

Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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

27th November 2022

To: Planning Officer

Reference: DC/087000

Proposal: Erection of 1 dwelling.

Location: 34 Church Lane, Woodford, Stockport, Stockport, SK7 1RQ

1. General Comments

- a) The site should be described on the website as land adjacent to 34 Church Lane. The applicant lives at 34 Church Lane and the application site is in a field adjacent to his dwelling.
- b) The planning application form has a number of errors. We have highlighted some of these in the attached application form and in section 2 below. We sent an enquiry to the planning officers via email on 9th November 2022, asking whether it would be withdrawn due to the errors. We have received no response and we note that the application is still on the website. Therefore, we are submitting this response.
- c) The site has Green Belt status, so Green Belt policies apply, but the planning application is not accompanied by any justification for a dwelling to be located on this site.
- d) As with other recent infill applications in Woodford, this proposal raises the question of where the settlement boundary of Woodford lies. This part of Woodford could be regarded as outside of the settlement boundary, in which case can limited infill in a village be considered? For the purposes of this response we have assumed that limited infilling in a village applies and assessed it against the appropriate policies in the NPPF and the Stockport Development Plan, with particular focus on WNP DEV1.

2. Errors in the planning application

- a) Under Applicant Details the address is incorrectly given as “*Church Lane, Woodford, Tehran*”
- b) Under Description “*It is proposed to construct a driveway in front of the proposed house to accommodate forecourt parking for 2 cars.*”
“*Layout: the proposed house would be positioned beyond the proposed forecourt parking, and in line with the rest of the houses on the Lane.*”
The parking and access arrangements are not clear in the plans submitted.
- c) “*The application is supported by a Green Belt Planning Statement.*”
No such statement is posted on the website.

- d) The site description is not accurate because it does not mention that 34 Church Lane is the last house in a relatively dense line of ribbon development. The character changes markedly at that point because adjacent open land belongs to Dean Valley Farm. There is a significant gap of grazing land from 34 Church Lane to the dwelling belonging to Dean Valley Farm. The following descriptions supplied in the form are inaccurate and confusing:
"The application site is located on the west side of Church Lane and to front (north) is the open side of the Farm".
"To the rear within the application site is an open grassed area of dean valley equestrian".
"To the side is a 2 Storey semi-detached dwelling"
"Beyond that access to the south is a 2 Storey detached house which has a detached"
 In order, to aid officer's understanding of the site, we have described it in our assessment below and included satellite images and photographs.
- e) The application form implies that the new dwelling will have space to park cars in front of it which will lead to the driveway of number 34 and access the road via that same driveway. This would be consistent with:
 No has been ticked for: Is a new or altered vehicular access proposed to or from the public highway?
 And for: Is a new or altered pedestrian access proposed to or from the public highway?
 However, No has been ticked for: Does the site have any existing vehicle/cycle parking spaces or will the proposed development add/remove any parking spaces?
- f) Under Existing Use it states: *"No specific, it has always been a plot of land"*
 We can clarify that until recently the site was grazing land belonging to Dean Valley Farm. It has a very long history as farmland. A section has been fenced off, presumably because of change of ownership, and is currently still grassland.

3. Policies relevant to this application

The site is within Green Belt and 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

4. 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 site is positioned at the end of a fairly dense line of ribbon development along the south west side of Church Lane, including terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings. This line of development ends at 34 Church Lane, which borders grazing land belonging to Dean Valley Farm. A field separates the residential dwelling of Dean Valley Farm from 34 Church Lane. The distance from the current boundary of 34 Church Lane curtilage to the farm drive is approx. 40 metres. The distance from the end of the dwelling at 34 Church Lane and the start of the dwelling at Dean Valley

Farm is 54 metres. On this basis, the gap would a suitable size for two new large dwellings. In addition, the proposal may match the character of the existing ribbon development. However, the site does not meet other criteria in DEV1. The perception in the street scene is that number 34 is the end of a line of dense ribbon development and there is a complete change in character after that. Grazing land separates number 34 from Dean Valley Farm and the ambience becomes rural with large and widely separated dwellings thereafter on that side of Church Lane. Therefore, the proposal does not “comprise the completion of an otherwise continuous and largely uninterrupted built frontage of several dwellings visible within the street scene.”

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 drawings submitted are completely inadequate and do not allow an assessment of character to be made. In addition, it is not possible to ascertain how the access from Church Lane to the dwelling would be arranged. The application appears to imply that it would share access with 34 Church Lane. This may be okay if the occupants of the new dwelling were family members, but at a point when the dwellings changed ownership a shared drive could be an unsatisfactory arrangement.

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

A native hedge lies at the border of the land in question with Church Lane. This hedge is contiguous with the hedge at the border of Dean Valley Farm and the road. This is a natural feature which should be protected. This has not been acknowledged in the application form, where No has been ticked for:

Are there trees or hedges on the proposed development site?

And/or: Are there trees or hedges on land adjacent to the proposed development site that could influence the development or might be important as part of the local landscape character?

This may be because the intention is not to create a new driveway through the hedge, but to share a drive with 34 Church Lane, in which case the hedge would be unaffected. However, the answer to the second point should be Yes because there is a hedge bordering Church Lane at the site that is an important part of the local landscape character.

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

We would expect any proposals to set out how this policy would be met.

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

We believe the following are relevant.

Stockport Saved UDP policies

As the proposal does not meet all the criteria for infilling set out in WNP DEV1, 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.

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:

- 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.

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

6. 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 a field that was formerly grazing land and part of a network of fields in the countryside around Woodford. The proposal represents 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 special circumstances in this case.

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

Assessment

As the proposal does not meet all the criteria for infilling set out in WNP DEV1, it does not meet any of the criteria listed for exceptions to inappropriate development in Green Belt.

7. Summary

We believe that this application should be withdrawn because information supplied is inaccurate and confusing and there is no Green Belt planning statement provided. It is possible to assess it fully with the material presented. However, we can assess the site location and believe that it does not meet all the criteria for infill as set out in WNP DEV1 and should be refused.

See images below:

8. Images



Satellite images showing the location of 34 Church Lane at the end of ribbon development and Dean Valley Farm



Street view of the site location

Yours sincerely,

E. M. Frearson

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee