



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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

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To: Planning Officer

Reference: DC/088660

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 8 dwellings

Location: Blossoms K & C Ltd Kennels, Blossoms Lane, Woodford, Stockport, Stockport, SK7 1RE

1. Summary

We believe that this proposal should be refused for the following reasons:

- The proposal is not compliant with the NPPF, or the Stockport Development Plan including the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan.
- The proposal is not compliant with the NPPF because it will harm the openness of the Green Belt due to the increased height of the buildings.
- There are no special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.
- The proposal will harm the landscape and environment due to loss of mature trees and the visibility of the dwellings.
- We have found no Planning Statement submitted with the proposal.
- The Design and Access Statement does not reference the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan, which provides the most up to date planning policies relating to the proposal.
- We have not seen evidence that the use as a kennels is no longer viable, or evidence of attempts to market the business. This is not compliant with policies WNP EMP2 or Stockport UDP AED-6
- The proposal is not in keeping with character of Blossoms Lane or Woodford and contravenes policies WNP DEV4 and Stockport UDP LCR1.1.
- Eight additional dwellings are likely to increase traffic compared with use as boarding kennels.
- Blossoms Lane has Quiet Lane status. Stockport UDP policy TD2.2 does not permit development that will increase traffic on Quiet Lanes.
- The lane is used by vulnerable road users and their safety is a concern.
- Blossoms Lane is single track in many places with soft verges and deep ditches creating hazards for traffic. See photographs in section 7.
- The section of Blossoms Lane connecting to Church Lane is an unadopted road. It is used by Blossoms Lane residents heading to and from southerly destinations and the proposal will increase wear and tear.
- Further details and photographs are provided in the sections below.

2. General comments

- i. The site of the proposal is in Green Belt. Therefore, Green Belt policies apply.
- ii. The site plays an important role in maintaining the openness of the Green Belt and preventing settlements merging. This will become more important in the future with the development of the adjacent Handforth Garden Village.
- iii. The site of the proposal is in the Woodford Neighbourhood Area. Therefore, policies in the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan apply. We note that this was not acknowledged in the Design and Access Statement submitted with the proposal. However, we note that it is referenced in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
- iv. Woodford is characterised by ribbon development with a variety of dwelling types and small businesses. Blossoms Lane is on the periphery of the settlement and has a very rural feel. The lane is bordered by farm fields with very sparse development and large gaps between dwellings. The current *sui generis* use of the site as a boarding kennels is in keeping with this character. The proposed site lies between a working farm (Threeways Farm) and stables (The Lodge). The proposal is for change of use from boarding kennels to a cluster of eight dwellings, which will not fit the character of Woodford Neighbourhood Area in general and Blossoms Lane in particular.
- v. The site access is on Blossoms Lane, which is a narrow country lane with Quiet Lane status. The Transport Statement does not mention the Quiet Lane status. The lane is frequently used by walkers, cyclists, horse riders, and carriage drivers and has no pavements to provide a refuge from traffic for pedestrians. Therefore, safety of all road users is a key consideration.
- vi. The Transport Statement concludes that the proposal will not increase the number of car trips. This seems unlikely since the number of trips by customers using the site for holiday pet care and the hydrotherapy pool was relatively low. The number of trips generated by residents in eight dwellings, each potentially commuting to work and taking children to school and other activities, is likely to be greater.
- vii. The adequacy of the proposed exit splay needs assessing carefully.
- viii. When heading in a northerly direction, residents and customers using the kennels turn left on to Blossoms Lane and follow it to the junction with Hall Moss Lane. While some of this section of the lane is wide enough for cars to pass, parts of it are single track and tricky to negotiate, especially in the dark. See photographs in section 7.
- ix. When heading in a southerly direction, residents and customers using the kennels turn right on to Blossoms Lane and follow it to the junction with Church Lane. This section of the road has a number of notorious hazards. See photographs in section 7.
 - a. It is very narrow and single track for approx. 300 metres.
 - b. It is bordered by soft verges and deep ditches which result in frequent cases of drivers needing rescue because they have either tried to squeeze past oncoming vehicles, or they have tried to reverse and been unable to steer well enough to keep the car on the road. Cars stuck in the ditch is a frequent occurrence on this stretch of the lane.
 - c. The current Council digital records show the section of Blossoms Lane from Threeways Farm to Church Lane as an unadopted track.* Therefore, it is not resurfaced and there are currently potholes opposite Threeways Farm.

* Long-standing residents recall that this section of the road was maintained by the Council until the late 1980s and nothing in the deeds or searches of adjacent properties suggests otherwise. Furthermore, post 2016, the Council has installed or replaced street furniture denoting Quiet Lane status, speed limit, use by horses and Single Track. We have consulted

both Cheshire East Council and Stockport Council in researching the status of the lane. We have been informed by Stockport Council that the paper records were lost when the information was transferred to digital format. Residents and local councillors have made considerable efforts to resolve this situation, without success so far. At this current time the status of this section of Blossoms Lane is disputed, which is a factor to be considered when assessing this proposal.

2. Policies relevant to the application

We believe that planning policies relevant to this application include:

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

3. Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

We believe that the following policies are relevant:

i. WNP EMP2: Loss of employment

“Proposals for the change of use of employment land should be supported by evidence that the existing land use is no longer viable.”

Assessment

The Boarding Kennels has provided a small amount of employment. Assessment of the application should include the impact of the change of use from boarding kennels to residential dwellings and whether adequate evidence has been provided to show that the existing land use is no longer viable.

ii. EMP3: Use of Rural Buildings

“Proposals for the re-use of redundant buildings and the replacement of buildings, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces, will be supported. Such development should not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.”

Assessment

If adequate evidence has been provided that the kennel buildings are redundant, then the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt should be assessed.

iii. 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 site is in a sensitive location rural in Woodford with fields to the rear. Should permission be considered, then it would be important to determine how the proposal will enhance the landscape, wildlife and ecological networks.

iv. 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

There are mature trees on site which contribute to the environment and to the local landscape. See photographs in section 7. Native hedgerows with trees (6H4b, 6H11, 6H32) and a pond (6P6) were recorded on site in the [Woodford Landscape and Environment Study](#), see pages 65 to 78. These natural features should be protected as much as possible. We are pleased to see that this has been acknowledged in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and mitigation with native planting is proposed. It should be noted that trees do not represent net carbon sinks or visual screening until they are mature. Planting with mature native tree planting, rather than immature saplings, will be required to provide effective mitigation.

We are pleased to see that a Bat Survey was undertaken. Other wildlife species around the site include Little Owls, Tawny Owls and Swallows, which should be considered.

v. 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

This will be an important consideration for this proposal, which is in a sensitive rural part of Woodford that supports wildlife. The site is adjacent to an area of Moderate Habitat Distinctiveness identified in Map 9 on page 13 in the Cheshire Wildlife Trust Report, ["Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment"](#).

vi. ENV5: Reducing light pollution

"Proposals for floodlights requiring planning permission should demonstrate how the potential for overspill will be controlled to a high level whereby it will not cause significant harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers."

Assessment

Blossoms Lane is currently relatively dark with no street lighting. This is good for wildlife and residents, that can be disrupted by light at night. Residential dwellings are likely to emit more light than kennels. Any proposals on this site should keep lighting to a minimum.

4. Stockport Saved UDP 2011

We leave it to the council planning officer's expertise to assess the proposal against these policies, but we note that the following may be relevant:

TD2.2 Quiet Lanes

“Developments and highway improvements that have an impact upon rural roads, which would detract from their character and their value as Quiet Lanes, will only be permitted where they can be justified on safety grounds. Any development that would result in a significant increase in traffic or conflict between different users of these lanes will not be permitted.”

The use of Blossoms Lane for walking, cycling and equestrian activities by residents from Woodford and the surrounding areas has increased in recent years. It provides an important source of outdoor recreation and access to nature. These users are vulnerable to traffic.

LCR1.1 Landscape Character Areas, which requires that development in the countryside should not adversely affect the landscape quality of the area.

5. Stockport Core Strategy 2011

We note that the following policy may be relevant:

Development Management Policy AED-6

Employment Sites Outside Protected Employment Areas

“3.277 Proposals for the change of use or redevelopment of employment sites outside designated employment areas which result in the loss of that use will not normally be permitted unless:

- a. it can be demonstrated that the site is no longer viable as an employment use;*
- b. the proposal will not adversely affect the operations of neighbouring premises;*
- c. the loss of employment land would not lead to significantly longer journey to work patterns; and*
- d. the development does not conflict with other policies.”*

Blossoms Kennels has provided employment opportunities for a small number of staff so this aspect should be assessed.

Policy SIE1 advises of the need to provide, maintain and where suitable, enhance the levels of privacy and amenity for neighbouring residents.

The impact of the proposal on residential amenity of neighbours, especially those at The Lodge and Threeways Farm and should be considered. The impact of additional trips on the surface of the un-adopted section of Blossoms Lane leading to Church Lane, and the privacy of residents living there, should also be considered.

6. NPPF 2021

The proposal does not comply with Section 13, including the following paragraphs:

Paragraph 137 which emphasises the great importance the Government attached to Green Belts. *“The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”*

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 exceptional circumstances.

7. Photographs

See below



Fig 1: Single track, unadopted section of Blossoms Lane connecting to Church Lane



Fig 2: Blossoms Lane by the kennels



Fig 3: Blossoms Kennels viewed from Church Lane



Fig 4: Walkers on Blossoms Lane south of the site



Fig 5: Blossoms Lane north of the site



Fig 6: Tractor stuck in ditch on Blossoms Lane



Fig 7: Car stuck in ditch on Blossoms Lane

Yours sincerely,

E. M. Frearson

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee