



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

5 October 2025

To: Planning Officer

Reference: DC/096927

Proposal: Outline application: Demolition of existing buildings and comprehensive residential-led development comprising the erection of residential dwellings (Use Class C3), self-build plots (Use Class C3), care home and extra care (Use Class C2), local community facilities (Use Class E (a), (b) (e) and/or (f)); mobility point (sui generis) the creation of new nature park, new vehicle, cycle, and pedestrian connections, open space, landscaping, drainage, ecological enhancements, and other associated works (all matters reserved).

Location: Land South Of Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, SK7 1PR

Note: in this response we will use LSCR as an abbreviation for this proposal.

1. General Comments and Concerns

- The proposal is submitted ahead of the Stockport Local Plan. The Planning Statement notes that site was also submitted in the call for sites for the Local Plan. Allocation or otherwise of this site in the Local Plan has implications for a decision on this application.
- A key part of the application is a claim that the site meets the criteria for Grey Belt. We have challenged this claim below.
- A planning application for DC/094533 Woodford Garden Village extension has been submitted to the Council and is awaiting a decision. The decision on DC/094533 WGV extension may be a consideration in the assessment of DC/096927 LSCR because it will potentially change the extent of built development and the accessibility of facilities.
- A large number of proposals for development on Green Belt land in and around Woodford, including this one, have been put forward in recent months since the publication of revised Government national planning guidelines and housing targets, raising concerns about the impact on local character and infrastructure.
- The various proposals, including this one, if permitted would consecutively put increasing strain on local infrastructure, raising a question of how the Council will assess the impact of each one. For each successive application, it will be necessary to re-evaluate available infrastructure resources, taking into account the effect of previous applications.
- Specifically for this application, we believe that school places, healthcare facilities and traffic flows should be re-assessed, if there have been any recent grants of permission for large developments in the local area.
- There are concerns about over-development in Woodford and we hope the Council will take this into account in determining this application.
- The proposal lies within the Woodford Neighbourhood Area therefore the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan applies.

- We note that this is an outline planning application, therefore details that would be presented in reserved matters are not addressed in this response.

2. Policies relevant to the application

We believe that planning policies relevant to this application include:

- i. NPPF 2024
- ii. Stockport Development Plan:
 - o Woodford Neighbourhood Plan 2019
 - o Saved UDP 2011
 - o Core Strategy 2011

3. Assessment

We believe that the application should be refused for the following reasons:

- It is premature to change the use of this land when regulation consultation on the draft Local Plan is expected to take place in November/December 2025.
- The site is in Green Belt. We believe that the Grey Belt claim is not justified because the site contributes significantly to *purpose a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas*. Development of the site would harm the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, the proposal represents inappropriate development in Green Belt. Very special circumstances do not exist to justify the harm, and it would result in over-development in Woodford.
- Part of the site is class 3a agricultural land, which should be retained for agricultural use.
- The site is not accessible, therefore the proposal does not constitute sustainable development.
- The proposal does not comply with the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan.
- The site lies within the Woodford Landscape area which would be harmed by the proposed development. It is also part of the iconic landscape character of Woodford village with large expanses of open fields with mature native trees, native hedgerows and ponds and views to countryside and the Pennines beyond.
- The proposal would harm important habitats and wildlife corridors identified by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

4. Evidence to support these reasons for refusal

a. The proposal is premature

As we understand it, a regulation 18 consultation on the draft Local Plan is expected to take place in November/December 2025.

b. The site of the proposals has Green Belt status

The site lies within the Green Belt in Stockport and should be assessed against relevant policies in NPPF December 2024 and the Stockport Development Plan.

Grey Belt

The Planning Statement for the proposal makes a claim that the site meets the criteria for Grey Belt.

The NPPF 2024 has the following definition of Grey Belt:

.....‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”

We believe the site contributes significantly to *purpose a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas*. NPPF 2024 paragraph 143

Woodford Garden Village, with planning permission for 900 houses plus extra care facilities, trebled the number of house in Woodford and spread development over a large area. A planning application has been submitted for Woodford Garden Village extension (DC/094533) with an additional 550 dwellings on the former aerodrome site from WGV to the south western boundary, which would increase the built up area further. The Green Belt at the site of LSCR proposal restricts even further urban sprawl and therefore fulfils Green Belt purpose a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

An argument is presented in the Planning Statement that a grant of permission for DC/094533 WGV extension would provide a boundary with the LSCR development and therefore there would be little connection with the Green Belt beyond. See paragraphs 6.24 - 6.27 from the Planning Statement in the Appendix.

We believe that a presumed grant of permission for DC/094533 WGV extension cannot be accepted as justification for the LSCR development.

Openness of the Green Belt

The site of the proposal is countryside, comprising agricultural fields, mature native trees, species rich native hedgerows, small copses and ponds. It provides a sense of openness and space between Woodford Garden Village and houses on Chester Road, providing vistas and views toward the Pennines and a sense of continuity with the countryside in Green Belt in Stockport and Cheshire beyond Old Hall Lane. See photographs in Appendix (iii)

We believe that the proposal would harm the openness of the Green Belt.

c. No very special circumstances

We believe that very special circumstances do not exist to justify inappropriate development in Green Belt. We understand that, following Government revisions to target housing numbers, the borough of Stockport has a large perceived shortfall in a 5-year housing land supply. However, there is no shortage of market housing in Woodford which is at risk of significant over-development. We have also noted reports that Stockport Council has a shortage of social housing in the borough amounting to 8,000 dwellings in 2024 and very long waiting lists. We strongly support efforts to increase the supply of social housing, but believe that the LSCR proposal does not represent a suitable location because it is inaccessible via public transport, it is too far from facilities and would have few

employment opportunities. We have noted the achievements of the Council in [regeneration of Stockport Town Centre](#) and increasing the supply of affordable homes there.

d. The best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected

NPPF 2024 Paragraph 187 includes:

“b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;”

The Planning Statement paragraph 7.158 notes that 31% of the proposed site is grade 3a, but then states: *“It should also be borne in mind that areas of the Site classified as subgrade 3a are located where no built form is proposed, such as at the Nature Park”*. See Appendix.

We believe that the purpose of protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land is to retain its value for agriculture, the agricultural economy, and food production locally, in order to reduce the need to import food. Inclusion in a Nature Park would not fulfil this purpose.

The Planning Statement paragraph 7.159 seeks to justify the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land *“particularly as the agricultural land at the Site is not utilised for the growing of crops, but only haylage.”* See Appendix.

We know that haylage is widely and effectively used as fodder for livestock, including dairy and beef cattle, sheep and goats, which produce meat, dairy products and wool for human use. Therefore, we believe that haylage is a valuable crop.

e. The site is not accessible

A bus route through the site is proposed. This would only be an effective proposition for sustainability if there are sufficiently frequent buses to sufficiently diverse locations to reduce car use. As it stands there are not.

Railways stations are not near enough to the site for it to be a practical proposition for anyone other than fit, mobile people to walk or cycle from the site.

Local shops and other facilities in Woodford, including Woodford Garden Village, such as the Woodford Community Centre, Budgens store, the Aviator pub and Woodford School, are a long way from parts of the site and difficult to reach for any residents with limited mobility or fitness and parents with young children.

Any reliance on access to facilities in Woodford Garden Village extension is premature.

Employment opportunities on or near the site are very limited, therefore many residents may commute to work.

This will inevitably lead to a car dependent development, as is the case with Woodford Garden Village.

The Planning Statement notes that 50% of C3 dwellings will be affordable. The poor accessibility and employment opportunities described above raises questions about the suitability of the site for affordable housing.

The proposal does not comply with NPPF 2024, paragraphs 110 and 155 which require development to be in a sustainable location.

f. Non-compliance with Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

WNP 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.”

Table 1 includes the following views 1 and 10 -13, which would be harmed by the LSCR proposal

1. View of Hills from the back of properties on Chester Road: Pennines: Lyme Park, Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy
10. View of hills from footpath 99HGB: Pennines: Croker Hill
11. View of hills from Old Hall Lane at end of former runway: Pennines: Saddleworth Moor, Kinder Scout, Lyme Park
12. View of hills from Wilmslow Road: Pennines: Shining Tor, Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy, Alderley Edge
13. View from Old Hall Lane (from field gate on east side of Old Hall Lane, next to Low Eaves & opposite Dellhaven): Pennines: Kinder Scout, Lyme Park, Shining Tor, Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy

The LSCR proposal does not comply with this policy.

See Appendix (ii) and (iii)

WNP 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.”

To support this policy, environmental surveys conducted by qualified WNF members and by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust identified areas of high habitat distinctiveness and wildlife corridors within the site. Please see Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) report [Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment](#) and our [Landscape and Environment studies](#).

We are pleased to see that the application proposes retention of trees, native hedgerows and ponds, but we believe that development on the scale proposed is likely to have a negative impact on the overall volume of native vegetation and on wildlife that needs large areas for foraging and breeding and does not survive in close proximity to human communities.

See Appendix (ii) and (iii)

5. Appendix

(i) Extracts from the Planning Statement

“6.24 It is acknowledged that at the time of submission of this application, the Outline application DC/094533 has not been approved. However, it is understood that the application is at an advanced stage and owing to its relationship to the former Aerodrome site which has long been considered a candidate site for future development (e.g. as evidenced in the Council’s ‘Woodford Aerodrome Opportunity Site SPD’ (2013).

6.26 Given this context, the sub-area has clear well-defined boundaries, particularly to the north in Chester Road, and to the east, south, and south-west due to the Woodford Garden Village, and has little connection with the Green Belt beyond. Suburban development along Old Hall Lane to the west means any sense of urban sprawl would be negligible given the sub-area’s containment.

6.27 We are therefore in broad agreement that the sub-area makes a relatively limited contribution to this Green Belt purpose, for there is built form beyond the Site along Old Hall Lane which compromises the sense of openness, and the sub-area relates more strongly to the urban area than to the wider countryside.”

7.158 The proposed development is supported by an Agricultural Land Classification report. The report concludes that 31% of the Site is classified as subgrade 3a, 58% as subgrade 3b, and 11% as ‘other land’. Accordingly, only 31% of the Site can be considered best and most versatile agricultural land, with the vast majority of the Site of lower quality. It should also be borne in mind that areas of the Site classified as subgrade 3a are located where no built form is proposed, such as at the Nature Park.

7.159 To accord with Policy GBA1.2, the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land at the Site must be outweighed by other factors. It is considered that the acute need for housing in Stockport, and the contribution the proposed development will make to meeting the needs of particular groups, alongside community provision and a new nature park for the people of Woodford, outweighs the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land at the Site, particularly as the agricultural land at the Site is not utilised for the growing of crops, but only haylage

(ii) Extracts from Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

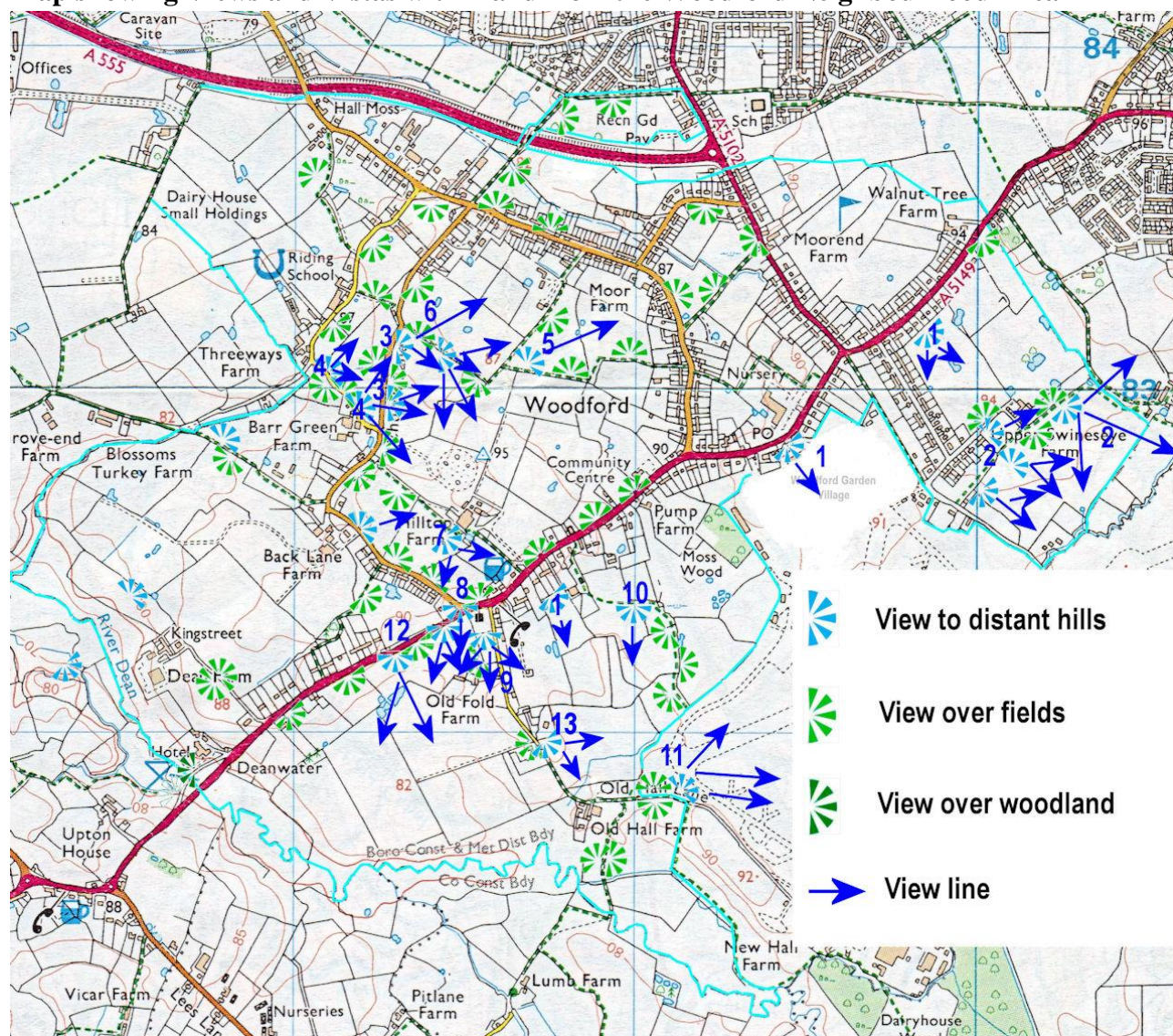
ENV1: Respecting views and vistas

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.

Numbers associated with blue arrows on the Views and Vistas Map below indicate these views:

1. View of Hills from the back of properties on Chester Road	Pennines: Lyme Park, Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy
2. View of hills from Bridle Way and footpaths 101 and 107HGB	Pennines: Kinder Scout, Lyme Park
3. View of hills from Church Lane (middle section) and Blossoms Lane	Pennines: Kinder Scout, Lyme Park, Shining Tor, Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy
6. View of hills from footpath 8HGB	Pennines: Kinder Scout, Lyme Park, Shining Tor, Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy
7. View of hills from footpath 7HGB	Pennines: Macclesfield Forest
8. View of hills from Church Lane (southern end)	Pennines: Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy
9. Views of hills from Church graveyard	Alderley Edge
10. View of hills from footpath 99HGB	Pennines: Croker Hill
11. View of hills from Old Hall Lane at end of former runway	Pennines: Saddleworth Moor, Kinder Scout, Lyme Park
12. View of hills from Wilmslow Road	Pennines: Shining Tor, Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy, Alderley Edge
13. View from Old Hall Lane (from field gate on east side of Old Hall Lane, next to Low Eaves & opposite Dellhaven)	Pennines: Kinder Scout, Lyme Park, Shining Tor, Macclesfield Forest, White Nancy

Map showing Views and Vistas within and from the Woodford Neighbourhood Area



Click [here](#) for a larger view.

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

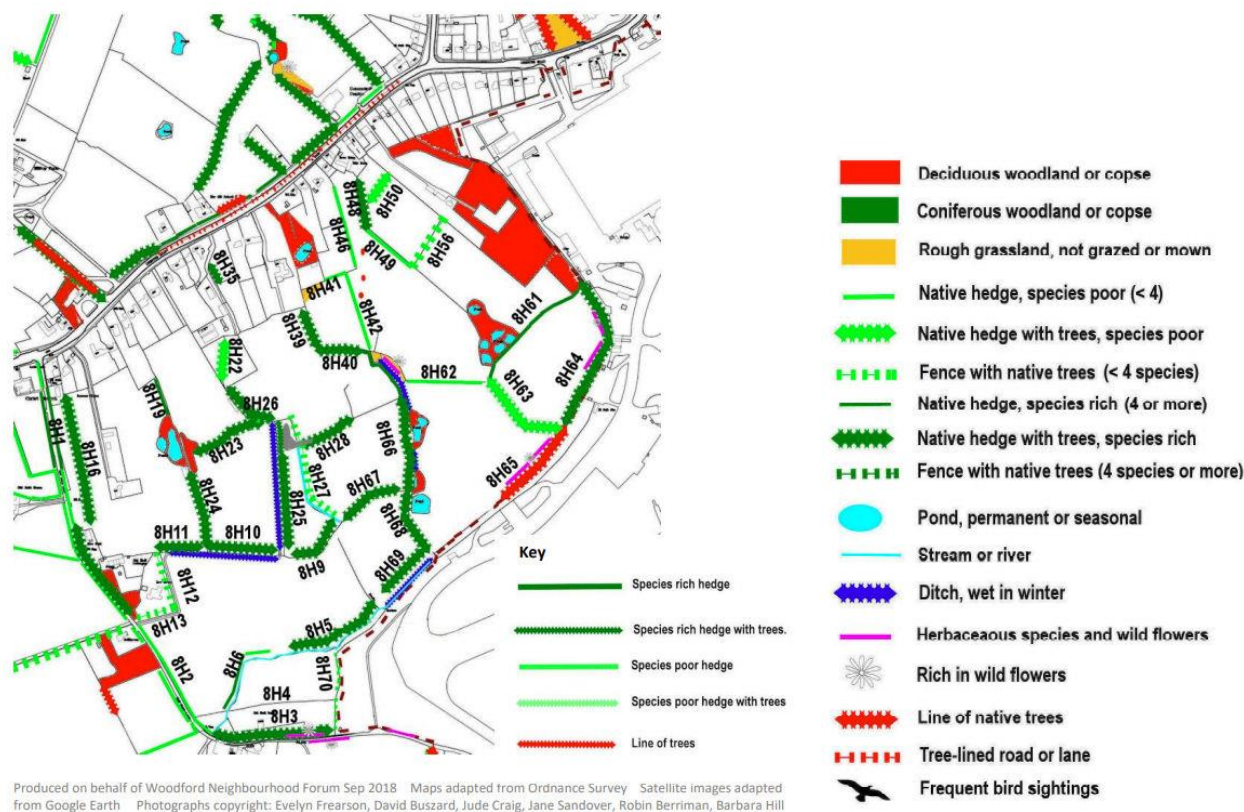
1.	Trees in public places and bordering roads, in pavements and in grass verges along Chester Road, Wilmslow Road Bridle Road, Church Lane, Blossoms Lane, Moor Lane, and Hall Moss Lane
2.	Trees and woodland with Tree Preservation Orders or Ancient Woodland
3.	Mature & veteran trees described and /or 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)

Evidence supporting WNP ENV3

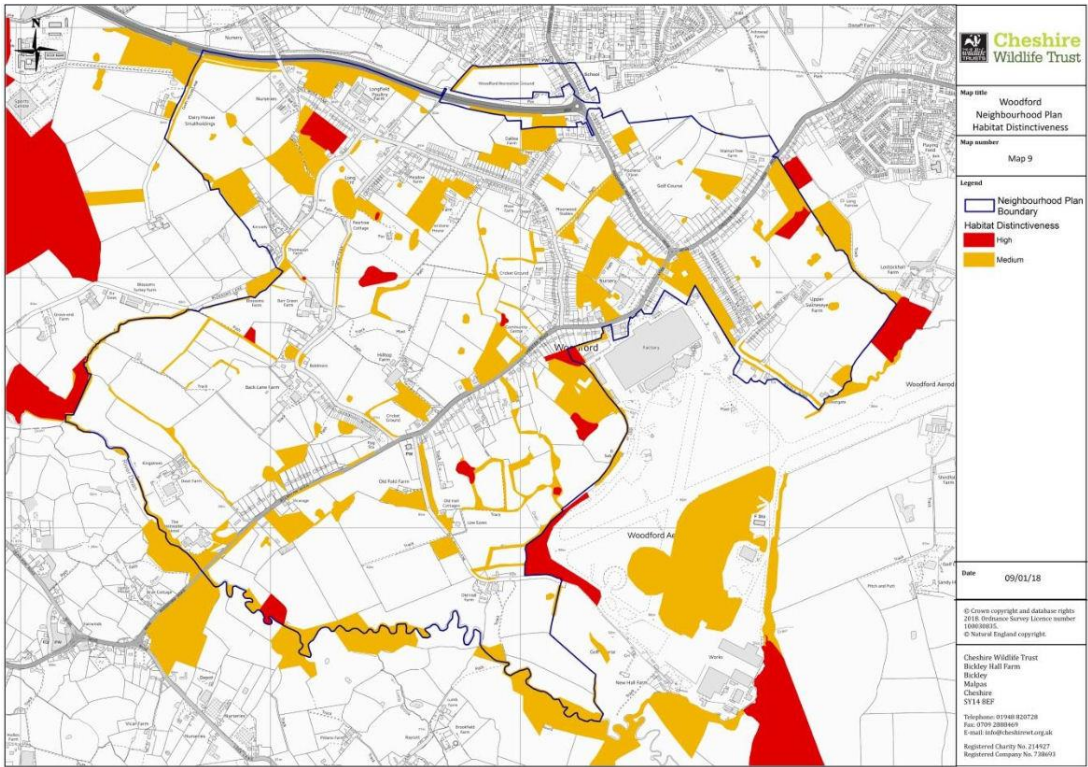
The Woodford Landscape and Environment Survey Report is [here](#)

A high resolution version of the natural features map can be viewed [here](#).

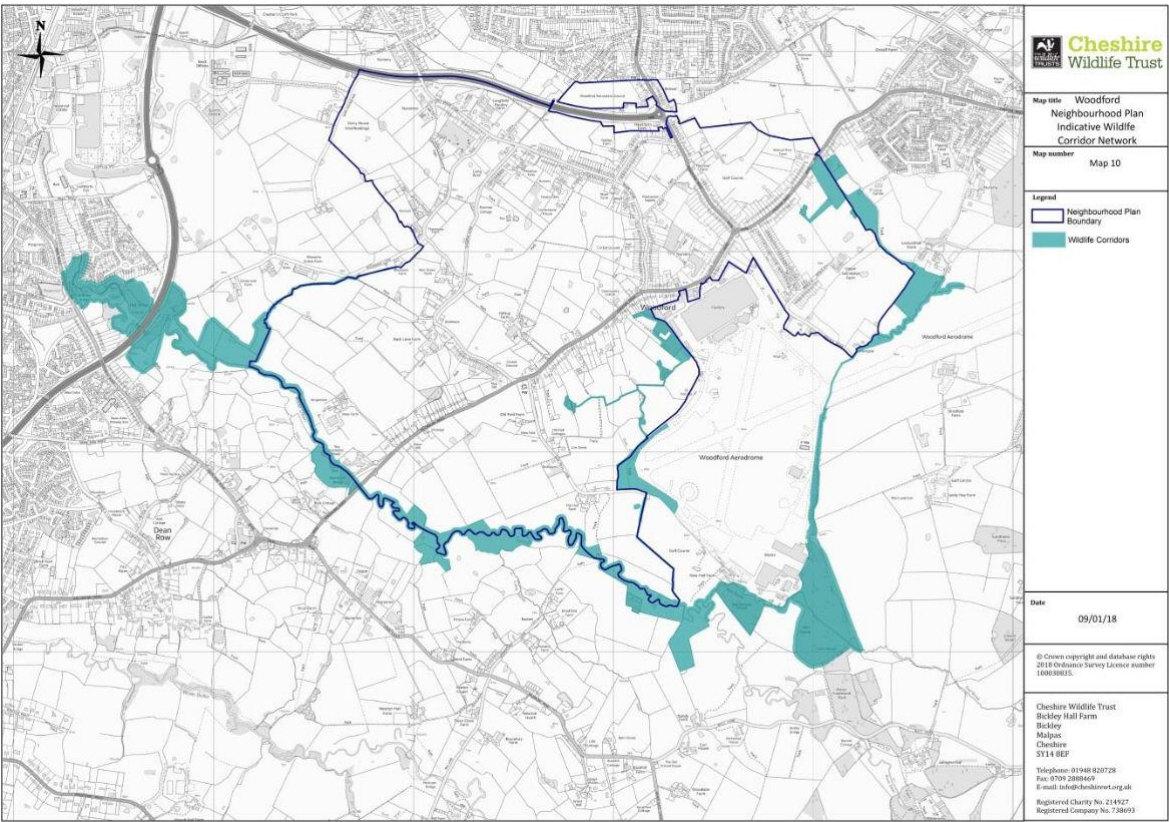
The LSCR is Area 8 in the survey report. See pages 92-102. Map of Area 8 below:



CWT Map showing area of Habitat Distinctiveness (red indicates high level, orange indicates medium level). Reproduced with permission from Cheshire Wildlife Trust



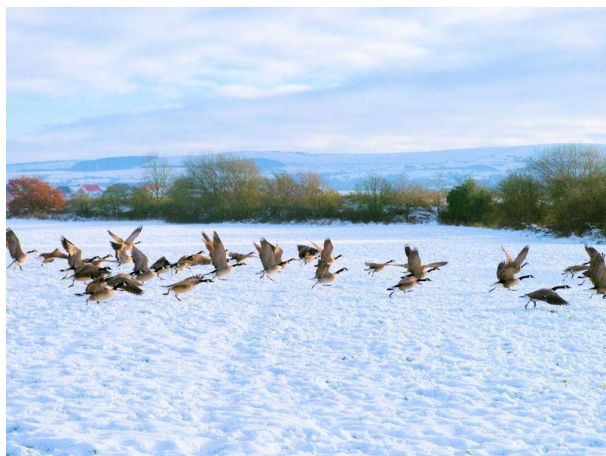
CWT Map showing Wildlife Corridors (marked in blue). Reproduced with permission from Cheshire Wildlife Trust



(iii) Photographs of views and vistas from Land South of Chester Road site

Views of site from Old Hall Lane, WGV in distance and Pennines beyond

Geese in winter



From gateway on Old Hall Lane



Views from within the site

In winter, Alderley Edge in the distance



In summer, trees and grassland on site



Views from within the site

From 99HGB, Croker Hill in the distance



From 99HGB, mature oaks, Lyme Park in the distance



Yours sincerely,

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee