



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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

13 August 2026

Dear Jane,

Reference: DC/099650

Proposal: Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for the erection of a residential development with public open space, landscaping, parking and associated site infrastructure.

Location: Land at Jenny Lane, Woodford

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

General Comments and Concerns

1. This site is of key importance to the character of Woodford, separating ribbon development on Woodford Road and Moor Lane, contributing to the open, semi-rural ambience.
2. The proposed access to the site via Moor Lane, which is a busy, narrow road, will have a major impact on the residents living on Moor Lane.
3. Interpretation of the criteria for distinguishing Grey Belt from Green Belt has been a key issue since the introduction of NPPF 2024, which along with the perceived shortage of housing land, has given rise to a large number of development proposals in Woodford. It has also been a factor in the choice of allocations for the Stockport Local Plan. The Grey Belt concept is subjective and opinions may vary.
4. The current interpretation of Grey Belt means that anywhere in Woodford can meet the criteria for Grey Belt and the protection afforded by Green Belt effectively ceases to exist anywhere in the village.
5. We accept that the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan needs updating to acknowledge NPPF 2024 and the concept of Grey Belt, but it remains part of the Stockport Development Plan and many policies are still relevant.
6. The cumulative impact of the volume of large and small proposals, some of which have now been granted permission, on landscape character, environment and infrastructure is significant and cannot be ignored in either the short term or the long term.

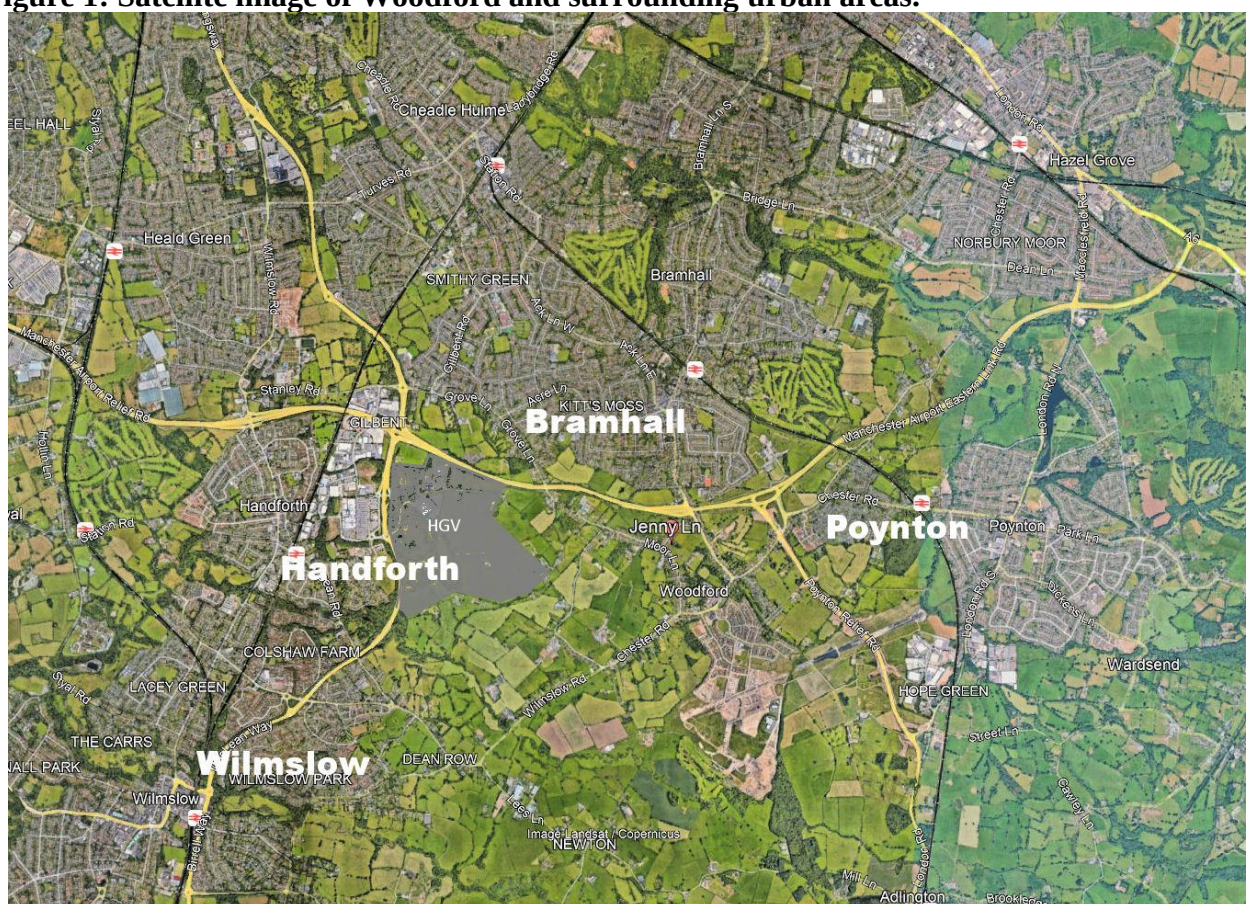
7. While the emotional impact of such proposals on existing residents may not be a material consideration in determining planning applications, we feel it is important to raise it here for the elected representatives who may read this response.
8. In the event that planning permission is granted, then certain features of the proposal are welcomed including: a varied mix of housing types, retention of existing trees, reinforcement of existing hedges, clearance of invasive species biodiversity net gain, connected greens and pedestrian routes, mitigation measures to protect, maintain and enhance ecological features during the operational phase of development, and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

We address each of the concerns in more detail below.

Interpretation of Grey Belt

Satellite images reveal the role Woodford Green Belt plays in separating neighbouring urban areas, Bramhall, Wilmslow, Handforth and Poynton, some of which are towns.

Figure 1: Satellite image of Woodford and surrounding urban areas.



We have noted that the NPPG recommends that, in Local Plan preparation, land is divided into parcels for assessment against the purposes of Green Belt. The advice in the NPPG for development management does not appear to suggest a minimum size of plot for Grey Belt assessment, but we note that, as the parcel or plot size decreases, so does the likelihood of fulfilling the three key purposes of Green Belt. It seems inconsistent to assess whether small areas are Grey Belt, but then to assess the potential harm caused by their removal from Green Belt against the whole plan area.

We are also aware of a number of appeal decisions across the country, including the one at 456 Chester Road in Woodford, where the planning inspector has assessed the specific site of the

development proposal against the three key purposes of Green Belt, even when it involved a single house on a small plot.

Very small sites, especially those for a single dwelling, are highly unlikely to meet the three key purposes of Green Belt used to identify Grey Belt. The consequence is that Green Belt protection is effectively lost and development could proceed anywhere in Woodford in successive small site permissions. We believe that this is an unintended consequence of the Grey Belt policy, not a desirable outcome, and potentially open to challenge.

Assessment against the three criteria for Grey Belt

As explained above, it is unlikely that a site the size of this proposal could achieve any of the three functions, as a direct result of its small size. However we have looked at the criteria from our local perspective.

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

The site is adjacent to Woodford Road where urban sprawl is encroaching. Just recently nine new dwelling have been permitted at 181 Woodford Road opposite this site. Bramhall is a large built up area very close-by. There is another development proposal at Moor Lane. These two developments would fill in the gaps that help to restrict sprawl from Bramhall.

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

The satellite image in Fig 1 shows the close proximity of neighbouring towns. Removal of this site from Green Belt could result in successive, subsequent developments in Woodford, resulting in the towns of Poynton, Handforth and Wilmslow and the large built-up area of Bramhall merging.

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

This is unlikely to apply, although Woodford is a historic settlement, as are Bramhall and Handforth. The Green Belt in Woodford preserves its rural setting and reflects its history as a settlement dating back to the Middle Ages and focussed on agriculture.

We suggest an independent review or clarification of the precise scoring against purposes (a)/(b)/(d), to determine whether the site, or parts of it, make a stronger contribution than assessed, particularly regarding separation of sprawl and importance of gaps in ribbon development.

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

Woodford Neighbourhood Plan (WNP)

We have noted the comments in officers' reports and accept that the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan needs updating to acknowledge NPPF 2024 and the concept of Grey Belt, but it remains part of the Stockport Development Plan. We realise that NPPF is on the top rung in the planning hierarchy, but we believe that the vision and objectives of the WNP are still relevant and that all the policies relating to design, natural features, biodiversity, employment and community facilities apply equally

to Previously Developed Land, Grey Belt and Green Belt land. Indeed they have been used in determining sites on PDL, such as Blossoms Kennels (DC/088660) and Flora Cottage (DC/086482). Only DEV 1 and DEV 2 are specific to Green Belt sites.

The vision of WNP is:

“To manage and support beneficial change whilst retaining and enhancing Woodford’s rural identity, character quality of life and sense of community.”

The objectives are:

“Environment:

To preserve and protect the openness of the Green Belt, the rural character, the landscape, important views, natural features and biodiversity.

Employment:

To seek to protect and support local employment.

Community:

To preserve and enhance recreational and heritage assets to promote a healthy community.

Development:

To provide variety and mix that meets local needs and manage limited infilling, including residential, employment and community uses.”

Policies relevant to this application include:

ENV 1: Respecting views and vistas

These include views and vistas across the site from Moor Lane, Cinder track, Woodford Road and Jenny Lane.

ENV 2: Enhancing public rights of way

The intention of this policy was to ensure that new PROW were welcomed, existing ones remained open, stiles were maintained and bordering hedges were cut. Urbanising changes were not envisaged.

ENV 3: Protecting natural features

This includes native trees, hedgerows, ponds and grass verges.

Removal of street trees, hedges and grass verges would not be compliant with this policy

The proposal outlined in the Planning Statement to retain and reinforce existing hedgerows and mature trees to improve structure and screening, is welcomed.

ENV 4: Enhancing biodiversity

The proposed biodiversity net gain outlined in the Planning Statement is welcomed. On site enhancements are preferred. Off-site enhancement does not compensate for local loss.

COM 3: Woodford Heritage assets

Moor Farm, a Grade II listed building is close to the site on the opposite side of Moor Lane

The proposal should be assessed for any impact on its setting.

DEV 4: Design of new development

Compliance with this policy will need to be assessed at the reserved matters application stage.

We trust that the proposal will be assessed against these policies, even if the site is deemed to be Grey Belt.

As this is an outline application high-quality integration, biodiversity net gain and active travel delivery should be secured.

Landscape character

Ribbon development on Moor Lane and Woodford Road is separated by fields which provide a sense of openness and contribute to a more rural ambience than neighbouring Bramhall, Wilmslow, Handforth and Poynton. See Figure 2. Our residents' surveys conducted during preparation of the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan revealed the importance of agricultural fields in private ownership and natural green vegetation visible from houses, roads and Public Rights Of Way. This informed the vision, objectives and policies in the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan. Residents have stayed here or have moved here, choosing those features in preference to the greater convenience of a more urban location.

Figure 2: View from Moor Lane over the site to Woodford Road



Traffic

Moor Lane is a narrow road with many accesses. A new access point on Moor Lane would increase traffic and create additional hazards for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. 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 not acceptable to have the traffic from an additional 75 houses emerging on to this road. We question whether proposed calming and capacity claims fully address peak-hour and cumulative effects.

We suggest that there is a need for independent traffic data or residents' evidence of existing junction and driveway difficulties.

Planning application and an allocation in the Stockport Local Plan

The site is part of an allocation for development in the draft Stockport Local Plan, which may complicate the Local Plan process, and the application is ahead of the Stockport Local Plan, which may disrupt co-ordinated planning with appropriate infrastructure.

Cumulative impact of development proposals

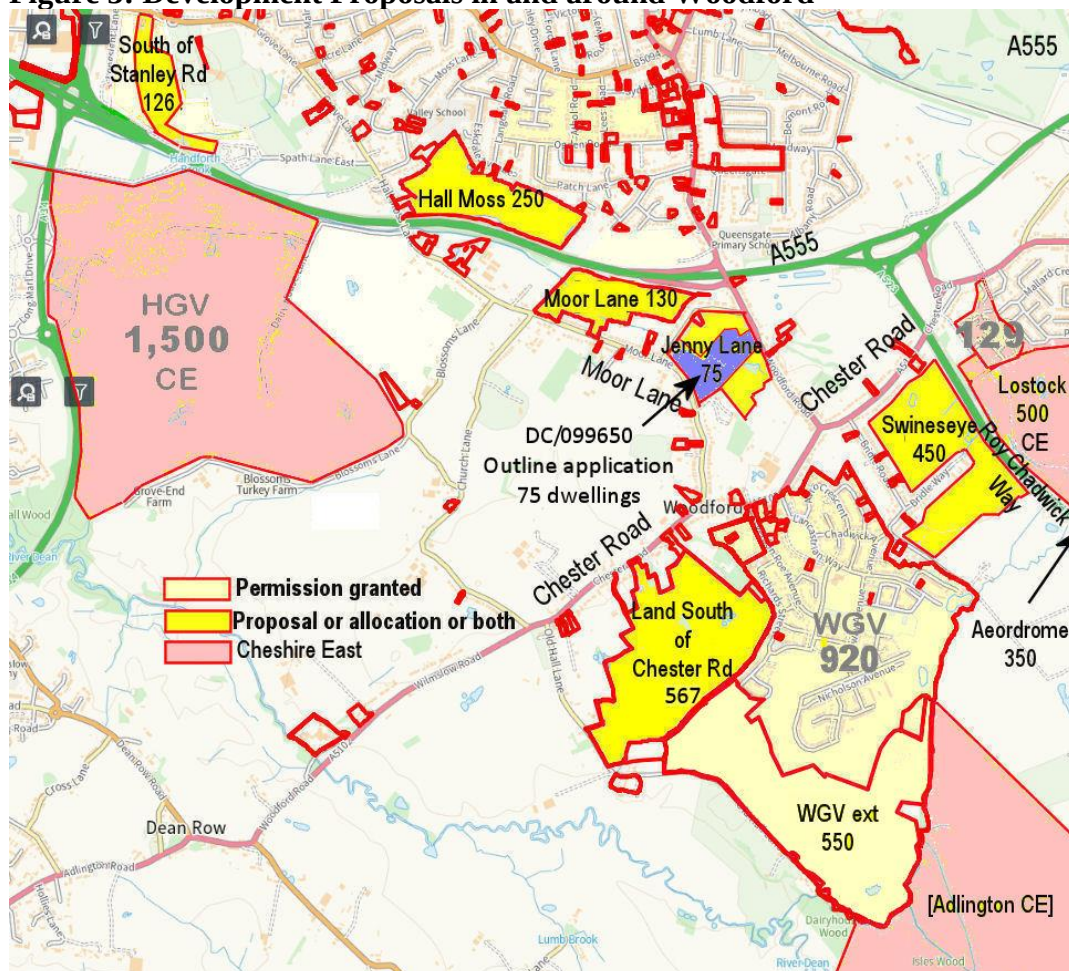
As we have noted in our response to other applications, there are concerns about over-development in and around Woodford and we hope the Council will take this into account in determining this application. Woodford was a village of 550 houses in 2013 when work on the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan commenced.

If all the current development proposals were to gain permission, then there would over 5,000 new dwellings within a short radius of Woodford, putting huge pressure on infrastructure, including roads, education and health care facilities. Figure 3 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.

We request a robust cumulative impact assessment to include traffic, education, healthcare and utilities, looking beyond the single-site traffic assessment.

Figure 3: Development Proposals in and around Woodford



The numbers on the map indicate the number of dwellings proposed at each site. Please note the following:

- Jenny Lane site (shaded in blue): The site of the planning application for 75 dwellings lies within the area of the Jenny Lane allocation for 190 dwellings in the draft Stockport Local Plan (red outline shown on the map).

- Moor Lane site: The planning application for 130 homes is on a site which is not an allocation in the Stockport Local Plan
- Hall Moss Lane site: The planning application from Jones Homes for 250 dwellings is on the same site as the allocation for 400 dwellings in the draft Stockport Local Plan.
- Woodford Garden Village extension and Land South of Chester Road are the subjects of planning applications and the sites are also allocated in the Stockport Local Plan for similar numbers.
- A revised application has recently been submitted for Land South of Chester Road. The mix of development has now changed and would equate to 567 dwellings.
- The planning application for Woodford Garden Village extension was permitted at appeal. The Council applied for a Judicial Review, which was declined.

Impact on existing residents

Emotional effects may not be a material consideration in a planning application, but for the elected representatives who may be reading this response, we wish to point out the emotional impact of so many development proposals, at the same time as consultation on a new Stockport Local Plan. The Woodford Neighbourhood Forum management committee are not anti-development and incremental growth in keeping with local character is welcomed. We believe many residents are of the same view. Provision of low cost housing is supported in suitable locations close to employment and facilities. However, residents have purchased homes in Woodford in the belief that important features of the location of their home would remain unharmed. Many are overwhelmed with development proposals, developer consultations, Council consultations on planning applications and consultations on the draft Stockport Local Plan. This can give rise to confusion and anxiety about finding information, future changes to the setting of their homes and consultation fatigue.

Summary

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

- The site is important to Woodford's semi-rural character. The proposal will have significant impact on landscape, environment and infrastructure.
- We believe that the site does not meet the new Grey Belt criteria. The Grey Belt/ Green belt assessment is inevitably subjective and should be subject to independent review.
- The means of access via Moor Lane will exacerbate increased traffic on Moor Lane. There is a need for independent traffic data or residents' evidence of existing junction and driveway difficulties.
- While we acknowledge that WNP is not up to date with NPPF 2024 because it does not refer to Grey Belt, we maintain that the vision, objectives and the majority of policies are applicable to Previously Developed Land, Grey Belt and Green land and should still be given weight.
- The site is part of an allocation for development in the draft Stockport Local Plan, which may complicate the Local Plan process.
- The application is ahead of the Stockport Local Plan and may 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. A robust cumulative impact assessment is needed, to include traffic, education, healthcare and utilities, looking beyond the single-site traffic assessment.
- Residents are overwhelmed with development proposals, developer consultations, Council consultations on planning applications and consultations on the draft Stockport Local Plan.

This can give rise to anxiety about finding information, future changes to the setting of their homes and consultation fatigue.

Yours sincerely,

Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee