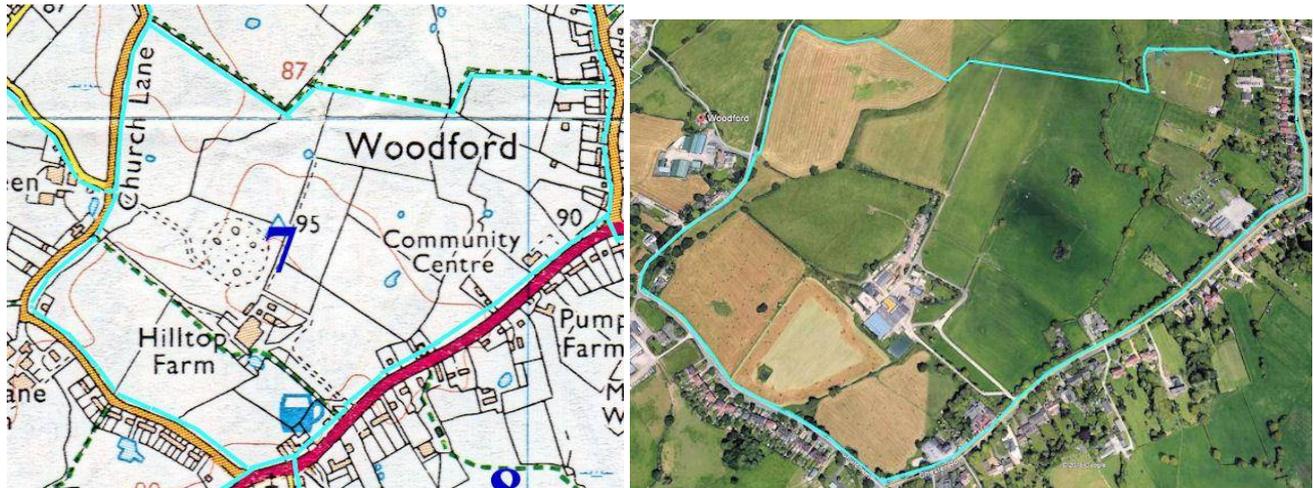


Woodford Landscape and Environment Study

Central Woodford, Area 7 (Surveyed October 2015)

This area is in the centre of the Neighbourhood Area, lying between the southern and central sections of Church Lane, Chester Road, the first part of Moor Lane and footpath 8HGB as shown in OS and satellite images below, bounded by a turquoise line. Footpath 7HGB crosses the area from Church Lane to Chester Road.



Land use

Area 7 includes agricultural land belonging to Barr Green Farm and Hill Top Farm, and recreational land belonging to the Woodford War Memorial Community Centre, Woodford Cricket Club and the Royal British Legion.

The farmland is mostly improved grassland, used for grazing for sheep and cattle and/or for hay, haylage or silage crops in the summer, but also includes some arable land (7F7) which appeared to have been sprayed with a total herbicide at the time of survey in October 2015.

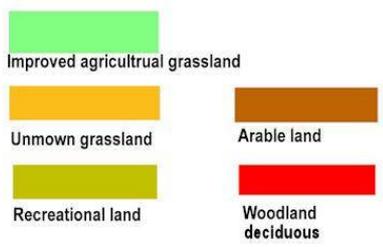
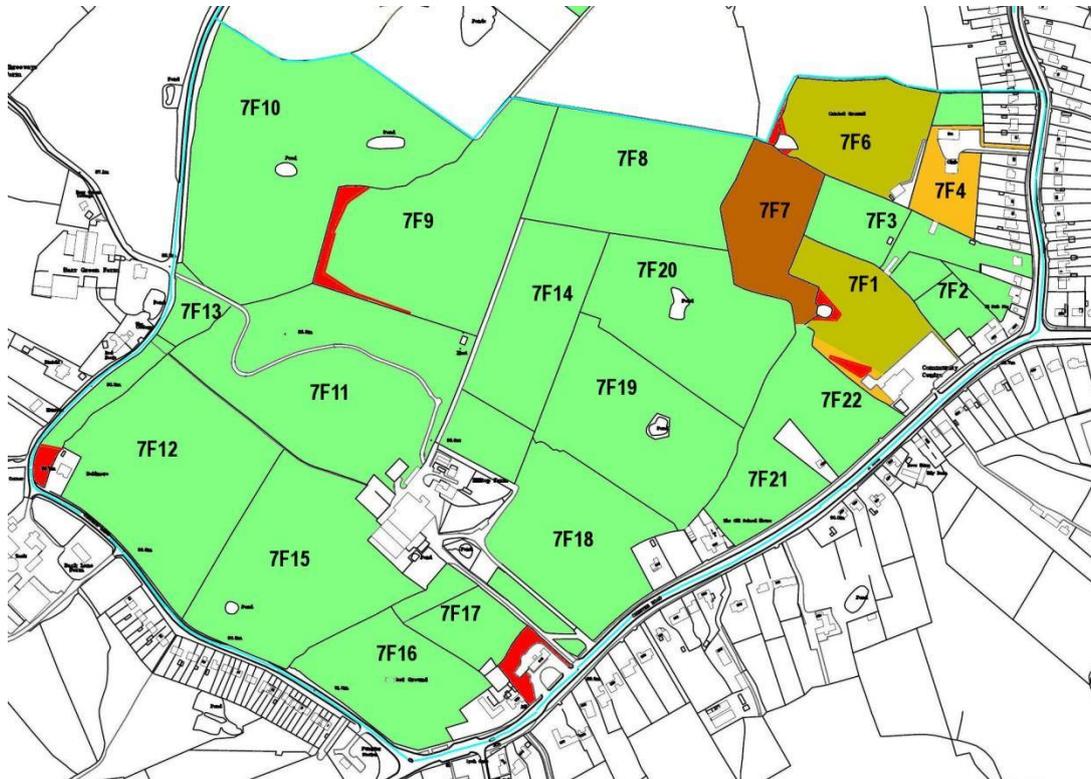
The 4 acre plot (7F1) belonging to Woodford War Memorial Community Centre includes a field of unimproved but regularly mown grassland used for recreation and a seasonal pond within a small area of deciduous native woodland. There is an area of unmown marshy grassland and a small copse of recently planted trees. The plot is bordered by species rich, native hedgerows.

Woodford Cricket Club ground (7F6) falls within this area. The cricket field is regularly mown and is surrounded by species rich native hedgerows. There is a pond surrounded by trees in the western corner.

Property belonging to the Royal British Legion, including a plot of unmown grassland (7F4), and the Scouts are also in Area 7 adjacent to Woodford Cricket Club.

Area 7 is very open with spectacular views of the Pennines from many locations, notably Church Lane, footpaths 7HGB and 8HGB fields 7F9 and 7F10. The high point of Woodford falls into this area and there is a trig point at 95 metres above sea level at Hill Top Farm.

Map showing land use



7F13



7F10 with sheep grazing, 7W1 and Pennines in background



7F9 with cattle grazing, Lyme Park in background



7F7 arable (after crop harvest)



7F10 grass grown for hay in summer



7F1 Woodford Community Centre field



7F1 copse with native saplings and unmown grass



7F6 Woodford Cricket Club



7F4 unmown grass behind Royal British Legion

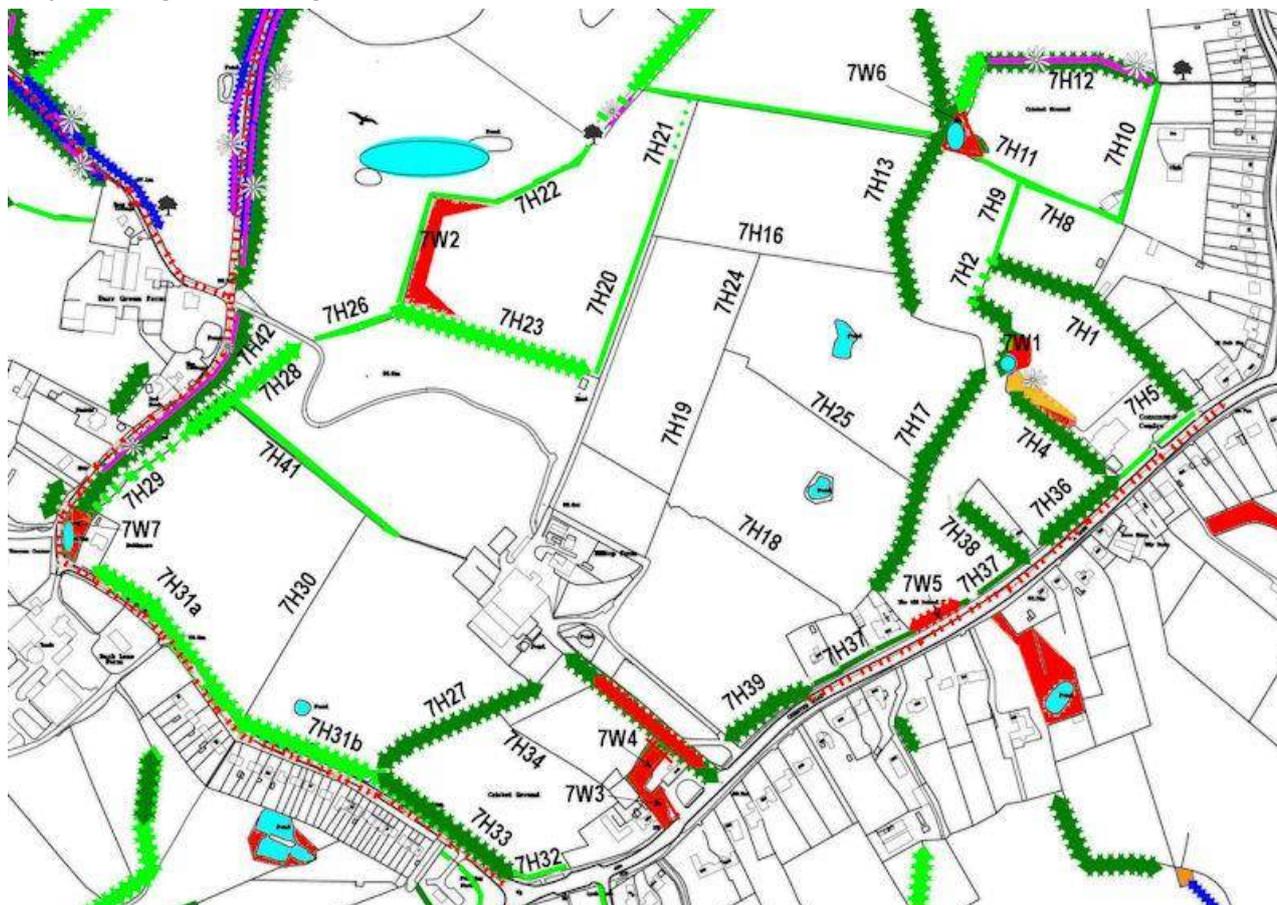


Hedgerows

There are numerous native hedges in Area 7. Some are species poor and predominantly hawthorn. Others are species rich with 4 or more native species per 30 metres as marked on the map. Notably species rich hedgerows with 8 to 10 different species in 30 metres were found at Community Centre field (7H1-3), at

Woodford Cricket Club ground (7H12) and bordering a section of Church Lane opposite Redroofs (7H43). The native species found include ash, blackthorn, briar, elder, hawthorn, hazel, holly, horse chestnut, ivy, maple, oak, rowan, sycamore and willow. Some are trimmed short (1.5 m) but others have been left to grow tall (from 2 - 4 metres). Several field boundaries marked on the OS map at Hill Top Farm were no longer boundaries on the ground.

Map showing native hedgerows and woodland



-  Species rich hedge
-  Species rich hedge with trees.
-  Species poor hedge
-  Species poor hedge with trees
-  Line of trees
-  Native deciduous woodland



Burrow in base of 7H22

Holly, elder, hawthorn, oak in 7H43



7H28



Mature trees

A common feature of the hedgerows and field boundaries is the presence of large trees with abundant oak and some sycamore and ash. As well as providing excellent habitats, these mature trees contribute to the characteristic landscape in Woodford, particularly where they border Church Lane and Chester Road.

7H9 with oak trees



7H31 with oak trees



Typical oak tree in boundary between 7F24 and 7F29



7H42 with mature trees



Woodland

Area 7 contains a few small fragments of native woodland, including small areas at the Community Centre (7W1), the cricket ground, adjacent to Chester Road (7W4 and 7W5) and adjacent to Church Lane (7W7). Species include alder, ash, birch, blackthorn, elder, hawthorn, maple, oak, sycamore, willow and yew. There are two areas of recently planted native woodland. A small copse of saplings (7W3) donated by the Woodland Trust and planted by volunteers on the Community Centre field 7F1, includes hazel, birch, cherry, alder, dogwood and rowan. A larger copse (7W2) on land at Hill Top Farm at the boundary of 7F9 and 7F10 includes ash, alder, birch, elder, and rowan.

7W1 at Community Centre

7W2 at in 7F9 Hill Top Farm



Ponds and ditches

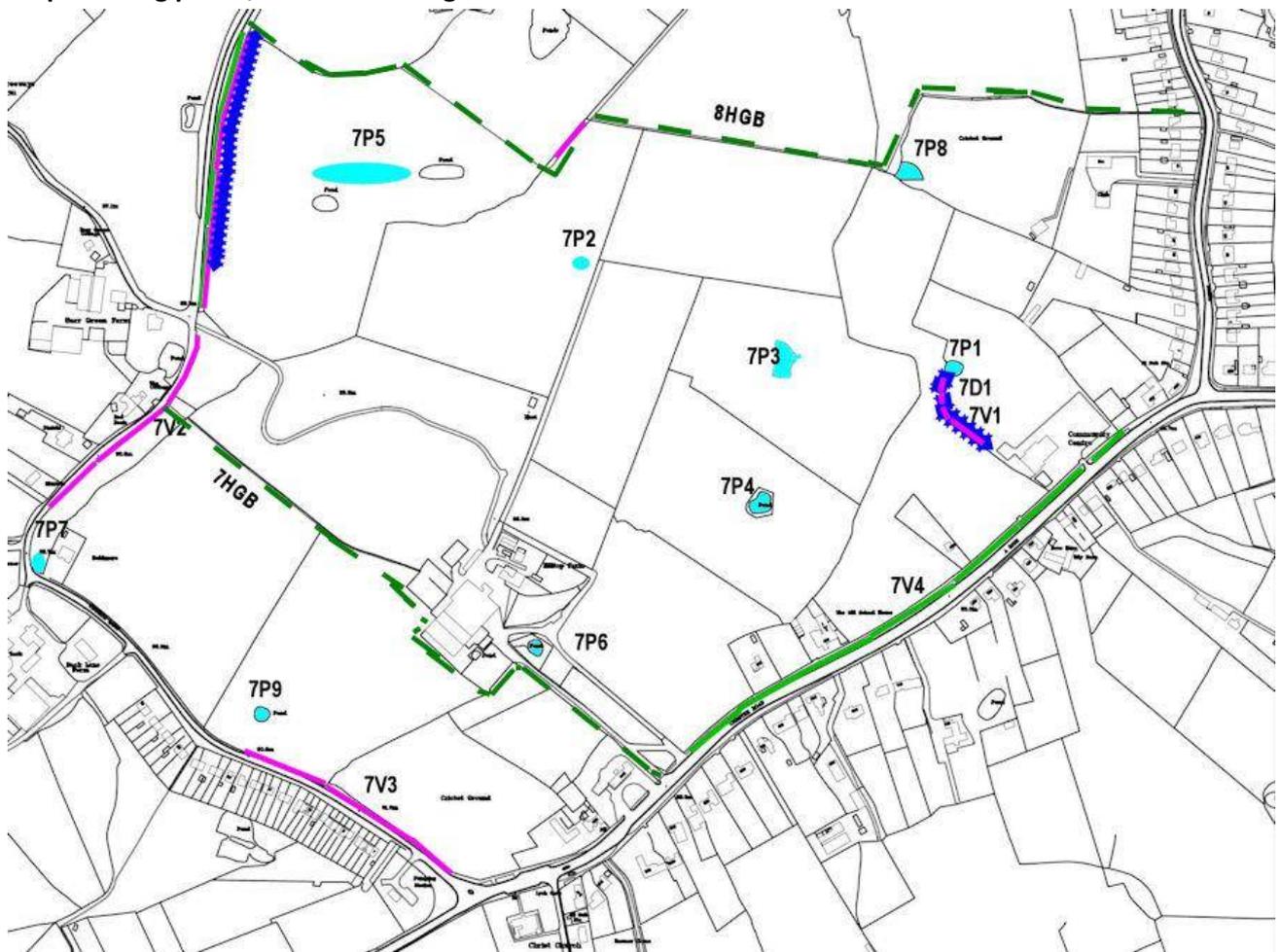
Area 7 has 8 ponds. Two of these are seasonal (7P1 at the back of the Community Centre field and 7P5 in 7F10 in Barr Green Farm) and one was a dry grassy hollow at the time of survey in October (7P6 at Hill Top Farm). All are on a mud substrate.

7P1 is seasonal and in a small area of native woodland (7W1). 7P2 was missing. 7P3 is fenced and surrounded by scrub. 7P4 was not visited. 7P5 is a large seasonal flood in grazed grassland. 7P6 was a dry grassy hollow. 7P7 is a shallow pond overgrown with willow scrub in the corner of 7F12 on a sharp bend in Church Lane. 7P8 is surrounded by mature native trees at the back of Woodford Cricket Club(7F6) adjacent to footpath 8HGB.

The seasonal flood, 7P5, is of particular value for birds and sightings on the flood water or the near vicinity reported on the Manchester Birding Forum by bird watchers over the past two years are shown in the table below (<http://www.manchesterbirding.activeboard.com/t34463332/woodford-area/>).

Black Headed Gull	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Pied Wagtail	Skylark
Blackbird	Greenshank	Little Owl	Pink Footed Goose	Song Thrush
Buzzard	Grey Heron	Little Ringed Plover	Pintail	Sparrowhawk
Canada Geese	Greylag Geese	Magpie	Raven	Starling
Collard Dove	Herring Gull	Mallard	Redshank	Stock Dove
Common Gull	Hobby	Meadow Pipit	Redstart	Swallow
Curlew	House Sparrow	Mistle Thrush	Redwing	Swan
Dunlin	Jackdaw	Oystercatcher	Robin	Teal
Fieldfare	Jay	Peregrine	Rook	Wigeon
Goldfinch	Kestrel	Pheasant	Shelduck	Willow Warbler

Map showing ponds, ditches and verges



Verges, hedge bases and ditches

- Grass verge mown
- Grass verge, hedge base, ditch with wildflowers in summer
- - - Ditches, dry in summer, wet in winter
- Pond

Swans on 7P5



7P5 seasonal flood attracting birds



7P1 seasonal pond in 7W1 at Community Centre



7P7 pond surrounded by willow scrub



7P3 fenced off in field 7F20



A deep ditch runs along the southern boundary of 7F1 (community centre field) leading to pond 7P1 which flows out into a drain in 7F7. The ditch is water filled in winter but dry in summer with wild-flowers in summer, including red campion, stitchwort, meadow sweet, ladies smock and foxgloves.

Grass verges and field boundaries

The wide grass verges along Chester Road with an overhanging canopy of Chestnut trees are a notable feature of the built landscape. These trees have recently been found by an SMBC arboriculture expert to be affected by Chestnut canker disease but treatment may be possible. SMBC have offered replacement with other native species planted in the grass verge in the event of loss. The grass verges are mown by SMBC. They are likely to be unsuitable for wildflowers due the presence of perennial weeds, as was seen when they were left unmown for a period of several weeks during the spring of 2015 resulting in large numbers of dandelions going up to seed.

There is a grass verge at the southern end of Church Lane with some native wild flowers in the spring and summer. Unfortunately, garden escapes such as the Spanish bluebell also proliferate here.

Wide grass verge in Chester Road



Hedge and verge southern end of Church Lane



Stand-alone trees

These are very rare in Area 7. Most of the large trees are to be found in hedgerows and field boundaries.



Some of the larger trees have been given a number and marked on the satellite image. All those labelled are oaks, apart from S11 and S12 which are ash and sycamore, respectively. One notable old oak tree with a TPO grows beside the board walk section of footpath 8HGB near to Moor Lane (7S14).

There are two stumps of felled trees in Area 7. In one of these, the annual rings are clearly visible. Age can be calculated as there is one ring per year of growth. There are approx. 200 rings giving an age of 200 years. There are many living trees with similar or greater circumference in the area indicating that they are at least this age or older

7S7 Large oak at Cricket Club



7S1 Large oak in 7F9



7S3 in boundary between 7F10 and 7F11



7S9 in 7H43



Cut down tree in fence around 7F14



Close-up of annual rings in tree stump



Invasive or undesirable species

- Spanish bluebell (invasive) in the grass verge 7V3 at the southern end of Church Lane.
- Snowberry (poisonous) found in 7H11.
- Ragwort (poisonous to horses) is quite common.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

The map below is taken from the Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council website and shows TPOs as green dots (7S14, very old oak tree in board walk section of footpath 8HGB near Moor Lane) and Tree Preservation Area Orders (7W4, copse behind the car sales forecourt on Chester Road) as green blocks.



7S14 (very old oak tree) by footpath 8HGB

History and character

Area 7 has a low density of housing development. It comprises mostly agricultural and amenity land, bounded to the south by the main A5102, Chester Road, to the west by central and southern sections of Church Lane and to the north by the first part of Moor Lane from its junction with Chester Road to the start of footpath 8HGB.

Chester Road is fairly wide in this location with wide grass verges on the western side and trees on both sides. While the linear development of large detached houses is almost continuous along the eastern side (Area 8), there are wide gaps between building on the western side (Area 7), providing views of the fields belonging to Hill Top Farm in the centre of Woodford. Large horse chestnut trees which overhang the grass verge from the field boundary are a notable feature in this area, particularly appreciated when in autumn hue and providing an excellent supply of conkers for children.

Chester Road in the autumn



Moor Lane, southern end



Southern end of Church Lane, housing



Southern end of Church Lane, open views



The central and southern sections of Church Lane are narrow with no buildings on the northern or eastern sides, allowing unobstructed views over farmland and to the Pennines beyond. There is linear development of housing on the southern and western side, including detached, semi-detached houses and short terraces of 4 or 6 houses.



The semis and terraces were built around 1927 by Macclesfield Rural District Council and a 'foundation stone' was laid after the first four were built. No 4 was purchased from the Urban District of Hazel Grove and Bramhall in 1955 for £767.

The southern end of Moor Lane has linear housing development comprising a mixture of detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows with leafy gardens on both sides of the road.

Woodford could be regarded as having two centres, about half a mile apart along Chester Road: a social centre, described below, and a commercial centre (described in the sections on Areas 3 and 8), which includes Budgeons store, Nottcutts Garden Centre, the row of shops opposite and the entrance to the new Redrow housing estate on the former aerodrome site. The effect of the new housing estate on the culture and dynamics of Woodford are yet to be discovered as new residents move in.

Area 7 includes the Woodford War Memorial Community Centre, Woodford Cricket Club, the Royal British Legion, the Scout Hut and the Davenport Arms, with the Church opposite in Area 9, and so it could be argued that it is the social centre as well as the geographical centre of Woodford.

Woodford Community Centre, Chester Road



Woodford Cricket Club, off Moor Lane



The Scout Hut off Moor Lane



Royal British Legion premises off Moor Lane



The early history of some of these organisations is recorded by the WI in a Scrapbook of Woodford 1950 - 1953 and the Rose Queen Souvenir programme 1989. The WI noted that they had found a quote dated 1895, stating that Woodford Cricket Club had formed in “the quiet, out of the way village” and that they played on a field opposite the Church until 1935.

Around that time, there was a Recreation Club which held an annual sports day and vegetable show. In 1939 they held a Gala Day starting the tradition of a Rose Queen in Woodford which began with a procession and ended with a dance in Woodford School.

The Woodford Branch of the Royal British Legion was formed in 1921. A plot of land off Moor Lane was purchased in 1936 and a temporary building was officially opened in 1948. At the time of writing the scrapbook there were hopes to develop the land for bowling and tennis.

In 1945, a meeting of residents held in Woodford School decided to raise funds for a war memorial building, which could be used for social and educational activities. In 1953, the War Memorial Community Centre was officially opened and in 1965 it was transferred into the custodianship of the Charity Commission. The Centre is home to the Woodford Players and to the Woodford branch of the WI. With two halls, a kitchen and a large field, it continues to this day to be well-loved, and well-used by residents and neighbours.

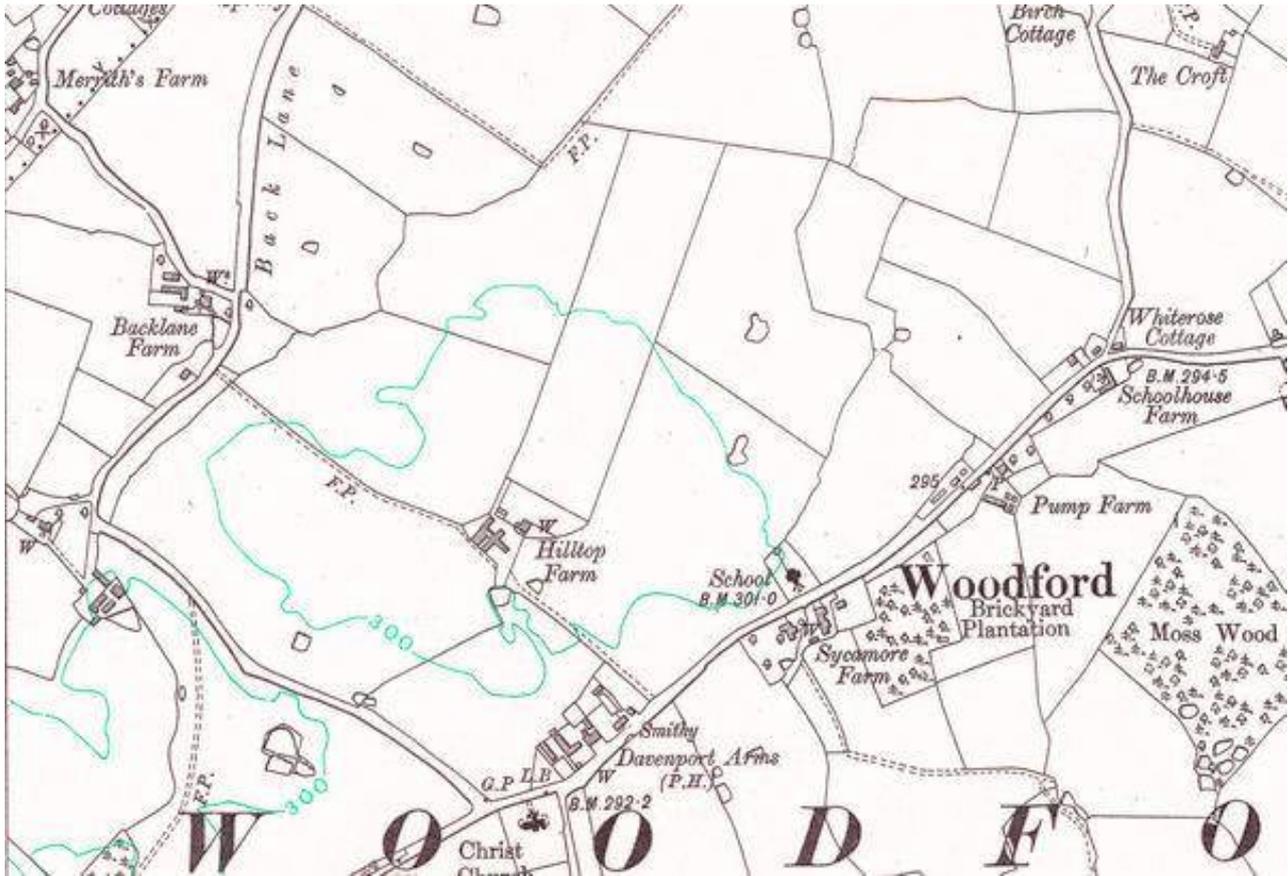
The village school was opened in 1847 as a Church of England school. It was built in Elizabethan style, funded by public subscription and the efforts of the Bromley Davenport family and Lord Stamford. The council took over the running of the school in 1953 until it closed in 1983, re-opening as a private school in 1985, until that too closed in the late 1990s. The buildings were subsequently converted into dwellings.

Hill Top Farm has a long history in Woodford as can be seen from the old maps below. It has been owned by members of the same family for many years. It was a dairy farm until this became uneconomic and is now a mixed farm. The land includes the highest point in Woodford (95 m), marked by a trig point and bearing a mobile phone mast. From footpath 7HGB, which runs from Church Lane to Chester Road, far reaching views of the Pennine hills in Cheshire and Derbyshire can be enjoyed. Together with land belonging to Barr Green Farm, it constitutes the green heart of Woodford.

OS map from 1871



OS map from 1907



The green heart of Woodford:

Highest point, on Hill Top Farm



Misty fields in Barr Green and Hill Top Farms



The Davenport Arms is a key part of the character and history of Woodford. According to the Rose Queen Souvenir Programme 1989, it was originally a thatched building, serving home brewed beer, opposite the lych gate of the Church, and was destroyed by fire. The current building is thought to be the third one on this site and retains much of its old-world charm. Members of the Hallworth family have been landlords since 1932.

Hill Top Farm from Church Lane

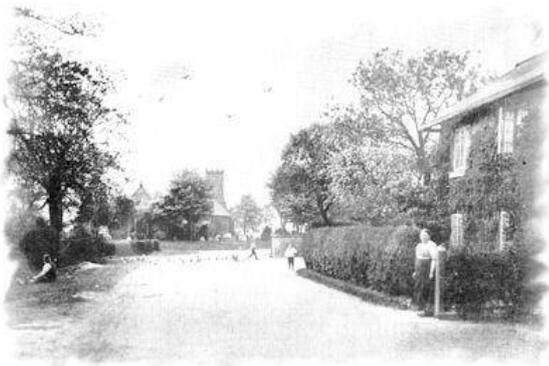


The Davenport Arms (Thief's Neck)



A blacksmith's shop on Chester Road, near the junction with Church Lane, appears in 19th century photographs of Woodford. A subsequent owner installed petrol pumps and the cottage was eventually replaced by an Esso garage which was enlarged to include a shopping area in 1988. Since the garage closed in the 1990s, the forecourt has been used for car sales.

Chester Road circa 1895



The Smithy, Chester Road circa 1930



Past and present photographs of Chester Road illustrate the profound changes in the nature of this part of the village, from a country lane where chickens could roam and children could play safely in 1895, to the wide, busy main road of 2016.

Chester Road in 2016



Traffic on Chester Road

