

Ms Jane Chase
Planning Officer
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

28th January 2020

Dear Ms Chase

Reference: DC/075517

Proposal: New dwelling adjacent to the existing property

Location: 443 Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, SK7 1QP

The Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee has assessed this application against relevant planning policies.

1. Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

We are pleased to see that the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) is acknowledged in the Design and Access Statement. WNP is part of the Development Plan for Stockport Council Plan and is now the most relevant, local and up to date part of the Development Plan for this area and the designated Woodford Forum area.

We have assessed the proposals against the policies in the WNP and find that some are relevant as follows:

1.1.WNP ENV4: Supporting biodiversity

“The conservation, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity, including that found in open spaces, trees and hedgerows, in order to promote and support wildlife and other forms of biodiversity will be supported. Development should, where viable and deliverable, achieve net gains in biodiversity.”

Assessment: The Design and Access Statement states that the site of the proposed new dwelling is in a garden, on an area currently occupied by sheds and a greenhouse. A current garden area is to be retained and new beds introduced. The WNP recognises the importance of maintaining and enhancing areas of vegetation to off-set the effects of climate change on the environment. Landscaping of the garden area should aim to enhance biodiversity, using native species and species which feed pollinators as much as possible.

1.2. WNP policy DEV1: Limited infilling

“Limited infilling in the Neighbourhood Area, comprising the development of a relatively small gap between existing dwellings for one or two dwellings, will not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, subject to such development respecting local character. Limited infilling should comprise the completion of an otherwise continuous and largely uninterrupted built frontage of several dwellings visible within the street scene where the scale of development is compatible in character to that of adjoining properties. Limited infilling should be built along similar building lines as adjoining properties.”

Assessment: This proposal does not comprise the development of a relatively small gap between existing dwellings. The site represents the end of the housing line on Chester Road adjacent to a road access into the Redrow Estate. See Figures 1 to 3 in the Appendix. Therefore, the proposal contravenes WNP DEV1.

1.3. WNP DEV4: Design of new development

“All new development in Woodford Neighbourhood Area should achieve a high standard of design. New residential development proposals should demonstrate how they respect and respond to the Neighbourhood Area’s rural character, to its ecology and to its landscape. Where appropriate and viable, the development of sustainable drainage systems, the retention and enhancement of landscape, wildlife and ecological networks and the achievement of high environmental and energy standards will be supported.”

Assessment: The Design and Access Statement states that the proposal “seeks to reflect its neighbour with regards to style, built generally of brick with a dark slate roof, with some render to highlight the entrance. It will however be built to modern high standards of insulation, use existing access.” This is welcomed. However, should a new dwelling be permitted, an assessment needs to be made as to whether the gap between the existing building and the proposed building is similar to those in the existing line to ensure that it is keeping street scene in that location and does not result in a cramming effect. See Figure 3 in the Appendix.

The WNP included the following notes:

“Further to consultation with the Environment Agency, the Neighbourhood Forum would like to see new development being designed to maximise the retention of surface water on the development site and measures to minimise runoff; for surface water drainage to be considered in liaison with the Local Lead Flood Agency, the public sewerage undertaker and the Environment Agency; and for surface water to be discharged in the following order of priority:

- An adequate soakaway or some other form of infiltration system.
- An attenuated discharge to watercourse or other water body.
- An attenuated discharge to public surface water sewer.
- An attenuated discharge to public combined sewer”

2. Stockport Unitary Development Plan 2006 and Core Strategy

The Design and Access Statement does not include an assessment of the proposal against individual policies in the Stockport UDP or Core Strategy. There is no assessment of sustainability, access and energy use. We leave it to SMBC planning officers to address these issues, but we have identified the following policies are among those that are relevant:

2.1. GBA1.2 presumes against the construction of any new buildings in the Green Belt unless the proposal lies within a list of four exceptions set out in Government guidance

Assessment: The proposed development does not meet the criteria of any of the four exceptions.
The proposal is in conflict with Stockport UDP GBA1.2.

2.4. GBA1.5 states that residential development in the Green Belt will be restricted to agricultural dwellings, re-use of buildings, limited infilling or redevelopment of Major Existing Developed Sites.

Assessment: The proposed development does not fall within any of those exceptions.

The proposal is in conflict with Stockport UDP GBA1.5.

2.5. CS1 Sustainable development including SD-1: Creating Sustainable Communities

2.6. CS9 Transport and development

2.7. CS2 Housing provision

2.8. CS3 Mix of housing

2.9. CS4 Distribution of housing Including H-1 Design of residential development

2.10. CS8 Safeguarding and improving the environment

2.11. CS8 SIE-1: Quality Places

2.12. Design of Residential Development SPD paras 8.8 to 8.10

Assessment: The potential for a cramming effect needs to be assessed.

3. NPPF (2019)

3.1. NPPF Paragraph 145

“A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”

Assessment: The proposal does not meet any of the criteria listed in the NPPF as exceptions for the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt.

- It is not infill – it a new dwelling on the end of a line of houses which finishes at a road.
- It is not previously developed land – it is in a garden of an existing dwelling.
- It is a separate dwelling and not an extension

- It will have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development because it would replace space that is currently a garden, which is adjacent to an open road

Therefore the proposal is in conflict with the NPPF paragraph 145.

With regard to openness of the Green Belt we recognise that, each site is unique and this particular site has the Redrow Estate behind it, which impacts on the openness of the Green Belt and the street scene. The current view from the Chester Road at the site is the garden and the roads and on the Redrow Estate. The proposal will require a careful assessment of the impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

We have noted the decision on the definition of infill in an appeal against the refusal of planning permission for a single dwelling in the Greater Manchester green belt in 2018. The Inspector considered that the reference to 'limited' in the NPPF (now paragraph 145e) requires a consideration of both the scale and form of the development and has to be interpreted in the context of the overall aim of green belt policy, which is to preserve the openness of the green belt. This implies minimising the loss of significant open gaps between buildings, he determined (see Appendix item 2 for more details).

Summary

We feel that this proposal contravenes WNP, SMBC and NPPF policies regarding permitted development in Green Belt. We believe that it is important to be consistent in the application of policy principles and to avoid setting precedent that can be used in other cases. However, we also feel that Green Belt policy is not really designed to be used for a situation like this.

The decision will require careful assessment of the balance between contravention of policy and any benefits the proposal brings at this unusual location.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. M. Frearson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Evelyn Frearson
On behalf of the WNF Management Committee

Appendix

1. Site setting

Figure 1: 443 Chester Road, front view of site from Chester Road



Figure 2: 443 Chester Road side view, including access road into Redrow Estate



Figure 3: Chester Road housing line



2. Limited infilling

A useful decision on the meaning of ‘limited infilling’ can be found in the decision relating to an appeal against the refusal of planning permission for a single dwelling in the Greater Manchester green belt in 2018

The inspector recorded that there was no evidence before him of a definition of ‘limited infilling’ or ‘villages’ contained within the Development Plan or the Framework, or indeed its glossary. He considered that “infilling” implies the development of a site that is between existing buildings. In respect of the plot itself, he observed that it sat between two residential properties on similar sized plots, which formed part of a wider established built form. He therefore considered that the proposal did constitute infilling in a village. In reaching this conclusion, he had regard to *Julian Wood v SSCLG, Gravesham Borough Council* [2015].

The inspector reasoned that the crux of the matter was whether the proposal was limited infilling in a village. He noted the appellant’s argument that the reference to limited was only concerned with the size of the plot, and he agreed that in his experience, infill proposals are typically only concerned with the size of the plot, not the size of the dwelling. However, he considered that the reference to ‘limited’ in the fifth bullet of paragraph 89* of the Framework requires a consideration of both the scale and form of the development and has to be interpreted in the context of the overall aim of green

belt policy, which is to preserve the openness of the green belt. This implies minimising the loss of significant open gaps between buildings, he determined.

The proposed dwelling, however, would extend almost the full width of the plot. Due to its significant width, the inspector held that the dwelling would fail to reflect the generous spacing of the neighbouring properties. Therefore, he found that the dwelling would be in excess of what would be a reasonable definition of limited infilling.

*In the latest NPPF this is Para 145 e).