

# Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

c/o Woodford Community Centre, Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 1PS

Email: [woodfordneighbourhood@gmail.com](mailto:woodfordneighbourhood@gmail.com)

Web: <http://woodfordnf.co.uk>

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

26<sup>th</sup> November 2022

To: Planning Officer

**Reference:** DC/084618

**Proposal:** Erection of two detached dwellings with associated access and landscaping (further amended plans)

**Location:** Bridle Road, Woodford, Stockport

With reference to the notification received on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 about further amendments to these proposals, our objections still stand for the reasons outlined in our previous responses to these proposals. We believe that the application should be refused.

The key points are summarised in section 1 for quick reference and outlined in sections 2 to 7, as submitted in previous responses, for completeness. The location and characteristics of the site are unique, therefore photographs and satellite image are included below the key points to aid those who do not live nearby. Larger versions and additional images can be found in the Appendix. Text written in italics is quoted verbatim from WNP DEV1. The full text for this policy can be found on page 4.

## 1. Key points

- a) The site lies within Green Belt on a narrow lane that extends at right-angles from the developed part of Bridle Road into a section with agricultural land on the left hand side and a few houses on the right had side. Behind the houses on the right hand side is Woodford Garden Village. A public right of way leads from this lane into countryside on the left hand side, where walkers can reach Poynton and (coming soon) footpaths alongside the Poynton Relief Road. It is a leafy lane with fields on one side and a rural ambience, characteristic of the more peripheral parts of Woodford.
- b) The key point in our objection is that the site and proposals do not meet the criteria set out in WNP DEV1 for infilling. As such, the proposals do not meet any of the criteria listed in the NPPF for exceptions to inappropriate development in Green Belt and should be refused.
- c) While we welcome the various small changes presented in the amended proposal, we believe that the proposal is still contrary to the NPPF and WNP and represents very little change in negative impact.
- d) We acknowledge that the officer's report to the Area Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> December is well-structured and comprehensive, but misinterprets the site with respect to WNP DEV 1.

- e) We believe that WNP DEV1 was correctly interpreted by Stockport Council in refusing application DC/073788. Unfortunately, it was misinterpreted by a Planning Inspector when permission was granted at appeal (APP/C4235/W/19/3239419). We believe this to have been a “rogue” decision. An opinion that was supported by Stockport Council officers. However, the resulting houses, numbered 67 and 69 Bridle Road are now part of the development landscape and a factor when assessing other proposals nearby.
- f) Taking that into account, we maintain that the proposal in application DC/084618 misinterprets WNP DEV1 for the reasons outlined below.
- g) Development along the stretch of road that includes the site is sparse with just two dwellings after the back gardens of 67 and 69 Bridle Road in over 300 metres (nearly one third of a kilometre). The road ends just after the second dwelling, Westgate. This does not represent: a *“continuous and largely uninterrupted built frontage of several dwellings visible within the street scene”*.
- h) 67 and 69 Bridle Road are not part of the *“built frontage”* on that stretch of road because the road turns a right-angle bend and they face at right angles to Holm Lea and Westgate. The back gardens of 67 and 69 form the first part of the frontage.
- i) The gap between the end of the back gardens of 67 and 69 Bridle Road and the first dwelling, Holm Lea is 65 metres and then there is a much longer gap from Holm Lee the second (and last dwelling) Westgate. This does not represent a *“relatively small gap between existing dwellings”*.
- j) At the site of the proposal, the second dwelling on that stretch of road, Westgate, is not *“visible within the street scene”*.
- k) A grant of permission to DC/084618 would amount to yet another instance of misinterpretation of WNP DEV1.
- l) Since it does not comply with the criteria for limited infilling in a village, the proposal contravenes several policies in the NPPF which seek to prevent harm to the Green Belt. (NPPF paragraphs 147, 148 and 149 as set out later in this response). It encroaches into the countryside and will significantly reduce the openness of the Green Belt at this site.
- m) The proposal also contravenes policies in the Stockport Unitary Development Plan and Core Strategy, which seek to protect Green Belt (GBA1.2, GBA1.5, GBA1.6, GBA1.7 and LCR1.1 as set out later in this response)
- n) Please refer to the images below to see the unique location and character of the site.

The images below show the characteristics of Bridle Road around the site



Bridle Road after the right-angle bend



Bridle Road near the site



Bridle Road looking towards the site



Bridle Road after the site leading to Westgate

Satellite image showing the location of the site within agriculture land after the sharp bend in Bridle Road



## 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 the 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 8.

As explained in General Comments, the section of the road containing the site is at right angles to the section of road containing 67 and 69 Bridle Road. Therefore, the perceived “gap” in housing under consideration stretches from the back gardens of those dwellings to Westgate at the end of the road. This is another aspect of the proposal that fails to meet the requirement to complete “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 proposal appears to be well designed. The amendments will slightly reduce the overall mass and setting plot 2 further back from the road will slightly reduce the inevitable impact

of the development on the street scene. As we noted in our response to the previous application for this site, 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 climate and biodiversity emergencies and ensure that the proposals meet 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**

As we noted in our response to the previous application for this site, we were disappointed that the trees and hedgerow on the border between the site and Bridle Road were cut down just prior to submission of the application. See Appendix figures 3 to 6. This 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 in green vegetation at this site due to the recent removal of a species rich hedge and mature trees. This will have a negative impact on carbon dioxide absorption and biodiversity. 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 climate and biodiversity emergencies and ensure that the proposals meets ENV4 by achieving net gains in biodiversity. We suggest that a wide variety of native tree and hedge species and species which attract pollinating insects should be included in the landscaping proposals.

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

As with our previous response, 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 are 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:

- 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.

## **5. NPPF (2021)**

The site is located within the Greater Manchester Green Belt, having been designated as Green Belt in 1984, 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 special circumstances in this case.

**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 and especially the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan. A grant of permission to DC/084618 would amount to yet another instance of misinterpretation of WNP DEV1.

The proposal will cause harm to the Green Belt which outweighs any special 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.

Should planning permission be granted, we suggest significant mitigation measures are included in conditions to offset the negative impacts on climate, biodiversity and local landscape.

**7. 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, October 2022



Fig 9: Open countryside around footpath 101HGB, which leads across fields from Bridle Road near the proposed site



Yours sincerely,

*E. M. Frearson*

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee