



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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

3 Nov 2024

To: Planning Officer

Reference: DC/093468

Proposal: Full planning permission conversion of Deanwater House to residential use; demolition of all other existing buildings and structures and erection of residential development; and, provision of landscaping, parking, and associated infrastructure.

Location: Deanwater Hotel, Wilmslow Road, Woodford, Stockport, SK7 1RJ

1. General Comments

- As noted in our response to DC/093469: Listed Building Consent, many in the community are sad to lose a hotel that was a treasured asset, but there seems to be general relief that it will not be left to become derelict.
- We welcome these sensitive proposals to redevelop the site whilst retaining the listed buildings and woodland setting.
- This response focuses DC/093468: Full Planning Application. We have responded to DC/093469: Listed Building Consent separately.
- We were pleased that the developer, PH Property Holdings Ltd, wrote to us on 9 September 2024 and offered to meet with representatives of the management committee.*
- PH Property Holdings Ltd also notified us on 4 October 2024 when two planning applications had been validated by the Council, which was helpful.
- We are pleased to see that relevant policies in the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan have been cited in the Supporting Planning Statement.
- The change of use proposed will remove a source of employment in the village, but we understand from the Supporting Planning Statement that the hotel use does not constitute employment land.
- We understand from the Supporting Planning Statement that the proposal is exempt from contributing to affordable housing because the buildings have not been made vacant solely for the purposes of redevelopment.
- The reduced volume of the proposed development compared with the existing buildings and the increased visibility through the site are welcomed in Green Belt.

- The drawing comparing existing and proposed layout of buildings is useful.
- We note from the report from that Environmental Health Officer that asbestos will need to be removed from the site and trust that this will be done in a manner that does not pose a health risk to construction workers or residents.

2. Policies relevant to the application

We believe that planning policies relevant to this application include:

- i. NPPF 2023
- 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:

ENV1: Respecting views and vistas

ENV3: Protecting Woodford's Natural Features

ENV4: Supporting Biodiversity

EMP2: Loss of Employment

COM3: Woodford Heritage assets

DEV2: Replacement of existing dwellings

DEV4: Design of New Development

Below we have assessed the proposals against the details in these planning policies, with particular focus on environmental aspects.

ENV1: Respecting views and vistas

'Development should respect local character. In doing so, it should recognise and take into account the importance of the views and vistas listed in the Table and indicated on the Map below.'

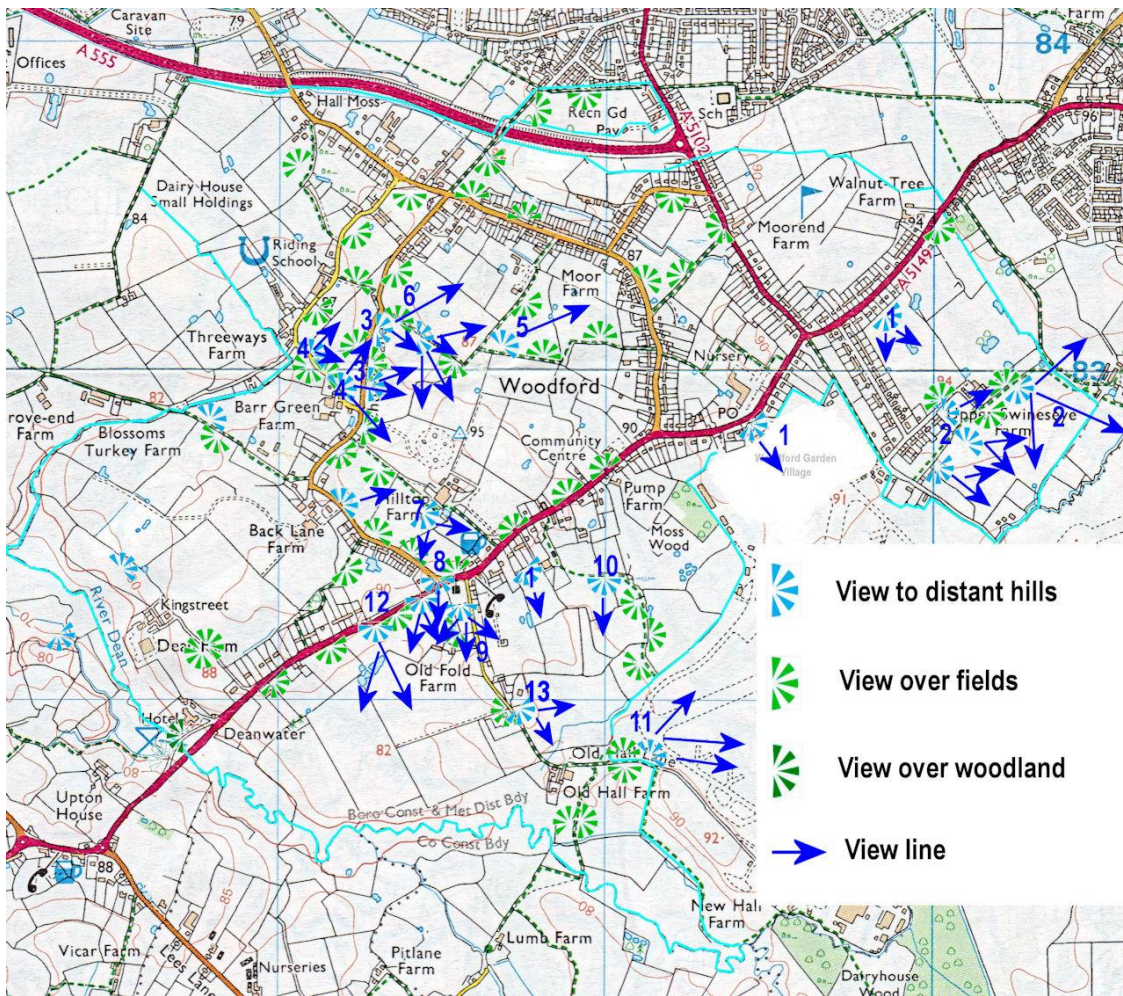


Figure 1: Views and vistas map in Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

Assessment

The views marked on the map on page 32 on the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan were noted by residents during consultation on plan and include the view into woodland and the River Dean from the layby off the A5102 outside of the Deanwater site (See Figure 1). We request that the vista of the woodland and river are not harmed by the proposals if possible. We note that an application to fell a large beech tree with a TPO was granted permission, which will have an impact on the woodland setting.

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.’

Table showing Natural Features which are a key aesthetic component of the Woodford Landscape

1.	Trees in public places and bordering roads, in pavements and in grass verges along Chester Road, Wilmslow Road, Bridle Road, Church Lane, Blossoms Lane, Moor Lane, and Hall Moss Lane
2.	Trees and woodland with Tree Preservation Orders or Ancient Woodland
3.	Mature & veteran trees described and /or marked on maps in the WNF Landscape and Environment Survey report (12)
4.	Grass verges with daffodils and wildflowers, such as bluebells
5.	Native hedgerows visible along roads, tracks and public rights of way across farmland (12)

6. Ponds visible along roads, tracks and public rights of way across farmland (12)
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Figure 2: Tree preservation orders and areas at the Deanwater site in Landscape and Environment Report.

Assessment

The Deanwater site is characterised by large number of trees, many of which are large and mature, contributing significant benefits to the environment and the aesthetic appearance of the location. The Landscape and Environment Report prepared to support the neighbourhood plan notes the Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Area (TPA) at the Deanwater Hotel site on page 126. (Figure 2)

We are pleased to see that a thorough Arboricultural Planning Assessment was submitted with the proposals, which takes note of the TPOs and TPA with detailed plans. The report suggests removal of several trees to facilitate development, as well as those that are degraded or dangerous. We request that removal of healthy trees is minimised and that reasonably mature, native species are planted to mitigate the losses in order to aid environmental benefits and to provide screening of the development for neighbours and from the A5102 and Kingstreet.

In addition, the River Dean forms the south west boundary of the site and is important from an environmental perspective and requires protection. Please see the recommendations made by Cheshire Wildlife Trust quoted below in the assessment against ENV4.

ENV4: Supporting biodiversity*

*The variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable.

‘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 are pleased that a Biodiversity Net Gain report has been submitted with the planning application.

We draw your attention to the fact that the River Dean forms the south west boundary of the site and is important from an environmental perspective. A report entitled: 'Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment' was prepared by Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) as part of the evidence supporting the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan. In the conclusion the report noted:

"This study has highlighted that the important wildlife habitat in Woodford is associated with the riparian habitats along River Dean and its tributaries and the mosaic of grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows and wetlands found across the parish."

"Any proposals for the development of sites which lie adjacent to high distinctiveness habitat or a wildlife corridor should demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen any potential impacts on wildlife. This should include measures such as installing bat/otter sensitive lighting schemes, installing durable bat/bird boxes and hedgehog-friendly fencing and ensuring surface water is directed away from sensitive areas and into SuDS schemes."

See Figures 3 and 4 below.

The CWT also notes the need to control the invasive species Himalayan Balsam along the River Dean:

"It is extremely important that this species is prevented from further colonisation the woodlands and wetlands. There are extensive areas of non-native Himalayan balsam present along the river Dean. This species is highly invasive outcompeting native flora and causing soil erosion due to the lack of binding vegetation in winter (particularly on river banks). Himalayan balsam is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which means it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild. CWT can provide further advice on the control of this and other non-native species."

See Figure 5.

Map 9: Habitat Distinctiveness

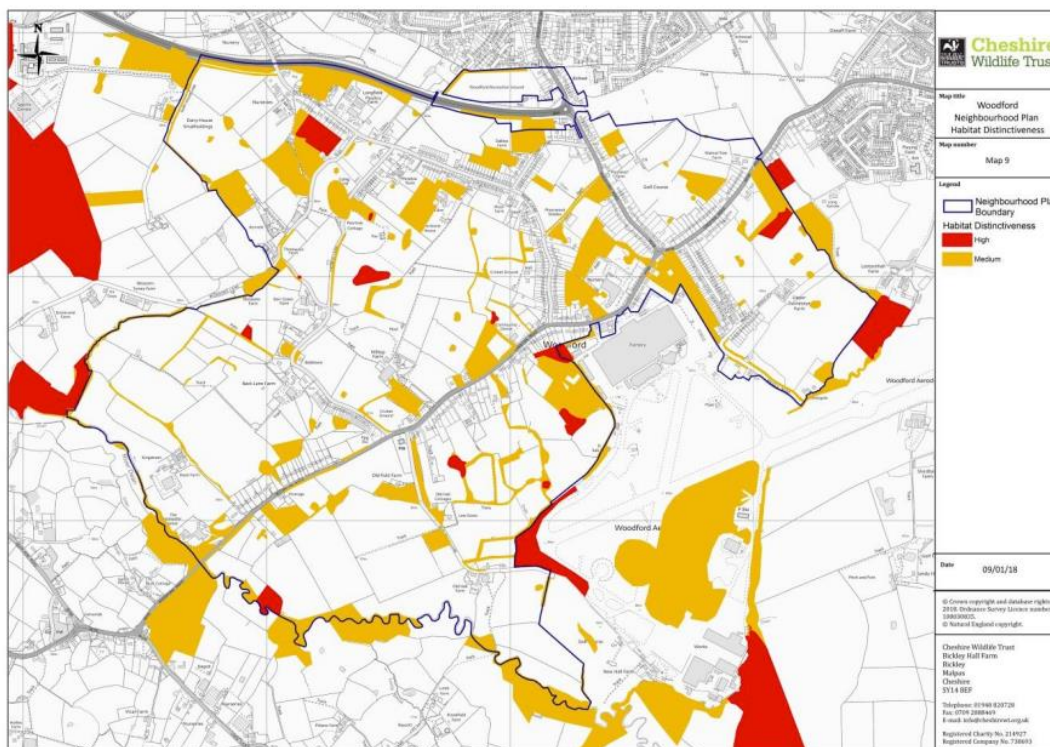


Figure 3: Map from CWT report 'Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment' page 13

Map 10: Indicative Wildlife Corridor Network

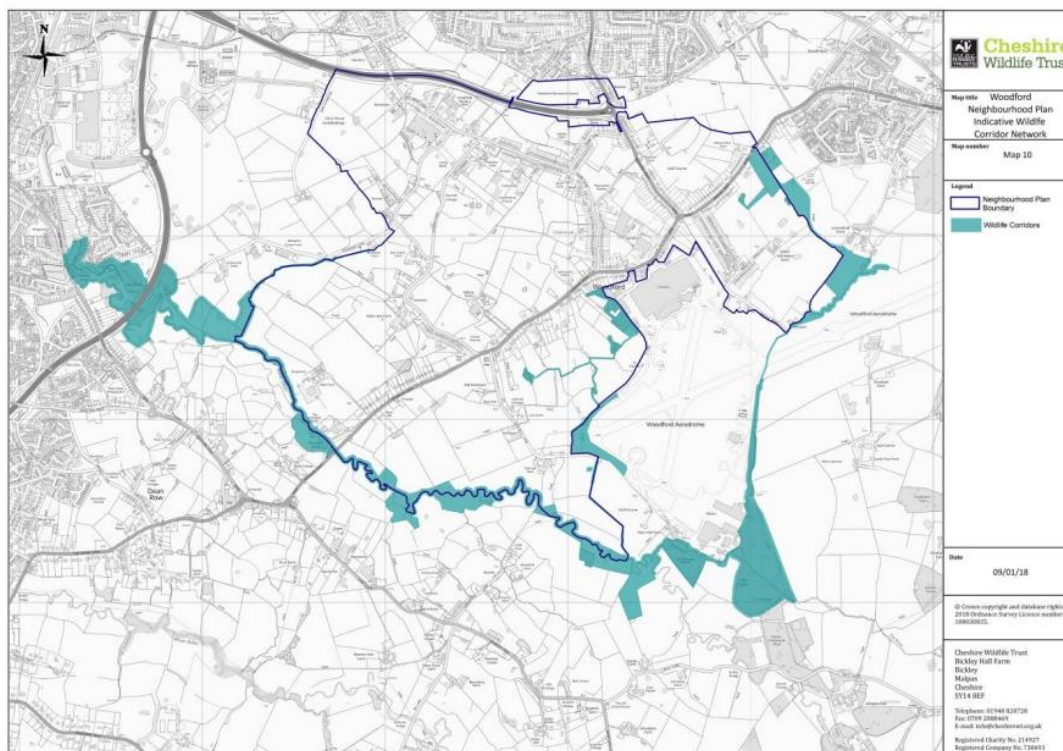


Figure 4: Map from CWT report 'Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment' page 14

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

We understand that in pre-application meetings with SMBC it was established that hotels are not classed as employment land and so policies AED-4 and EMP2 do not apply.

COM3: Woodford Heritage assets

'New development affecting a heritage asset, including the setting of the asset, should conserve or enhance the asset in a manner according to its significance.'

Assessment

This was covered in our response to DC/093469 – Listed Building Consent

DEV2: Replacement of existing dwellings

'Development comprising the replacement of a dwelling should not be materially larger than the dwelling that it replaces and must have regard to local character and residential amenity.'

Assessment

This policy is relevant because buildings are being demolished and replaced by new dwellings. The proposals are compliant because the total volume of built structure in the proposals is reduced compared with the existing.

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

This is a prominent and unique site in the Woodford Neighbourhood Area. More visual permeability is also proposed, giving greater prominence. Therefore the design and landscaping will be very important. Artist’s impressions are helpful for assessing whether the proposals achieve a high level of design and respond to the Neighbourhood Area’s rural character. The development will be somewhat separated from other development in Woodford and may not be read in conjunction with the street scene in Wilmslow Road or Kingstreet, allowing more flexibility in style. We have seen the high standard of design and landscaping in other housing developments by PH Property Holdings Ltd, such as those on Alderley Park, which inspires confidence that the Deanwater House development will be of a similar high standard.

4. Photographs



Figure 5: View from the A5102 towards the River Dean, bridge at the layby and surrounding woodland by the Deanwater site. Himalayan Balsam can be seen in the foreground.

We leave it to the expertise of Stockport planning officers to assess the proposals against policies in the Stockport Core Strategy, Saved UDP and the NPPF 2023.

5. Summary

Overall, we support this application. We welcome the retention of the listed buildings, the reduced volume and increased permeability of the built structures, the quality of the proposed layout and design, the proposed landscaping and retention of the woodland setting.

*A meeting with representatives of PH Property Holding Ltd has now been arranged for 6 November 2024 so it is possible that we may have further comments after that meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. M. Frearson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the first name.

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee