

Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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Planning Services
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Edward Street
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To: Planning Officer

Reference: DC/084618

Proposal: Erection of two detached dwellings with associated access and landscaping

Location: Bridle Road, Woodford, Stockport

1. General Comments

- The site of the proposal is in Green Belt.
- The proposal does not comply with policies in the NPPF concerning development in Green Belt. See section 5.
- The proposal will cause significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt at this location, which should be given significant weight. See Appendix and section 5.
- As we know, the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt with exceptions listed in NPPF paragraph 149. This proposal does not meet the criteria for any of those exceptions. See section 5.
- The Planning Statement submitted with the proposal is contradictory with regard to limited infilling in a village in Green Belt. The site is either within the village settlement, in which case limited infilling in a village can be considered, or it is outside the village settlement, in which case limited infilling is not one of the exceptions that can be considered.
- In paragraphs 3.4 to 3.15, the Planning Statement concludes that the proposal meets the criteria for limited infilling in a village. If this part of Woodford is regarded as part of the village settlement, then limited infilling would be a factor to consider. We believe that this proposal does not meet the criteria for limited infilling in a village in Green Belt, as described in WNP DEV1. See Appendix Figs 1 to 9 and section 2.
- In paragraph 3.16, the Planning Statement goes on to argue, that the site of the proposal is “located within Woodford however is outside of any defined settlement boundary”. If this part of Woodford is regarded as outside of the village settlement, then limited infilling in a village does not apply and the proposed new buildings are therefore inappropriate because they meet none of the other exceptions for development in Green Belt.
- We note the case of DC/076613 Proposal for infill on Land off Church Lane, which went to Appeal (Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/W/21/3268543). The Inspector noted that, while there was some merit in the argument for inclusion of the south side of Church Lane in the village, this did not mean that the same principle would necessarily apply to the other side. In paragraph 15 of the Appeal Decision, the Inspector concluded that “There are very few buildings at all on the north side, and those which are there are dispersed in a way which is not characteristic of the built-up parts of Woodford.” “I therefore find that, for the purposes of applying national Green Belt policy, the appeal site is not within a village.” We believe that this case has similarities to the Bridle Road proposal DC/084618, which is the subject of this response.

- We believe that very special circumstances have not been demonstrated which outweigh the harm that would be caused by this proposed development.
- There are more than enough new houses of this size already built and occupied with more due to be built under the current planning permission in the Redrow development on the former aerodrome site.
- This area of Woodford is very sensitive to change.
- We are disappointed to note that a species rich, native hedge with mature trees on the border between the site and Bridle Road has been cut down recently. The Woodford Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect such features. See Appendix figures 3 to 6.
- The proposal would harm the character of a tranquil rural lane and public right of way that are treasured assets to residents in Woodford. See Appendix figures 3 to 10.
- The fields at this site, with access via a Public Right of Way, are an important part of the rural character of Woodford that the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect.
- Residents are concerned about the risk of development creep into the fields behind Bridle Way, should this proposal be given permission.
- If permission is granted, we request that conditions are attached for the construction phase to cover parking of construction vehicles, hours of working and road cleaning, in order to reduce inconvenience to neighbours.

2. Policies relevant to the application

We believe that planning policies relevant to this application include:

- NPPF 2021
- Stockport Development Plan:
 - o Woodford Neighbourhood Plan 2019
 - o Saved UDP 2011
 - o Core Strategy 2011

3. Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

We believe the following WNP policies are relevant:

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

The proposal does not comply with this policy because it does not comprise the completion of an otherwise continuous and largely uninterrupted built frontage of several dwellings visible within the street scene. The site is located after a right angle bend in Bridle Road. This section of the road is largely open and undeveloped with only two properties located on same side as the proposal, namely Holm Lea and Westgate (the caravan site). The gap from the end of the garden of numbers 67 and 69 Bridle Road to Holm Lea is 65 metres, but there is then a very large gap from Holm Lea to the next dwelling (Westgate, the bungalow at the caravan

site) of over a quarter of a kilometre (263 metres). This is not a largely uninterrupted built frontage of several dwellings. See Appendix figures 1 to 9.

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 proposal appears to be well designed, but much harm has already been caused to the character, ecology and landscape by the recent removal of trees and a hedgerow See Appendix figures 3 to 6. [Greater Manchester Combined Authority has declared a Biodiversity Emergency](#). Should permission be granted, significant mitigation will be needed in order to respond to the emergency and ensure that the proposals meets DEV4 by responding to the rural character of the area enhancing the landscape, wildlife and ecological networks in this sensitive part of Woodford.

ENV3: Protecting Woodford's natural features

"The protection and/or enhancement of Woodford's natural features, including those identified in the Table below, will be supported."

Assessment

We are disappointed to note that the trees and hedgerow on the border between the site and Bridle Road have been cut down recently. See Appendix figures 3 to 6. This was hedge was recorded as 1H1, a species rich hedgerow with trees, in the [Woodford Landscape and Environment Report](#) (see pages 19 to 20), so it is a significant loss to the environment and the landscape character of the area.

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

There has already been a loss to biodiversity at this site due to the recent removal of a species rich hedge and mature trees. See Appendix figures 3 to 6. [Greater Manchester Combined Authority has declared a Biodiversity Emergency](#). Should permission be granted, significant mitigation will be needed in order to respond to the emergency and ensure that the proposals meets ENV4 by achieving net gains in biodiversity.

4. Stockport Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and Core Strategy

We leave it to the Stockport Planning Officers to assess this application against the relevant policies in the UDP and Core Strategy, but believe the following may be relevant.

Stockport Saved UDP policies

We believe that the proposal does not comply with the following policies:

GBA1.1, which includes Woodford in the extent of the Green Belt.

GBA1.2, GBA1.5, GBA1.6 and GBA1.7, which list criteria for the control of development within Green Belt.

Policy GBA1.2: Control of Development in the Green Belt, sets out the presumption against construction of new buildings unless the development is for a number of purposes, none of which includes the construction of two new large residential properties in the Green Belt. The supporting explanation to policy GBA1.2 is confirmed at 6.16, which clearly states that “new residential infill will not be permitted in the Green Belt.”

Furthermore, policy GBA 1.5: Residential development in the Green Belt confirms that any new development is restricted to only three named categories, all of which are named and none of which are for any residential use.

LCR1.1, which does not permit development in the countryside unless it protects or enhances the quality and character of the rural area.

5. NPPF (2021)

The site is in Green Belt, therefore paragraphs relating to development in Green Belt are relevant, including:

Paragraph 138, which seeks to assist in prevention of encroachment into the countryside.

Assessment

The site is currently an agricultural field and part of a network of fields in the countryside around Woodford. The proposal represents substantial encroachment into the countryside.

Paragraph 147, which seeks to prevent harm to the Green Belt.

Assessment

The proposal would harm the openness of the Green Belt.

Paragraph 148, which advises Planning Authorities to give substantial weight to any harm caused to the Green Belt and notes that special circumstances only exist where any harm is outweighed by other circumstances.

Assessment

Significant weight should be given to the harm caused to the Green Belt which we believe is not outweighed by any exceptional circumstances.

Paragraph 149, which lists the criteria for exceptions to inappropriate development in Green Belt.

Assessment

The proposal does not meet any of the criteria listed for exceptions to inappropriate development in Green Belt.

6. Summary

We believe that planning permission should be refused because the proposal fails to comply with the NPPF and is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is contrary to policies in the Stockport Development Plan, including the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan. The proposal will cause harm to the Green Belt which outweighs any exceptional circumstances. It would harm the character of a tranquil, rural lane and Public Right of Way that are treasured assets to residents in Woodford and visitors from the wider area.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of E. M. Frearson in black ink.

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee

Appendix

Fig 1: Satellite image of the site showing openness of Bridle Road on the north east side



Fig 2: Satellite image of the site showing openness of Bridle Road on the north east side



Fig 3: Looking down Bridle Road by the site, with hedge 1H1 and trees on the left before they were cut down



Fig 4: The same location with hedge 1H1 and trees cut down. Photo taken 2 April 2022



Fig 5: Looking up Bridle Road by the site, with hedge 1H1 and trees on the right before they were cut down. Stile in bottom right is the start of footpath 101HGB



Fig 6: Same location with hedge 1H1 and trees cut down. Photo taken 2 April 2022



Fig 7: Site of proposal DC/084618 looking towards Holm Lea and the caravan site beyond, showing openness of the site and sparse dwellings, 2 April 2022



Fig 8: Character of Bridle Road beyond Holm Lea, April 2022



Fig 9: Character of Bridle Road beyond Holm Lea in summer



Fig 10: Open countryside around footpath 101HGB, which leads across fields from Bridle Road near the proposed site

