



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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Planning Services
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
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To: Mark Burgess, Planning Officer

Reference: DC/097442

Proposal: Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access for the demolition of Number 23 Hall Moss Lane and erection of a residential development of up to 250 dwellinghouses, with associated open space, landscaping, infrastructure and new site access off Hall Moss Lane.

Location: Land Off Hall Moss Lane, Bramhall, Stockport

1. General Comments

- 1.1. The site is outside of the Woodford Neighbourhood Area, but adjacent to it and likely to have an impact on it.
- 1.2. The site is in Green Belt and subject to Green Belt policies in the NPPF and Stockport Development Plan.
- 1.3. The site is an allocation in the draft Stockport Local Plan which proposes a development of 400 dwellings on the site. The decision on this planning will have implications for the way forward with the Stockport Local. A grant of permission for 250 homes at this stage would complicate the allocation in the Local Plan. If the numbers on the site are reduced by 150, it would be difficult to make up elsewhere without sacrificing other Green Belt locations for development.
- 1.4. We believe that Woodford is already experiencing the effects of over-development. This proposal would put another 250 dwellings very close to the village and exacerbate existing problems, particularly traffic congestion on major routes through the village at peak times.
- 1.5. The potential cumulative impact of development proposals within a small radius threatens to overwhelm local infrastructure, including but not limited to:
 - 1,500 homes plus commercial premises at Handforth Garden Village with 1,500 homes plus commercial premises with potential access on to Hall Moss Lane via Dairyhouse Lane.
 - 1,285 homes in Woodford proposed in the draft Stockport Local Plan

HOM 2.14 Woodford Garden Village Extension: 545 homes
HOM 2.38 Chester Road (Woodford) (part grey belt): 550 homes
HOM 2.27 Jenny Lane: 190 homes

2. Policies relevant to the application

We believe that planning policies relevant to this application include:

2.1. NPPF 2024

2.2. Stockport Development Plan:

- Saved UDP 2011
- Core Strategy 2011

3. Purposes of Green Belt

The Planning Statement notes the classification of the site by the Council as grey belt and that development is therefore not inappropriate. Conversely, we believe that classification of a site as grey belt should not be an automatic green light for development and that the other purposes of the Green Belt and openness should be a consideration where the site is open farmland, as opposed to previously developed land. This site performs an important Green Belt function in protecting against urban sprawl and forms an open green space separating Bramhall, Handforth and Woodford.

4. Surface flooding

Local residents report surface flooding in the fields in wet weather and we note that the Flood Risk Assessment Part 1 states:

“The S19 Flood Report (Appendix B) identifies the A555 as a contributing factor to downstream flooding near the site. Flooding occurred on March 16, 2019, and July 28 & 31, 2019 due to A555 surface water pump failures and prolonged heavy rainfall, leading to the closure of Hall Moss Lane. This could impact emergency access to the site, and these factors should be considered in the design of emergency access routes and the wider drainage strategy.”

The fields will be acting as a natural attenuation tank, providing a buffer for excess rainfall. Development will cover much of the surface with non-permeable materials which will increase the risk of surface flooding and run-off. Adequate solutions to drainage will be a key requirement for any development. We note the drainage strategy diagram shown in Flood Risk Assessment Art 2 and leave to expert evaluation for efficacy.

Woodford residents have experienced significant travel delays and disruption due to recent closures of the A555 due to flooding. The Hall Moss Lane site is adjacent to the A555. We believe that no development should be considered until reliable plans are in place for drainage that will be able to accommodate the expected increases in bouts of intense rainfall due to climate change and not cause further flooding on the A555.

5. Agricultural heritage

We have noted that the Agricultural Land Classification Report found that 8% of the land is Grade 3a and 92% is Grade 3b. We are aware that the NPPF Annex 2 classifies the ‘best and most versatile’ agricultural land as Grades 1-3a, but would like to note that Grade 3b is a valuable resource capable of use for food production, as outlined in Table 1 in the report. This site is part of our national heritage of farmland (in common with proposed development sites in Woodford) that could never be recovered once developed.

6. Housing need and accessibility

We believe that key components in the housing crisis are lack of affordability of market housing and insufficient supply of social housing for those who cannot afford market prices for purchase or rental. There is now significant evidence that increasing the supply of market priced housing does not bring prices down because housing does not respond to supply and demand in the same

way as other commodities. The accumulated evidence from a wide variety of economists over many years, for example [blog by Bank of England staff](#), undermines the reasoning behind the increase in housing targets.

In common with other Green Belt sites on farmland, market priced housing on this site is likely to be beyond the price limit for many prospective buyers. So-called affordable housing at 80% of market value may also be out of reach for many.

Many organisation support the view that there is a crisis in the supply of social housing. Social housing is best located in accessible town centre and district centre locations, close to employment opportunities and amenities. Farmland sites in Green Belt, including this site (in common with proposals in Woodford), do not meet these criteria.

7. Enforcement of agreements and conditions

The Planning Statement proposes 50% affordable housing in line with the Golden Rules for development on grey belt sites. It also states that the precise mix, delivery and allocation of the affordable homes will be agreed via a detailed Affordable Housing Statement to be secured via a planning obligation. Should development be granted permission, monitoring and enforcement of all agreements concerning affordable housing and all conditions to mitigate the impacts of development will be crucial, to ensure that they are not evaded further down the line.

8. Protecting the environment

As outlined in point 4, the site provides a natural “sponge” to soak up excess rainfall.

Natural vegetation on the site also provides a carbon sink, helping to mitigate climate change.

The site currently includes ponds, native hedgerows and mature native trees, including mature oaks. They are notable as valuable habitats for wild life. Native hedgerows provide corridors for wildlife. On this site they will connect with the Woodford network of hedges, trees and ponds on the other side of Hall Moss Lane and at Woodford Recreation Ground. Refs: [Cheshire Wildlife Trust Nature Corridors](#), [Protecting and Enhancing Woodford's Natural Environment](#)

Mature oaks are particularly important habitats. The Woodland Trust notes that a single mature oak can be home to 2,300 species. Ref: [Woodland Trust](#)

Some of these features have taken decades, and in some cases hundreds of years, to reach maturity and their function would take hundreds of year to replace by replanting with immature saplings. If planning permission is granted, we hope that every effort will be made to retain the trees and hedges and to protect their roots during construction.

9. Impact on Highways

We note that the Transport Assessment concludes “*the proposed residential development at Hall Moss Lane (up to 250 dwellings) would not result in a material detrimental impact on existing and future operation of the immediate surrounding local highway network.*”

This does not match the lived experience of residents who already report long queues of traffic at peak times from Hall Moss Lane to Grove Lane and Stanley Road, heading to the A34 at the Stanley Green roundabout; congestion on the A34 towards Stockport; increases in traffic on Moor Lane and Jenny Lane and congestion on the A523 along Woodford Road and through

Bramhall. Given that there are existing problems, it seems unlikely that an additional 250 homes with car users on this site would not make matters worse.

The access from the site on to Hall Moss Lane will need to be carefully assessed for safety for all road users.

Yours sincerely,

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee