

Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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Planning Services
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

28th November 2022

To: Planning Officer

Reference: DC/083007

Proposal: Demolition of the existing buildings and erection of a single dwelling with access from Chester Road (outlined application with only landscaping reserved for future consideration)

Location: Land To Rear Of 409 Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, SK7 1QP

I have received a planning application for the above location, and I am writing to you to seek your comments in connection with this application.

1. General Comments

- a) The site lies in Green Belt in an area of land lying between ribbon development on Chester Road and Woodford Garden Village.
- b) All the buildings present that are described in the document submitted with the application are associated with agricultural, small holding or gardening activities.
- c) Satellite imagery reveals a mixture of sheds and pens, which may not be aesthetically pleasing. Development of a dwelling may improve the ambience and aesthetics.
- d) The supportive planning statement suggests that the proposal can be regarded as infill on previously developed land, but we believe from the information available that the temporary buildings described do not constitute previously developed land as described in the NPPF
- e) We believe that the proposal may be more correctly described as backland development behind the line of housing on Chester Road (see section 4). It does not meet the criteria for infill as set out in WNP DEV1.
- f) The planning statement suggests that the site is now surrounded by development and no longer serves all of the purposes of Green Belt policy. We are sympathetic with this point of view in some respects, but its role as a buffer of open space between dwellings on Chester Road and Woodford Garden Village should be assessed on site by the Stockport Council planning officer
- g) Parts of paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021) are selectively quoted on page 5 of the planning statement. We have provided a full quote of NPPF paragraph 149 in section 5.
- h) The access drive is very narrow (see Fig 3 in section 7) and would need assessing for safety by a Stockport Council Highways officer

2. Policies relevant to this application

We believe that planning policies relevant to this application include:

- NPPF 2021
- Stockport Development Plan:
 - o Woodford Neighbourhood Plan 2019
 - o Saved UDP 2006-2011
 - o Core Strategy 2011

3. Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

WNP does not include policies relating to replacement of temporary buildings on Green Belt land with a dwelling, or backland development. The proposal can be assessed against the following policies:

WNP DEV1: Limited Infilling

The proposal does not comprise the completion of an otherwise continuous and largely uninterrupted built frontage of several dwellings visible within the street scene, because it lies behind the built frontage and is not visible from the street scene. It is not relevant to assess it against this policy

WNP DEV4: Design of new development

The proposal appears to be an acceptable, modern design. If the proposal is granted planning permission, we welcome the proposals in the planning statement to construct the dwelling to “the highest environmental standards possible to minimise its impact on the environment”.

WNP ENV3: Protecting Woodford’s natural features

If the proposal is granted planning permission, any native trees and hedges on the site should be protected where possible for their environmental and aesthetic benefits and to retain screening for neighbours.

WNP ENV4: Supporting biodiversity

If the proposal is granted planning permission, the proposals to “enhance the biodiversity of the site through additional native planting and the provision of bird and bat boxes on sites on site” are welcomed. Inclusion of native flowering species which support pollinator insect species would also be welcomed.

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

We believe the following are relevant.

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.

Policy GBA 1.5: Residential development in the Green Belt confirms that any new development is restricted to:

- dwellings essential for the purposes of agriculture;
- re-use of buildings as provided for by Policy GBA1.6; and
- development which meets the requirements of Policy GBA1.7 “Major Existing Developed Sites in the Green Belt.

Assessment: the proposal does not meet any of the criteria set out in these policies, but the Planning Statement presents the argument that some of the purposes of Green Belt have been lost in this location, which is now surrounded by development due the arrival of Woodford Garden Village.

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

Assessment: This site no longer constitutes part of countryside and this location in Woodford can no longer be regarded as rural.

Design of Residential Development SPD, which states that “Backland development refers to the development of land to the rear of properties or the redevelopment of long back gardens”

Paras 8.5 to 8.10 outline the potential problems associated with backland development.

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 cannot be classed as countryside.

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

Assessment

The proposal may harm the openness of a small area of 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

A planning judgement is to be made here.

149. 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 planning statement submitted with the application quotes only part of NPPF Paragraph 149. The paragraph is quoted in full above. The proposal does not meet any of the exceptions to inappropriate development in Green Belt, so a judgement on special circumstances will be need. to be made by the Stockport planning officer.

6. Summary

The proposal is contrary to Green Belt policy set out in the NPPF 2021 and in the Stockport Development Plan. However, the planning statement presents the argument that this site no longer contributes to all the main purposes of Green Belt. The proposal appears well-designed and we welcome the aspiration to contribute to biodiversity, provided that it is fulfilled. The safety of the very narrow access will need to be assessed, as will any impact on residential amenity due to loss of openness. This proposal does not comply with national policy or the development plan, but the Stockport planning officers will need to make a judgement on whether the benefits may outweigh the harm to the Green Belt in this instance.

7. Images Fig 1-3

Next page.

Fig 1: Satellite image showing the location of the site.



Fig 2: Satellite image showing the sheds and pens on the site and the access drive



Fig 3: Access driveway at Chester Road.



Yours sincerely,

E. M. Frearson

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee