



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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

22nd June 2026

Dear Mr Hartley,

Reference: DC/099029

Proposal: Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for residential development of up to 130 dwellings with site access from Moor Lane, open space, landscaping, drainage, ecological enhancements and other associated works.

Location: 152 Moor Lane, Woodford, Stockport, SK7 1PJ

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. There have now been several planning applications for large developments on Green Belt land in and around Woodford ahead of the Stockport Local Plan. The planning considerations are very similar and aspects of the responses are repetitive, apart from matters concerning the details of the location.

1. General Comments and Concerns

- The proposal is submitted ahead of the Stockport Local Plan. It was not an allocation in the draft plan, which 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.
- We note that the application is submitted in outline, with all matters reserved, so details that would be presented in reserved matters applications are not addressed in this response.
- The site is in Green Belt. The applicant claims that the site meets the criteria for grey belt, which we have challenged below.
- The openness of the Green Belt at this site and the separation from neighbouring development make an important contribution to the landscape and rural character of Woodford.
- The proposed access on to a busy, narrow road is a major concern. A particular concern is the exacerbation of the increase in traffic on Moor Lane, which is a narrow road with many accesses. There are safety concerns for drivers and pedestrians relating to the proposed access near to the junction of Church Lane and the place where footpath 16CG emerges and crosses Moor Lane into Church Lane, which has no pavements.
- Some of the members of the Woodford Neighbourhood Forum are locals who have lived here for several decades. We know this site well and are very familiar with its features and characteristics.

- This site is bordered by homes on Moor Lane and Jenny Lane, with a significant gap in development along Moor Lane, which is one of the features that the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect.
- A frequently used public right of way 16CG, which is part of the Fred Perry Way, borders the site to the northwest and provides a much appreciated route between trees with views over adjacent fields comprising the Moor Lane site and Lyme Park and the Pennines in the distance. See Figures 1, 2, 3 and 9.
- The scheme, together with proposed changes to roads and public rights of way, would have an urbanising effect on the locality.
- The site is very prone to prolonged flooding in wet weather and standing water is a regular occurrence.
- 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. See Section 10 and Figure 12 below.
- Two of these proposals, including this one and the proposal for Jenny Lane (Richborough), would put significant numbers of additional dwellings with access onto Moor Lane.
- 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.

Figure 1: Footpath 16CG bordering the site, which can be seen to the right



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

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
- Paragraph 156, which sets out the Golden Rules for development in Green Belt (if the application proceeds to reserved matters).

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.
- TD2.2 Quiet Lanes which does not permit development which would increase traffic on a Quiet Lane

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

3. 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;

As the Planning Statement submitted with the application notes, Woodford is a village, while Bramhall and Handforth are large built up areas. We might also add that Poynton is a near-by large built up area. Poynton and Handforth are towns. Woodford is currently washed over by Green Belt and is characterised by ribbon development separated by agricultural fields. As such, it checks the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas such as Bramhall, Handforth and Poynton. Focussing on the specific parcel of land which includes the Moor Lane site, we believe that this parcel contributes strongly to function a), as outlined in the LUC Green Belt Assessment below.

b) 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 bordering the A555 from encroachment.

c) 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.

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

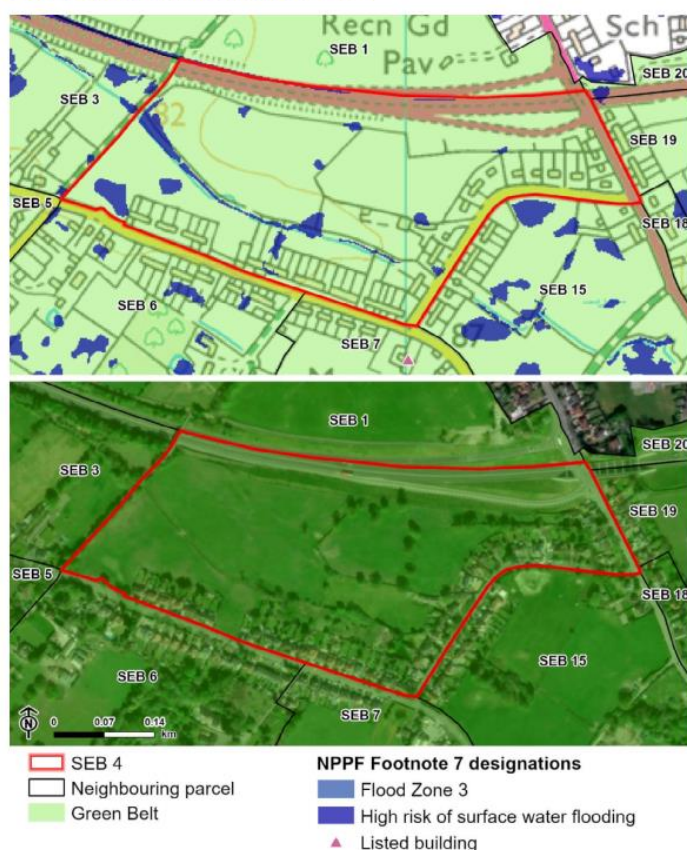
All Green Belt land, including this site, contributes to this purpose.

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

This view is supported by the Green Belt Assessment carried out by LUC on behalf of Stockport Council in 2025. See below

The site is within parcel SEB 4 in the LUC assessment.

Contribution of land in Parcel SEB 4



The LUC Green Belt Assessment for Parcel SEB 4 states:

“Purpose A – Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas: Strong contribution

- o The parcel is near to a large built-up area. Bramhall is defined as part of a large built-up area, and Handforth is a town and so is also defined as a large built-up area*
- o The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.*
- o There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.*
- o There are physical features in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. The parcel is partially contained by existing development within the Green Belt to the south, south-east and east.*
- o Development in the parcel would create an incongruous pattern of development by breaching strong physical features currently restricting and containing an urban area. Development would extend beyond the A555.”*

The parcel was assessed by LUC 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	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal	No

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 Planning Statement submitted with the application claims that the site meets the criteria for Grey Belt:

“8.19. The site meets the definition of Grey Belt, and the development would utilise Grey Belt land. The site does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143 of the NPPF and 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 disagree with the applicant’s claim and note that 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.”

Openness of the Green Belt

The site of the proposal comprises agricultural fields bordered by a public right of way (CG16, Fred Perry Way). It provides a sense of openness and space between the A555 and dwellings on Moor Lane and Jenny Lane We believe that the proposal would harm the rural character of Woodford, the local landscape character and the openness of the Green Belt. See Figures 2, 3 and 9.

Figure 2: View across the site from footpath 16CG



Figure 3: View across the site from the proposed access on Moor Lane



4. Traffic safety and access

The Planning Statement does not refer to the access, but the Movement and Access Parameter Plan and the Design (Figure 4) and the Access Statement part 3 submitted with the application show access on to Moor Lane near the junction with Church Lane.

Figure 4: Drawing from the Movement and Access Parameter Plan



Figure 5: Position of the proposed access relative to the junction with Church Lane and footpath 16CG



The proposed access via Moor Lane will further increase traffic on this road. It is also likely to result in an increase in traffic using Church Lane as a short cut to Chester Road to reach destinations in southerly direction. We note that the Transport Assessment submitted with the application concluded that *“...the proposed development will not have a severe residual cumulative impact on the operation of the road network or an unacceptable impact on highway safety.....”*

Church Lane has Quiet Lane status so the proposal is in conflict with Stockport UDP policy TD2.2 Quiet Lanes, which states that:

“Developments and highway improvements that have an impact upon rural roads, which would detract from their character and their value as Quiet Lanes, will only be permitted where they can be justified on safety grounds. Any development that would result in a significant increase in traffic or conflict between different users of these lanes will not be permitted.”

The lived experience of local residents suggests otherwise. Moor Lane is a narrow road with many accesses. Traffic calming measures were introduced as part of the mitigation for the Woodford Garden Village development to reduce speed and deter traffic. Despite those measures, traffic density has increased dramatically in recent years. Residents currently report difficulty in emerging from their drives throughout the day, and congestion at busy times. It is completely unacceptable to have the traffic from an additional 130 houses emerging on to this road. The proximity of the proposed access to the junction with Church Lane is potential hazard for drivers trying to exit either road at busy times and for pedestrians using the Fred Perry Way, CG16. See Figure 5. Church Lane is already used as a short cut between Moor Lane and Chester Road.

We note the proposals for 16GG outlined in section 8 of the planning statement aimed at enhanced accessibility and pedestrian safety

“8.8. The proposals will also improve PRow off-site by widening to 3m, surfacing and lighting the Fred Perry Way between Moor Lane and the A555 bridge, to provide a shared path.”

We are concerned that these measures would increase the urbanising effect of the whole scheme on the village character and lighting can have a negative effect on wildlife.

5. Flooding

We are very surprised by and sceptical about the conclusions of the Flood Risk Assessment Report submitted with the application, which includes the following statements:

“Construction of the proposed development will not increase flood risk on or off the site. No mitigation measures are considered necessary to mitigate the risk from infrastructure failure.”

Locals know that parts of the southwest end of the site are submerged under surface flooding in wet weather and during the winter months, presenting challenges for development. There have been reported episodes of flooding in Moor Lane threatening to flood properties. See Figure 7.

It is well established that fields such as this act as soakaways for rainfall and that covering the surface with the impermeable materials associated with development can result in flooding of homes and roads. This field is adjacent to the A555, which is notorious for episodes of serious flooding resulting in closure. The Council is undertaking drainage from Woodford Recreation ground on the other side of the A555, taking water towards Spath Brook with the aim of reducing this problem. Spath Brook leads into Handforth and has caused flooding there in the past, so there will be a limit to how much extra water can be diverted that way.

A small stream running through this site, Handforth Brook, leads to the River Dean. See Figure 6, Water management and drainage will be serious issues to solve before this site can be considered suitable for development, especially as episodes of intense rainfall are predicted to increase with climate change.

Figure 6: Handforth Brook crosses the site



Figure 7: Flooding on Moor Lane at the proposed site entrance



6. Housing supply and infrastructure

We note that the Planning Statement submitted with this application refers to GMSF. There were three iterations of GMSF between 2016 and 2020. The Moor Lane site was not allocated for development in any of them and, as the Planning Statement points out, it was not allocated in the draft Stockport Local Plan that was presented for regulation 18 consultation in 2025.

The Planning Statement makes the following allegation:

“5.19. However, the Council took certain politically motivated decisions to pull out of the GMSF in December 2020 and therefore no such plan provision was brought forward in Woodford.”

It is not clear why the applicant has chosen to quote figures for housing needs over 20 years when the Council is working with figures for 17 years.

The Planning Statement states:

“5.27. Indeed, the latest standard methodology for calculating the minimum LHN, which is applicable in this case because the Core Strategy housing target is now more than five years old, sets a minimum need of 1,861 dwellings per annum (Housing Needs Assessment 2025). This represents a 378% increase on the Core Strategy requirement and a need to deliver 37,220 new homes over the next 20 years.”

The paper entitled Addressing our development needs October 2025, which was presented by the Council with the draft Stockport Local, sets out the housing needs calculation as follows:

“14) Therefore, the overall housing need for Stockport for the plan period is $1,870 \times 17 = 31,790$.”

The Planning Statement refers to the shortfall in meeting the housing needs on brownfield sites as follows:

“5.30. Indeed, the Draft Local Plan is the first time the Green Belt boundaries have been reviewed in Stockport for a significant number of years. Given that the Council have maintained a brownfield first approach in the Draft Local Plan (as confirmed at paragraph 259 of that document), even after allowing for existing and potential urban supply and accounting for additional delivery from small unidentified sites, there remains a shortfall of 15,384 dwellings (as confirmed at paragraph 262).”

Paragraph 262 in the Stockport Local Plan document refers to a different number as follows:

262) The overall figure which this process identifies, including existing permissions and allowances for delivery of 8,000 homes (gross) in the town centre, in district centres and for ‘small sites’ totals 16,406. This leaves a shortfall against housing need of 15,484.

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 and that insufficient brownfield sites have been found to meet the mandatory target required for the draft Stockport Local Plan.

We have included the points below in responses to other speculative development proposals submitted ahead of the Local Plan and they are equally applicable here.

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.

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

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 Moor Lane 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.

7. Agricultural land

A hay crop is currently growing on the site and the site was used for sheep grazing over the winter.

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.”

The Agricultural Land Classification And Considerations reported submitted with the application found that 42% of the land was grade 3a and 58% was grade 3b (table 1 on page 5)

On page 6 the report states:

“The Site is made up of a mix of Subgrade 3a and 3b, agricultural land, therefore the Site contains BMV agricultural land. Soil wetness was found to be the most limiting factor across the site. Where the site is graded as Subgrade 3b the topsoils were found to be a sandy clay loam that are waterlogged, leading to a wetness class of IV.”

This acknowledges that 42% of the land is the best and most versatile agricultural land and would also appear to be evidence of water logging on the site.

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. The economic arguments presented in the Planning Statement miss that point. Brownfield sites can be used for housing, they cannot be used for agriculture.

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

8. Accessibility and sustainability

We support this statement in the pre-application advice from the council:

“It is agreed that the proposal would accord with point b above however as set out below, the site is not considered to be in a sufficiently sustainable for the scale and nature of the development proposed thus conflicting with point c. With regard to point d, compliance with the Golden Rules in respect of affordable housing, necessary improvement to infrastructure and the provision of green spaces cannot be confirmed at this point in time however I understand that you are aware of the requirements in this respect. Having regard to the above it is not agreed that the development is compliant with paragraph 155 and as such it would be inappropriate in the Green Belt. Any formal submission would therefore need to pay regard to NPPF paragraph 153.”

The site is not suitable for “Affordable Housing” in the form of social housing because there are few local employment opportunities, few local amenities and public transport is limited.

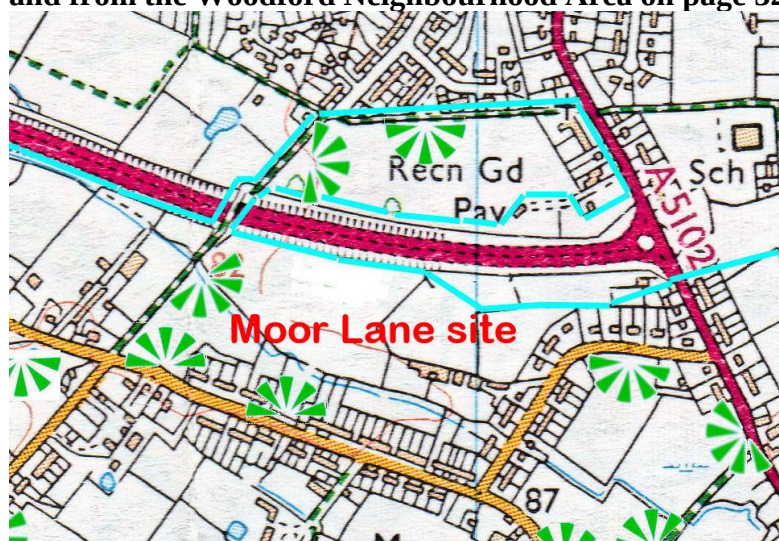
Therefore, the proposal does not comply with NPPF 2024, paragraphs 110 and 155, which require development to be in a sustainable location.

9. 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.”

Figure 8: Extract relating to the Moor Lane site 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 because it will harm the vistas marked on the map (Figure 8) and shown in figures 2, 3 and 9.

Figure 9: View to Lyme Park across the site from footpath 16CG



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 16CG is adjacent to the border of the site. While improvements to the surface would be welcomed, we do not support removal of native trees which give the route its charm, nor do we support the introduction of lighting which can disrupt wildlife and would have an urbanising effect. Enhancing without urbanising would be acceptable.

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

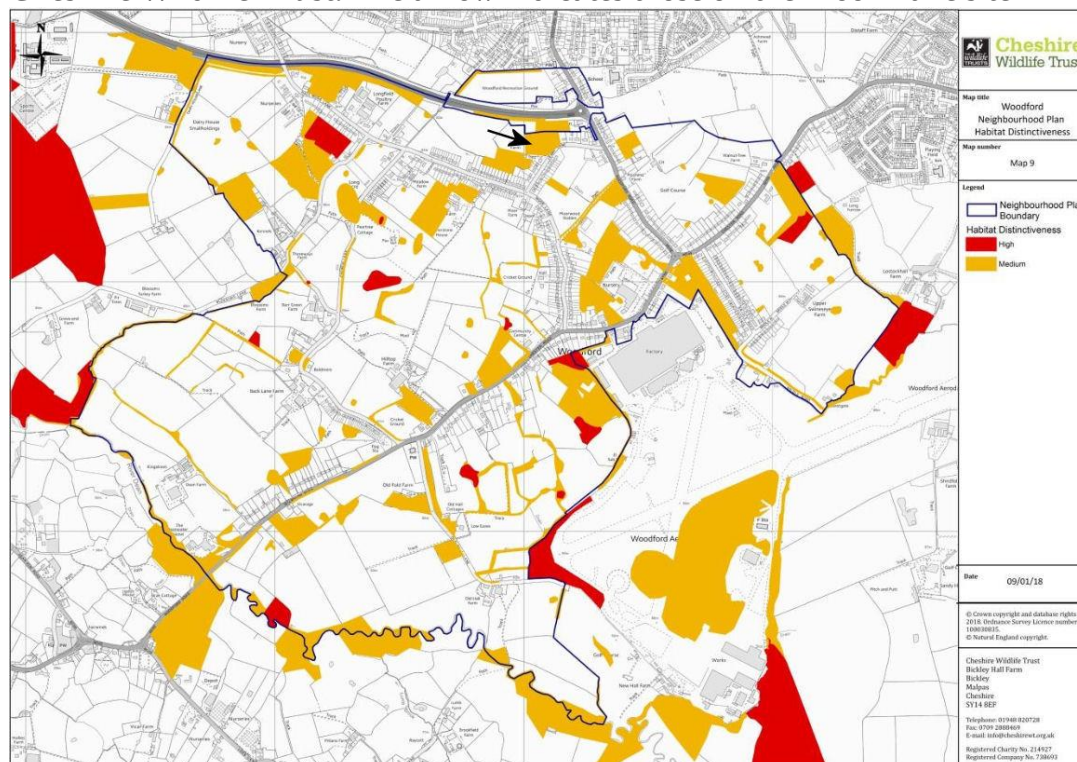
The conservation, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity, including that found in open spaces, trees and hedgerows, in order to promote and support wildlife and other forms of biodiversity will be supported. Development should, where viable and deliverable, achieve net gains in biodiversity.

Considering ENV3 and ENV4 together, the detailed Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report presented with the application are welcomed and would require detailed analysis should the application reach reserved matters stage, in order to assess potential harms and measures needed to avoid them.

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 medium habitat distinctiveness was identified within the site by CWT as shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Map showing area of Habitat Distinctiveness reproduced with permission from Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The arrow indicates those on the Moor Lane site



Natural features in the Woodford Neighbourhood Area 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. We were unable to discover the identity of the owner of the Moor Lane site at the time in order to gain permission to enter the site, so the features were viewed with binoculars from the public right of way. Therefore, the results for this area shown in Figure 11 are much more limited compared with other areas of Woodford.

The Moor Lane site includes a small stream, native hedgerows and trees, which add to the character of the area and provide habitats for wildlife. Locals have reported foxes, rabbits, and birds, including owls. Mature native trees, including oaks which support many species, are present on the site and in neighbouring properties. The trees, including their roots, should be carefully protected. Lighting can have a negative impact on wildlife, especially birds and bats.

Figure 11: Extract from the Map showing Key Natural Features in the Woodford Neighbourhood Area on page 37 in the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan



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.

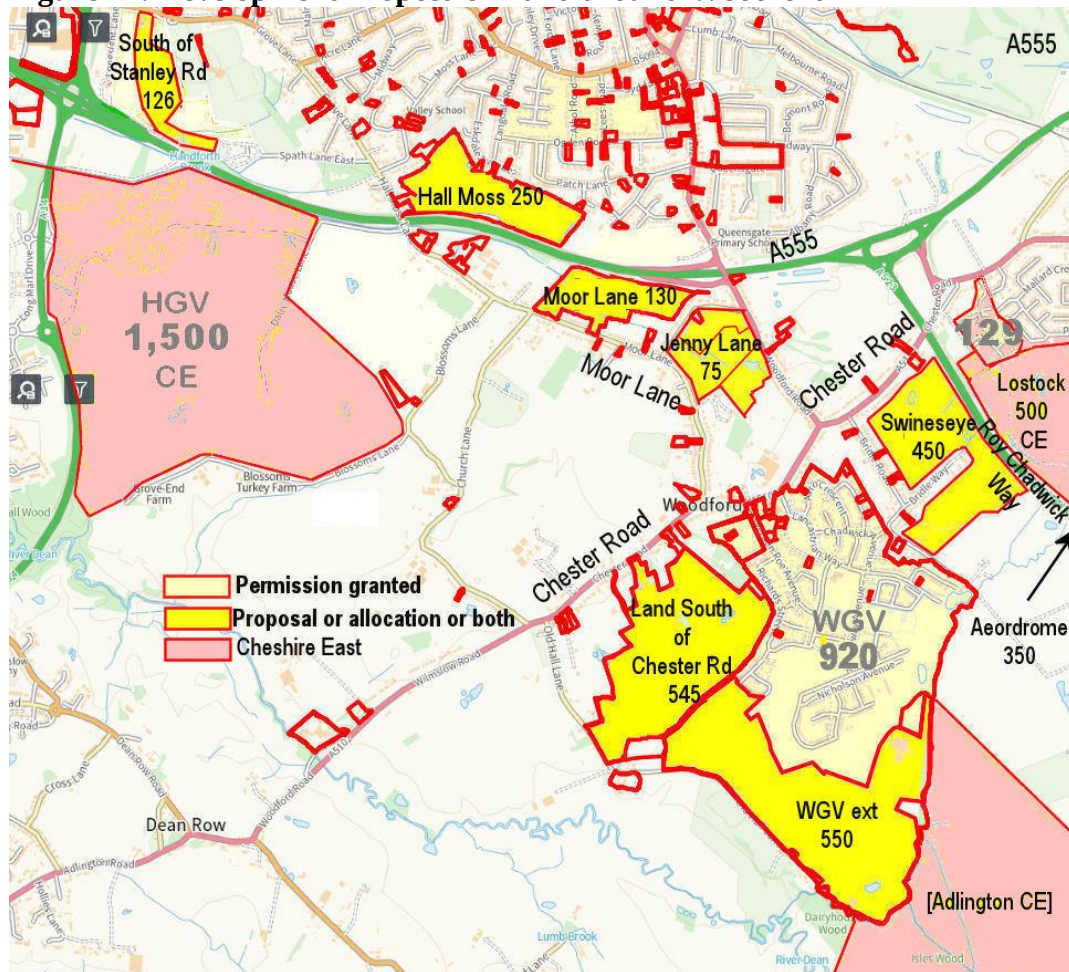
10. Cumulative impact of development proposals

There are concerns about over-development in and around Woodford and we hope the Council will take this into account in determining this application. Woodford was a village of 550 houses in 2013 when work on the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan commenced.

If all the current development proposals were to gain permission, then there would over 5,000 dwellings within a short radius of Woodford, putting huge pressure on infrastructure, including roads, education and health care facilities. Figure 12 below illustrates the scale of the problem.

Facilities remain much the same today as they were in 2013, apart from the addition of Woodford School in Woodford Garden Village, which is already oversubscribed. A commercial centre that was granted planning permission in 2023 has yet to materialise and it is not clear whether all the Section 106 agreements associated with the planning permission for Woodford Garden Village in 2015 have been fulfilled. These measures were intended to mitigate the impact of 920 new dwellings. Many more dwellings than that are now proposed.

Figure 12: Development Proposals in and around Woodford



The numbers on the map indicate the number of dwellings proposed at each site.

11. Summary

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

- 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 means of access via Moor Lane will exacerbate increased traffic on Moor Lane and increase traffic on Church Lane, which is a Quiet Lane.
- The proposal would result in loss of some of the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- 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 site is not allocated for development in the draft Stockport Local Plan.
- 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