



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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

Email: woodfordneighbourhood@gmail.com

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

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

26 August 2023

To: Planning Officer

DC/089542 | Request for screening opinion in relation to the land to the West of Old Hall Lane, Woodford SK7 1RS- Proposed development for a ground mounted solar farm and associated infrastructure | Land To The West Of Old Hall Lane Woodford Stockport

We have noted this application for a screening opinion on the Council website. The site of the proposal is in Green Belt and within the Woodford Neighbourhood Area. We have a number of comments and questions relating to this proposal.

We are aware of the note from Parliament dated July 2023: [Planning and solar farms - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#), which states that “*Solar farms with a generating capacity below 50 megawatts (MW) fall under the remit of the LPA and require planning permission.*” As the proposal outlined in the letter from Pegasus Group has a generating capacity within this category, are we correct in presuming that it will need planning permission from Stockport Council?

Are we correct in assuming that we will be consulted on the proposal, if and when an application is submitted?

We would like to make the following preliminary comments:

- We support the push towards a decarbonised power system and understand that solar energy is an important part of this. However, siting solar farms on agricultural land has many negative impacts for agricultural, wildlife and visual amenity. Siting solar panels on existing suitable buildings is preferable and opportunities in the borough should be fully explored first.
- There are ten grade II listed buildings within the Neighbourhood Plan area. These were noted in the [Woodford Heritage And Character Assessment](#) undertaken by AECOM in 2016, as follows:
 1. Peartree Cottage (NHLE 1241427);
 2. Number 387 and right hand bay only of Number 385, Chester Road (NHLE1241499);
 3. Old Hall Farmhouse (NHLE1241579);
 4. Barn to north east of Old Hall Farm (NHLE1241580);
 5. Christ Church (NHLE 1241641);
 6. Deanwater House, timber framed wing at rear only (NHLE1241642);
 7. Lychgate at Christ Church (NHLE1260398);

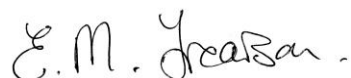
8. 475, Chester Road (NHLE1260397);
9. Lane Side Farmhouse (NHLE1241493); and
10. Moor Farm (NHLE1241577).

The proposed site of the solar farm to the west of Old Hall Lane is in a sensitive part of the Neighbourhood Area, near to the listed structures 3, 4, 5 and 7 in the list above.

- The rural setting of Christ Church is one of the iconic features of Woodford.
- The impact of the proposed site on the Woodford Landscape Character Area will need to be assessed.
- The solar farm will be visible from the Church yard, Wilmslow Road and Old Hall Lane and will impair the rural character and visual amenity of the Woodford Neighbourhood Area.
- Old Hall Lane is very narrow, posing potential problems during the construction phase.
- The impact of disruption to the Neighbourhood Area caused in connecting to the power grid will need to be assessed.
- The impact on agriculture in Woodford should be assessed. Fields in that location are used for arable crops as well as grazing.
- The impact on the environment should be assessed. Areas of medium habitat distinctiveness were noted at the site in the report by Cheshire Wildlife Trust [Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment](#) "*Medium distinctiveness habitat represents areas of semi-natural habitat which are usually wildlife rich but can also act as ecological stepping stones and wildlife corridors*". They also identified the River Dean as a wildlife corridor.
- The proposed site includes important natural features, including mature oak trees, species rich native hedgerows, copses of native trees and a pond. See pages 103 -115 in the [Woodford Landscape and Environment Report](#).

For the reasons outlined above, we believe that a thorough Environmental Impact Assessment is essential in this case.

Yours sincerely,



Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee