout much of the area due to the flat and open landscape;
- Ribbon development along winding former country lanes makes up the settlement of Woodford;
- Houses on the main roads are individual in design, generally dating from the 19th and early 20th century and comprise large, detached two storey buildings, many with extensions and loft conversions;
- Houses are generally set a long way back from the street and are set within generous private front and rear gardens with off street parking;
- The boundaries of properties vary from brick and stone walls, hedges, railings and timber fencing. Many properties are gated;
- Vernacular light brown brick buildings are common and many properties have a rendered white or cream finish and this, together with the rich architectural detailing and consistent building lines creates a sense of unity throughout the area;
- Commonality in materials but differentiation between the architectural style of buildings from street to street creates interest and legibility;
- Comprehensive survival of historic buildings with a rich variety and high architectural quality;
- Buildings in the Tudor revival style are common in the area, predominately in the form of black and white timber detailing to gables;
- Smaller semi-detached properties and bungalows are focused along quieter roads, such as Bridle Road and Moor Lane;
- Conversion of former farm buildings to residential use acts as a reminder of early settlement origins in many cases, such as Barn, Old Hall Farm;
- The busy Chester Road and Wilmslow Road are heavily trafficked;
- The majority of activity is focused along Chester Road which includes the Davenport Arms, Olivers Restaurant, Deanwater Hotel, Budgens convenience store, Chrome of Woodford car show room, Woodford Community Centre, Woodford Christ Church, Woodford Notcutts Garden Centre which includes a café, access to Avro Heritage Museum and a small parade of shops; and
- Many properties have house number/name plaques on boundary walls which are a unifying feature.



Davenport Arms built from local materials



Survival of historic buildings



Views across open countryside



Views towards South Pennines



Extensive private gardens are common



Gated boundaries to many properties



Heavily trafficked Chester Road



Quieter, rural Chuch Lane

5 Managing Change

5.1 Forces Of Change

Woodford is sensitive to a range of pressures, which may result in a change to the key characteristics described above over time. The Woodford development, which is proposed to the east of the neighbourhood area, has the potential to substantially alter the setting of the area. 145 houses are currently being constructed and 775 further homes, a primary school, a pub, shops and community facilities have outline planning permission on the former 200 hectare Woodford Aerodrome. Furthermore, there are likely to be indirect effects on the tranquillity of Woodford as a result of heavier traffic on local roads.

Additionally the northern part of the area has been affected by the Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road, which is currently being extended. The relief road, which is expected to significantly reduce existing traffic on Woodford Road and Chester Road, will have a visual and audible influence on tranquillity in the surrounding landscape.

5.2 Positive Aspects Of Character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the open rural aspect of the landscape and the quality of surviving heritage within Woodford as shown in Figure 4.

- Variety of architectural detailing of buildings;
- Well vegetated gardens which enhance the quality and verdant character of the streets;
- Well-maintained residential boundaries including gates, brick and stone walls and hedgerows;
- Open countryside surrounding the ribbon of settlement contributing to the rural setting of Woodford;
- Public Rights of Ways providing a recreational resources by linking Woodford to the wider countryside;
- Mature trees within private gardens, along streets and within the open countryside;
- House number and name plaques on boundary walls provide a high degree of unity and strengthen sense of history and place; and
- Wide grass verges providing a separation between the busy roads and the footpaths in places, such as areas along Chester Road.



Well maintained properties



Wide grass verges between footpath and road

5.3 Issues To Be Addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to expansion or the modernisation of existing houses resulting in the erosion or loss of key characteristics and the quality of public realm as shown in Figure 4.

- Outward expansion of settlement encroaching into the surrounding countryside;
- The busy Chester Road and Wilmslow Road, which is dominated by traffic. This is exacerbated by a lack of crossing points for pedestrians;
- Congestion at peak times from vehicles using Chester Road and Woodford Road;
- Lack of designated cycleways;
- Public realm is often limited to narrow asphalt pavements adjacent to busy roads which abruptly end in some locations, with the exception of the area surrounding the Aerodrome development where block paving is currently being introduced;
- Formal public green space is limited. Woodford Recreational Ground in the north of the area is the only designated space;
- Pavements are overgrown with vegetation in places restricting visibility and access; and
- The modernisation of individual houses and boundaries has resulted in some loss of original detailing.



Narrow pavement along Wilmslow Road



Mature, overgrown vegetation along footpath

5.4 Sensitive To Change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to scale, setting and architectural design of buildings, the value and setting of heritage assets, the contribution of mature vegetation to the quality of the Woodford area and the rural characteristics of the surrounding landscape as shown in Figure 4;

- Designated greenbelt surrounding the settlement, which contributes to the rural setting of Woodford;
- Heritage assets and their settings;
- The intactness of the hedgerow network;
- The open views of the surrounding rural landscape and South Pennines beyond from within the settlement and PRoW;
- Hedgerow trees, scattered copses and vegetation along the River Dean that provides enclosure and enforce the distinction between the urban and rural landscape;
- Mature street trees and in particular those with TPO protection, particularly along Moor Lane and Bridle Road; and
- Continuity of building frontages, rooflines and boundaries.



Mature street trees at the junction of Church Lane



Designated greenbelt with views towards the South Pennines

5.5 Character Management Principles

Managing change in this area should focus on sustaining, reinforcing or enhancing those aspects which contribute to the rural character and well maintained and attractive settlement. However, without further protection through planning policy unsympathetic development, could result in a reduction in openness, loss of historic features or mature vegetation. This could have incremental impacts on the key characteristics of the area. In order to address the issues highlighted above the following principles should be considered when defining policies with respect to heritage and character:

- Any new development should respect the layout, scale, mass and appearance of neighbouring buildings and buildings across the neighbourhood area;
- The materials proposed for any new buildings should be responsive to the character of existing buildings and the vernacular materials used in the area;
- Proposals to alter existing buildings should demonstrate an understanding of the architectural history and design qualities of the buildings and provide a clear rationale for how this is taken account of in the design of the alterations proposed;
- Proposals should conserve and protect heritage assets which contribute to the historic character of the area and their setting;
- Opportunities to further enhance connections for pedestrians and cyclists should be considered as part of proposals for new development;
- Any alterations to front gardens, boundary treatments or driveways should be high quality and responsive to the character of the existing or surrounding detailing;
- Proposals which retain or enhance well-vegetated front gardens that demonstrate a strong relationship with the street are more likely to be acceptable than proposals to introduce substantial areas of paving for parking;
- High quality materials and a high standard of workmanship should be applied in the repair, or other works, to pavements and the public realm; and
- New high quality green spaces that provide a variety of functions and diverse habitats should be included in future proposed residential developments.

In addition to policy protection, this assessment has identified projects or initiatives which could be financed through CIL or s106 contributions or delivered by volunteers, for example:

- A plan should be prepared to set out commitments to the management and future replacement of trees, which considers resilience to environmental change;
- A plan should be prepared to set out commitments to the management and reinstatement of degraded hedgerows; and
- Projects to plant new areas of woodland, particularly along the settlement boundary and existing and proposed roads should be considered to protect the rural character of the landscape.

Further guidance on how to use the output of the Heritage and Character Assessment can be found at <http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-how-to-prepare-a-character-assessment-to-support-design-policy-within-a-neighbourhood-plan/>.

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APPENDICES



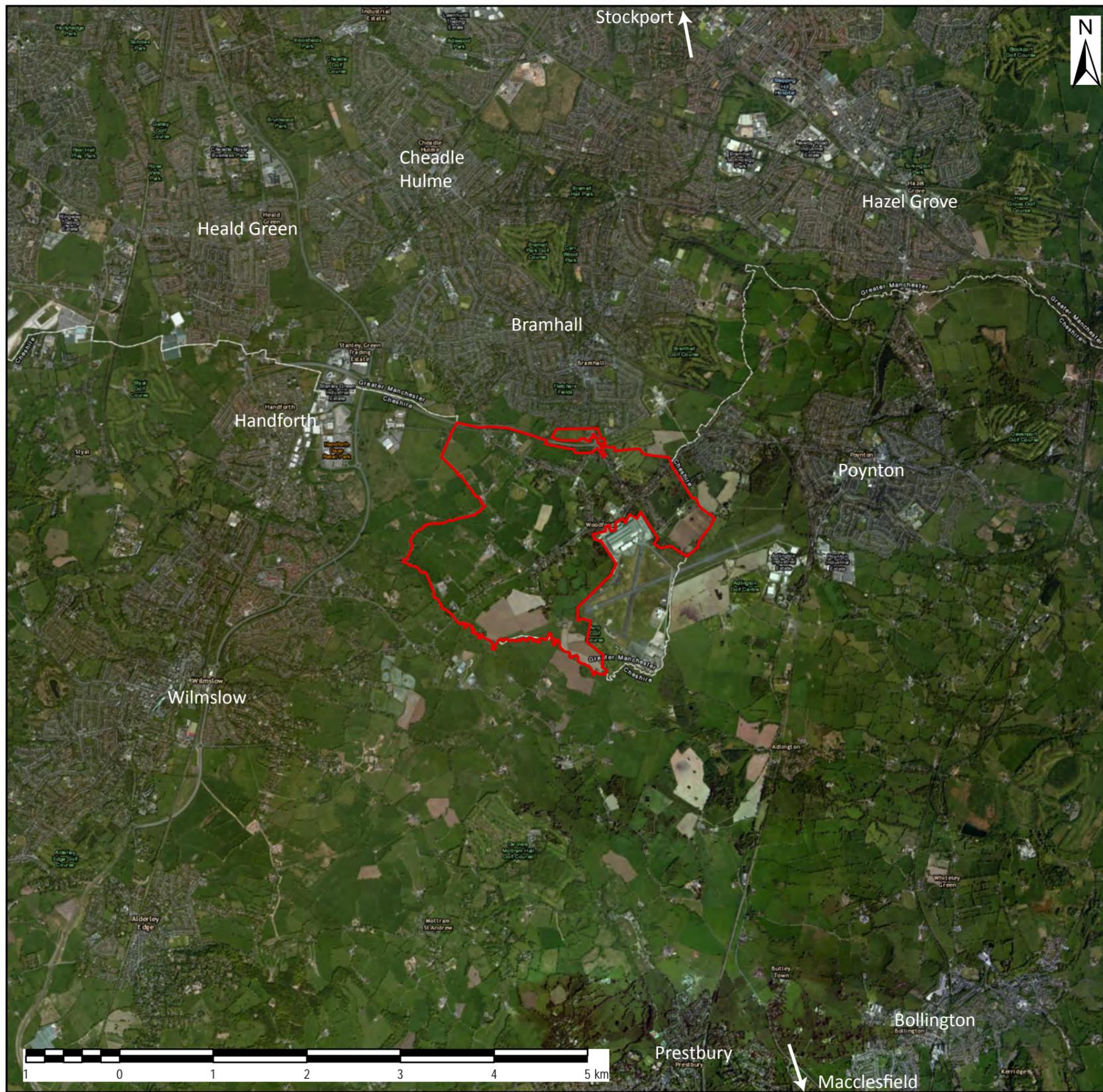
Appendix: Figures

Figure 1: Location and Context

Figure 2: Historic Maps

Figure 3: Key Characteristics

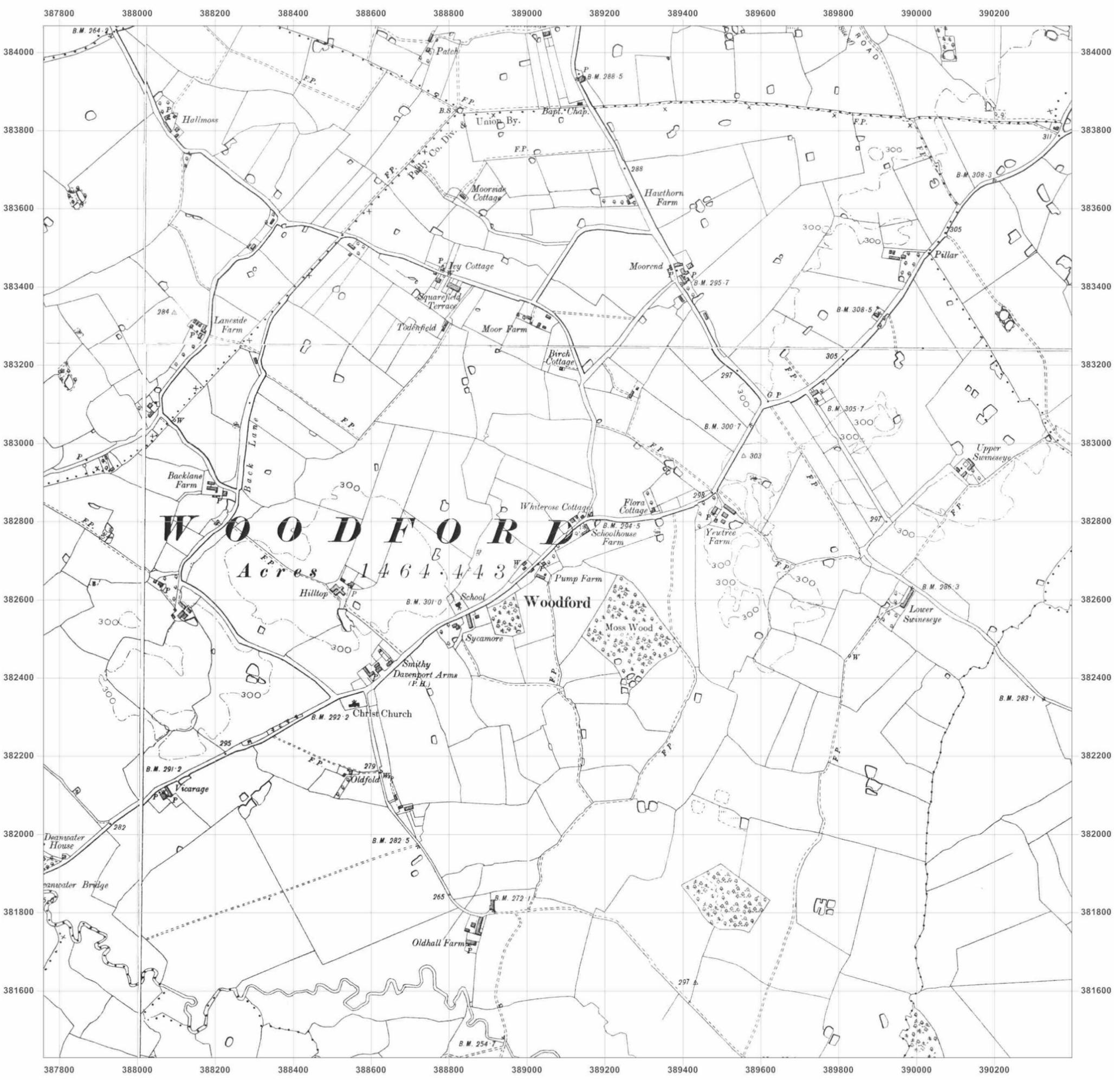
Figure 4: Constraints and Opportunities



Legend
 Study area

Figure 1: Location and context

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1896-A3PDF-10000

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Report Ref: CMAPS-CM-552199-39015-100816
Grid Ref: 389078, 382747

Map Name: County Series
Map date: 1896-1897
Scale: 1:10,560
Printed at: 1:10,560



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| <p>Surveyed 1872 Revised 1897 Edition N/A Copyright N/A Levelled N/A</p> | <p>Surveyed 1872 Revised 1897 Edition N/A Copyright N/A Levelled N/A</p> |
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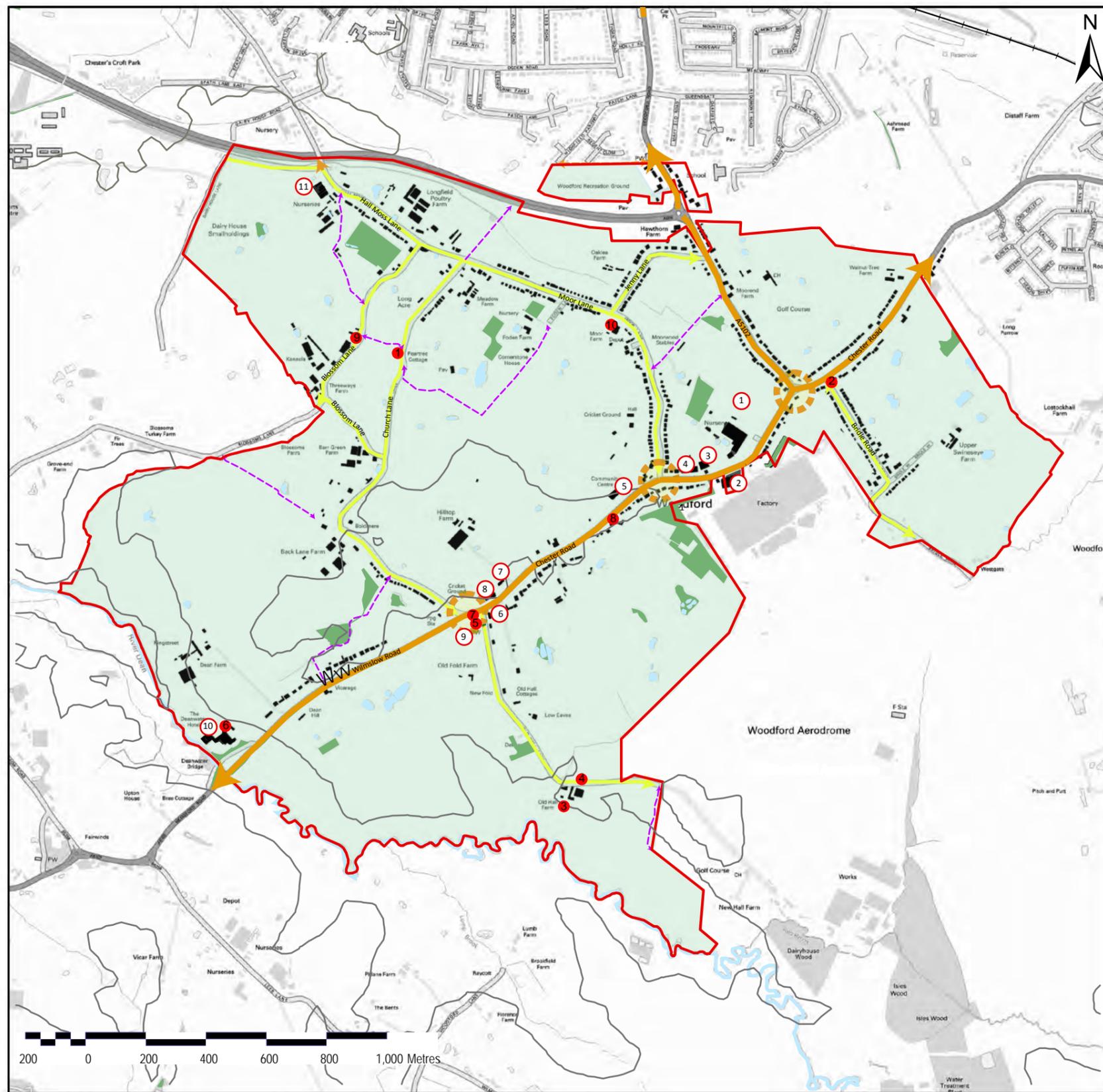
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Figure 2- Historic Development 1896-1897



Legend

Study Area

Movement

Gateway/node

Primary access route

Secondary access route

Public Right of Way

Land use

Greenbelt

Woodland

Waterbody

Building

Contour

Key buildings

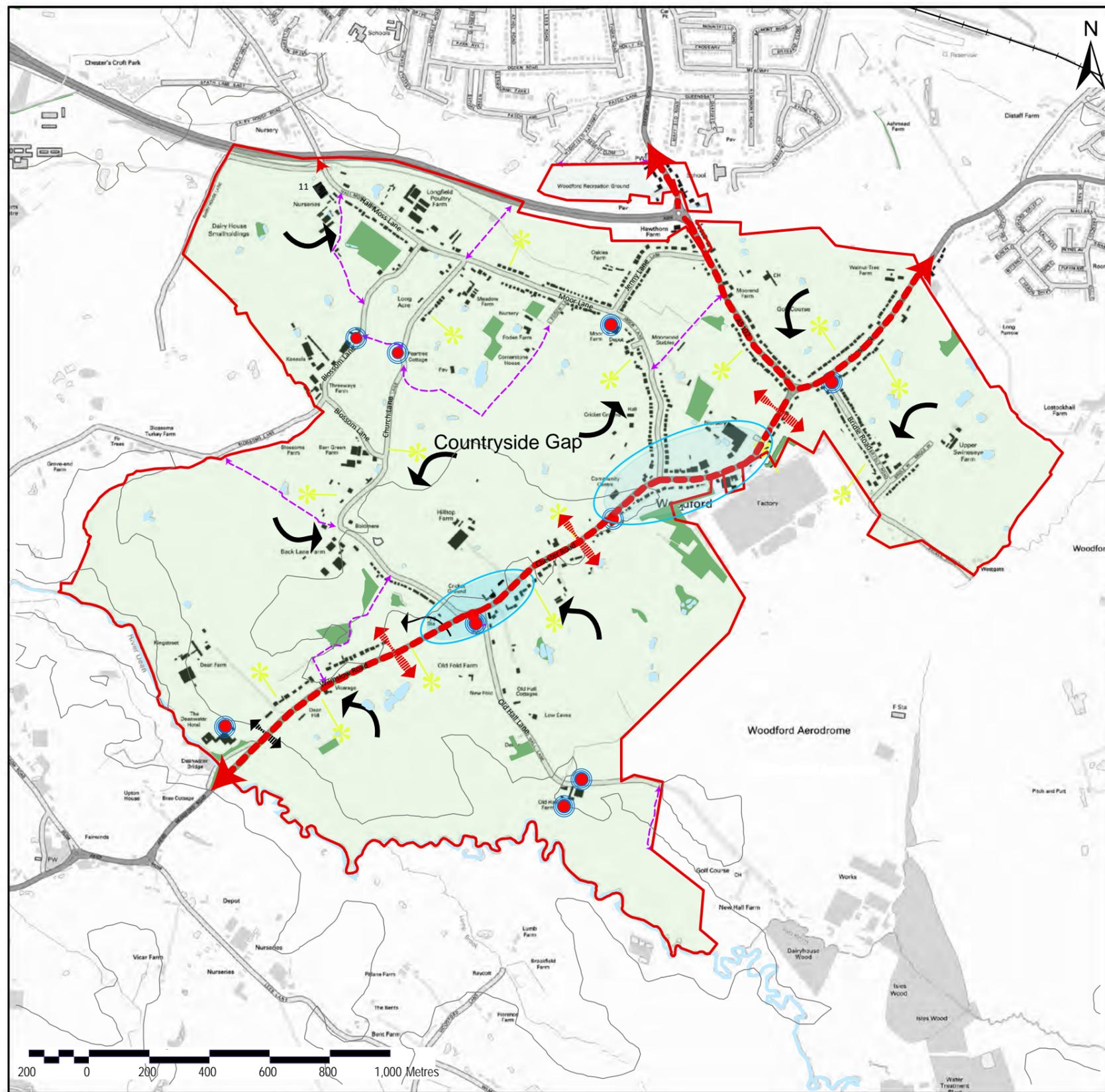
- Woodford Notts Garden Centre
- Parade of Shops
- Flora Cottage Dog Kennels
- Budgens in Woodford Convenience Store
- Woodford Community Centre
- Olivers Restaurant
- Chrome of Woodland Car Show Room
- Davenport Arms Public House
- Woodford Christ Church
- Deanwater Hotel
- Anderton's/ Bramhall Nursery

Listed Building

- Peartree Cottage (NHLE 1241427)
- Number 387 and right hand bay only of Number 385 (NHLE1241499)
- Old Hall Farmhouse (NHLE1241579)
- Barn to north east of Old Hall Farm (NHLE1241580)
- Christ Church (NHLE 1241641)
- Deanwater House, timber framed wing at rear only (NHLE1241642)
- Lychgate at Christ Church (NHLE1260398)
- 475, Chester Road (NHLE1260397)
- Lane Side Farmhouse (NHLE1241493)
- Moor Farm (NHLE1241577)

Figure 3: Key Characteristics

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Legend

Study Area

Movement

Heavily trafficked primary access route

Enhance connections

Public Rights of Way

Views

Retain countryside gap

Open views

Land use

Protect heritage assets and their setting

Focus of activity

Greenbelt

Woodland

Waterbody

Building

Figure 4: Constraints and Opportunities

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