



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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To: Tim Hartley
Planning Services
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

5th June 2026

Dear Mr Hartley,

Reference: DC/098620

Proposal: Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for residential development with associated landscaping, sustainable urban drainage, and other infrastructure

Location: Land At Upper Swineseye Farm, Woodford, Stockport

Thank you for notifying Woodford Neighbourhood Forum about this planning application, which lies within the designated Woodford Neighbourhood Area and the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan applies.

1. General Comments and Concerns

- The proposal is submitted ahead of the Stockport Local Plan. It was not an allocation in the draft plan that was submitted for regulation 18 consultation in 2025. We are opposed to speculative developments in Green Belt, which disrupt planning in a co-ordinated and organised manner via the Local Plan process, which will include an Infrastructure Plan.
- The Planning Statement notes that the application is submitted in outline, with all matters reserved.
“4.12 It is noted that the pre-application response was submitted on the basis that the application would be submitted in outline, with all matters reserved apart from primary vehicular access. In the intermediate period between pre-application engagement and submission of this application, access was removed as a reserved matter, and the application is submitted entirely in outline, with all matters reserved.”
We believe that even in this instance, the means of access should be shown on the red outline plan, so the application may be flawed in this respect.
- We question whether this application can be assessed as an “all matters reserved” application because the means of access is a key consideration? There is no obvious access route, except via the Roy Chadwick Way as shown in the Illustrative Masterplan. The Roy Chadwick Way was built to take traffic away from Poynton town centre. A roundabout would disrupt the flow and impair its function as a bypass, which raises serious doubts about the feasibility of this proposal.
- The site is in Green Belt. The applicant claims that the site meets the criteria for grey belt, which we have challenged below.
- Members of the Woodford Neighbourhood Forum are locals who know this site well and are very familiar with its features and characteristics.
- We know that the openness of the Green Belt at this site makes an important contribution to the landscape and rural character of Woodford. A public right of way across the site gives

residents from the wider area access to open countryside with all the mental and physical benefits which that provides.

- 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.
- We believe that school places, healthcare facilities and traffic flows should be reassessed, in the light of 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.
- We note that the Planning Statement refers to the “Design Approach” when addressing Woodford Neighbourhood Plan policies. However, the application has been presented as an outline planning application, so details that would be presented in reserved matters applications are not addressed in this response.

2. Planning History

We note that the Planning Statement states that there is no planning history on the site. However, there was an application in 2022 for infill development on Bridle Road within the red line boundary of this proposal: [DC/084618: Erection of two detached dwellings with associated access and landscaping \(amended plans\), Bridle Road Woodford Stockport](#)

Woodford Neighbourhood Forum submitted objections to this proposal. It was refused by the Council and dismissed at appeal. The Inspector concluded that the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, would harm openness and that the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal did not exist.

3. 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

NPPF 2024

We leave this to the officer’s expertise, but we believe that the proposal does not comply with policies, including but not limited to, the following:

- Paragraph 143, which seeks to prevent encroachment into the countryside
- Paragraph 153, which suggests that planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness.
- Paragraph 154, which sets out the exceptions for inappropriate development in Green Belt.
- Paragraph 155, which sets out circumstances where development in Green Belt is not inappropriate

Stockport UDP

We leave this to the officer's expertise, but we believe that the proposal does not comply with policies, including but not limited to, the following policies concerning control of development in Green Belt:

- Paragraph GBA1.1, which includes Woodford in the extent of the Green Belt.
- Paragraphs GBA1.2, GBA1.5, GBA1.6 and GBA1.7, which list criteria for the control of development within Green Belt.
- Paragraph GBA 2,1, which seeks to protect agricultural land
- Policy LCR1.1, which does not permit development in the countryside unless it protects or enhances the quality and character of the rural area.

Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

We believe that the following policies apply to this proposal:

- ENV1: Respecting views and vistas
- ENV2: Enhancing public rights of way
- ENV3: Protecting Woodford's natural features
- ENV4: Supporting biodiversity
- DEV4: Design of new development

4. Green Belt status

We believe that the site meets many of the purposes of the Green Belt set out in NPPF paragraph 143:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

With the development of the Woodford Garden Village, Woodford has grown from around 500 dwellings in 2013 to over 1,000 and more are permissioned to give a potential for around 1,500 homes in total. The addition of this new proposal would expand the sprawl of development over a wide area to the south and east of the village.

- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

While Woodford is not a town, the green spaces within it, including this site, help to prevent neighbouring towns, including Bramhall, Poynton, Handforth and Cheadle Hulme merging. This site in particular provides separation from Poynton.

- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

This site, along with other Green Belt sites in Woodford, plays an important role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;

We realise that Woodford is not a town so this may not apply, but we wish to point out that it is a historic village with a history of a settlement here dating back to the middle ages, with agriculture being an important part of the way of life here, which contributes to Woodford's special characteristics.

- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

All Green Belt land, including this site, contributes to this purpose.

In our view the site strongly fulfils purposes a) and c)

This view is supported by the pre-application advice and the Green Belt Assessment carried out by LUC on behalf of Stockport Council in 2025. The applicant has included this in the Planning Statement.

The proposal is within parcel SEB 17 in the LUC assessment, which notes that:

“Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. Despite the presence of the A523 to the east, development would reduce the size of the gap between Woodford (including Woodford Garden Village) and Poynton, which would weaken the sense of separation between them.”

The applicant’s attempt to downplay the A523 as a defensible boundary is contradicted by the Council’s own evidence and pre-application response, which highlight weak southern containment and harm to separation between Woodford Garden Village and Poynton.

The parcel was assessed as making a strong contribution to purpose A and a moderate contribution to purpose B:

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

| Purpose A | Purpose B | Purpose C | Purpose D | Purpose E | Grey belt |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strong | Moderate | Strong | Weak/No | Equal | No |

Grey belt

We believe that the site does not meet the criteria for grey belt.

According to NPPF Annex 2 and PPG (Feb 2025), grey belt land must not strongly contribute to purposes (a), (b), or (d) set out in NPPF paragraph 143.

The LUC assessment concludes that:

“The parcel makes a strong or very strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A and therefore does not meet the definition of grey belt land.”

This point is confirmed by the pre-application advice.

Openness of the Green Belt

The site of the proposal is in countryside, comprising agricultural fields crossed by a public right of way. It provides a sense of openness and space between Woodford, Poynton, and Adlington, providing vistas and views towards the Pennines and a sense of continuity with the countryside in Green Belt in Stockport and Cheshire. See Figure 1 below. We believe that the proposal would harm the landscape character and the openness of the Green Belt.

Figure 1: View from footpath 101HGB on the site towards Roy Chadwick Way (in a cutting), and the Pennines beyond Adlington Industrial Estate



5. Housing supply and infrastructure

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.

While we understand a need for houses which people can afford, there is in fact no shortage of high-priced market housing on sites that have already been granted planning permission in and around Woodford and there is a deluge of new proposals for additional such housing on Green Belt sites. Woodford is at increasing risk of significant over-development.

Speculative development proposals such as this threaten to overwhelm local infrastructure before any mitigation measures can be put in place.

In this proposal, the Golden Rules set out in NPPF 2024 paragraphs 156-157 have not been met. We note the proposed the inclusion of 50% affordable housing is a minimum requirement. In this particular area “Affordable Housing” which is 80% of market price or rent (as set out in one of the elements in the definition of Affordable Housing in NPPF 2024 Annex 2: Glossary) is still not affordable for many.

The emerging Stockport Local Plan acknowledges exceptional circumstances for some Green Belt release, but emphasises a sequential approach (brownfield first, then grey belt). The applicant has not demonstrated exhaustion of alternatives.

In this application, the Draft Heads of Terms for any section 106 agreement appear inadequate on infrastructure delivery (education, open space, highways). This conflicts with Core Strategy H-3 and SIE-2.

We believe that very special circumstances do not exist to justify the harm that would be caused by inappropriate development in Green Belt in this case. Even applying the tilted balance (due to the 1.77-year housing land supply), the adverse impacts on the Green Belt, landscape character, agricultural land, and local infrastructure significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

We have 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 Upper Swineseye Farm 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 applaud the achievements of the Council in [regeneration of Stockport Town Centre](#) and increasing the supply of affordable homes there.

6. Agricultural land

We note that in NPPF 2024 section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, paragraph 187 includes the following:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

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;”

We also note that NPPF 2024 Annex 2: Glossary includes the following definition:

“Best and most versatile agricultural land: Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.”

Referring to the Agricultural Land Report submitted with the application, the Planning Statement at paragraph 6.110 states: *“The report identifies that 46% of the Site (9.5 hectares) is classified at subgrade 3a, with the remainder of the land being either subgrade 3b, Grade 5 or ‘other land’.*

Paragraph 6.112 of the Planning Statement states: *“It is inevitable that as part of the proposed development, 9.5 hectares of subgrade 3a agricultural land will be lost, the value of the land is outweighed by other factors.”*

Therefore, 9.5 hectares of “the best and most versatile agricultural land” will be lost.

We believe that the purpose of protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land is to retain its value for future generations for agriculture, the agricultural economy, and food production locally, in order to reduce the need to import food. Soil structures have formed over thousands of years and once developed cannot be returned to their former condition in a short timescale, if ever. Good farmland is a precious resource and part of our national heritage which should not be squandered lightly.

We believe that the harm caused by loss of good agricultural land in this proposal is not outweighed by any benefits.

7. Accessibility and sustainability

The site is in a peripheral location in the village. The southern region of the site is some distance away from Chester Road and the facilities in Woodford or Poynton. For example, it is 1.2 km from the southern perimeter of the site via Bridle Road to the bus stop on Chester Road at Notcutts Garden Centre. It is a similar distance via Woodford Garden Village, to Budgens Store, and 2 km via public rights of way to Poynton station.

Active travel to the nearest railways station, bus stop, local shops and other facilities in Woodford, such as the Woodford Community Centre, Budgens store, the Aviator pub and Woodford School from the southern and eastern parts of the site would only be an option for reasonably fit, active people and a challenge for people with poor mobility and parents with small children.

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

This will inevitably lead to a car dependent development.

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

8. Non-compliance with Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

WNP ENV1: Respecting views and vistas

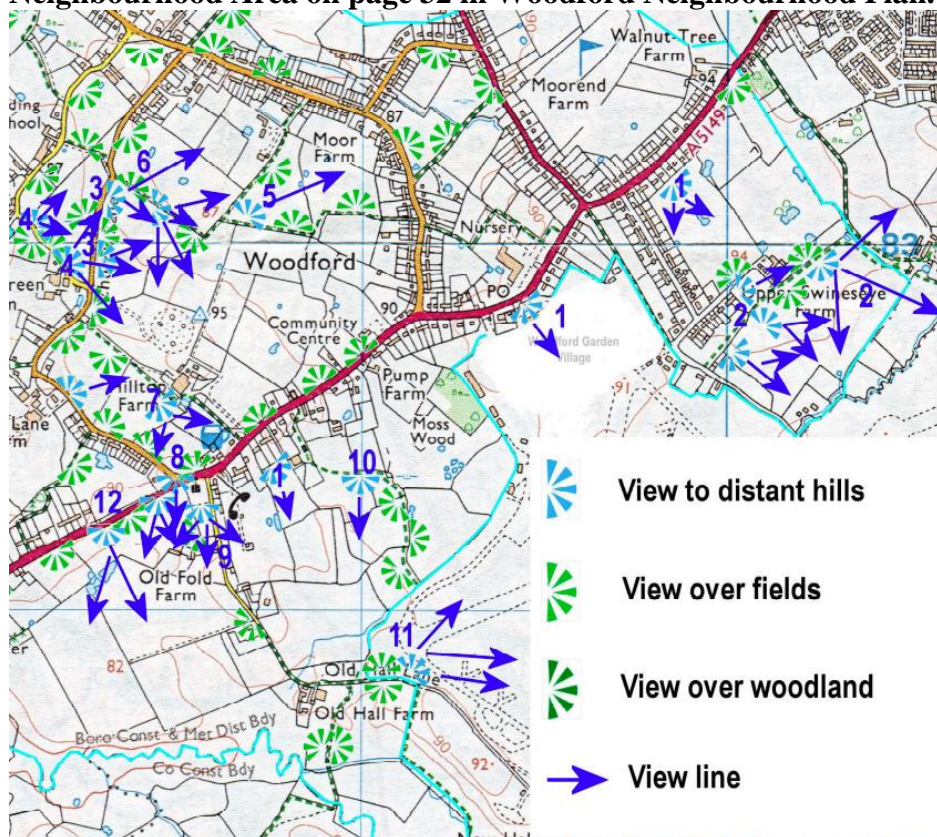
“Development should respect local character. In doing so, it should recognise and take into account the importance of the views and vistas listed in the Table and indicated on the Map below.”

Table 1 includes the view, which would be harmed by this proposal:

“View of hills from Bridle Way and footpaths 101 and 107HGB Pennines: Kinder Scout, Lyme Park”

See Figure 1 in section 4 above and Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Extract from Map showing Views and Vistas within and from the Woodford Neighbourhood Area on page 32 in Woodford Neighbourhood Plan.



The proposal does not comply with this policy.

ENV2: Enhancing public rights of way

“The enhancement of public rights of way throughout the Neighbourhood Area will be supported.”

This policy will apply because public right of way number 101HGB runs through the centre of the site from Bridle Road to the Roy Chadwick Way. We trust that it would be retained and access enhanced.

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.”

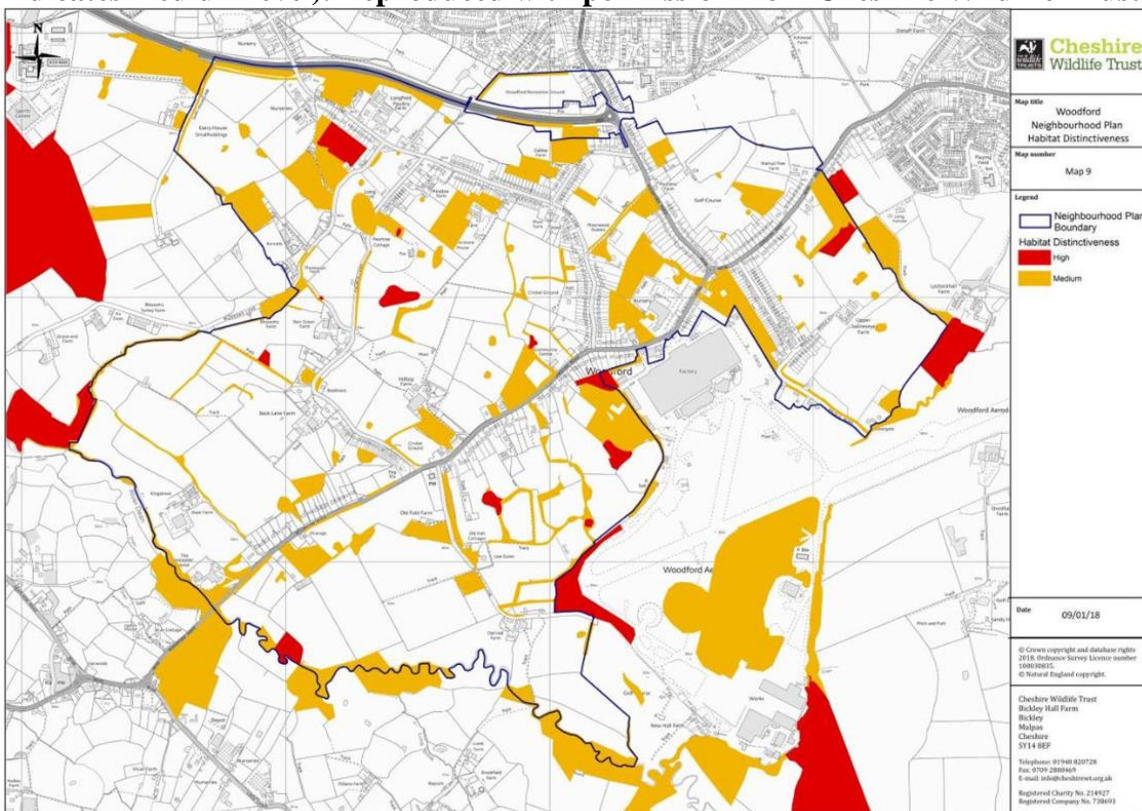
WNP ENV4: Supporting biodiversity

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.

In order to support policies ENV3 and ENV4, environmental surveys conducted by qualified WNF members and by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust identified areas of 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](#).

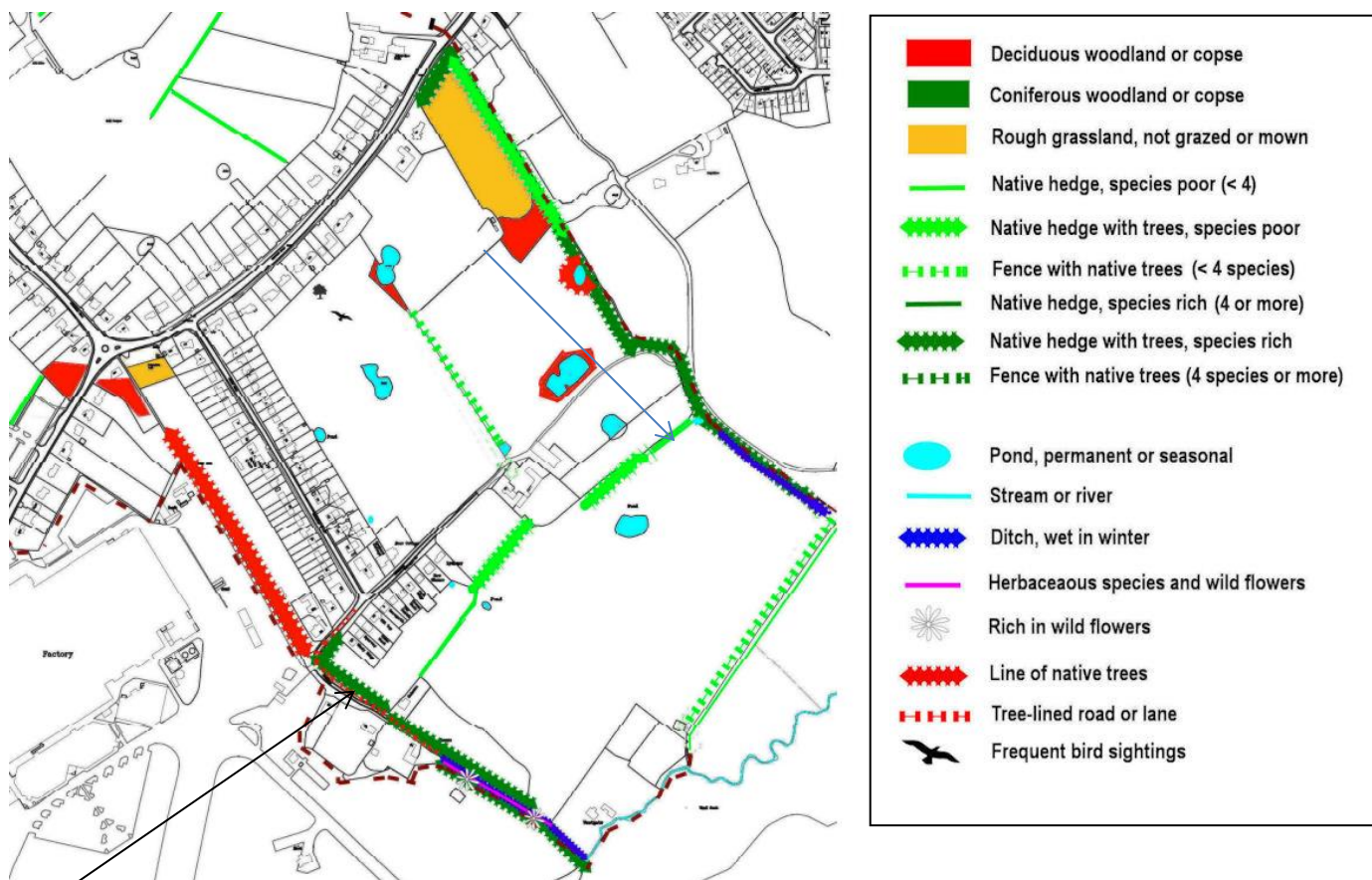
An area of high habitat distinctiveness was identified within the site by CWT as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Map showing area of Habitat Distinctiveness (red indicates high level, orange indicates medium level). Reproduced with permission from Cheshire Wildlife Trust



Natural features on the site were surveyed in 2016 as part of the evidence for the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan. Trees, hedgerows, ponds, ditches, streams, unimproved grassland, wildflowers and bird sightings were recorded. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Map of natural features present on the site during the Landscape and Environment Surveys conducted for the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan



Note that the landowner has removed the species rich native hedge adjacent to the southern end of Bridle Road and there has been drainage of some ponds.

Also note that the surveys and maps shown in Figures 3 and 4 predate the construction of the Roy Chadwick Way.

We are pleased to see that the application proposes retention of some natural features that are key features of the landscape and important habitats:

3.18 As noted above, the proposed development seeks to retain, protect and enhance the existing public right of way that runs across the Site. The proposed development also incorporates a mature tree to the north of the Site, which is subjected to a TPO.

3.19 The design approach has been to retain and protect the existing natural features as far as possible within the proposed development. As such, the development complies with Policy ENV3.

However, 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. Biodiversity net gain measures do not replace habitats in large areas of open countryside.

Replacement of large expanses of green countryside with housing is likely to have a negative impact on carbon emissions and climate change, which would need to be mitigated.

WNP DEV4: 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."

Although design would be an issue for consideration in a reserved matters application, we note that at the outline stage the density of the proposed housing is a consideration in order to be in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood area, as well as retention and enhancement of landscape, wildlife and ecological networks.

9. Summary

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

- The application is for "outline, all matters reserved", but does not include the access in the red outline plan.
- The means of access shown in the illustrative master plan is via a roundabout on the Roy Chadwick Way. This has the potential to impair the function of this road to take traffic away from Poynton town centre and is not likely to be a feasible proposal.
- The site is in Green Belt and does not meet the criteria for grey belt.
- The proposal would harm the openness of the Green Belt and the landscape character.
- The proposal would harm the rural character of Woodford.
- The proposal does not comply with the Golden Rules for development in Green Belt.
- The proposal would result in loss of some of the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- The proposal would cause reduction in habitats and corridors suitable for wildlife and away from human disturbance.
- The proposal does not comply with policies in the NPPF, or Stockport Local Plan, including Woodford Neighbourhood Plan, as outlined above.
- There are no very special circumstances that would justify the harm caused.
- The application is ahead of the Stockport Local Plan and would disrupt co-ordinated planning with appropriate infrastructure.
- The proposal would represent over development in Woodford and would exacerbate the ever increasing strain on existing infrastructure, including roads, education and health facilities.

Yours sincerely,

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee