



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

c/o Woodford Community Centre, Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 1PS

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Minutes of Meeting of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee at Woodford Church Hall on 22nd July 2026

Attendance	Present	Apologies received
Mr Robin Berriman (RBB)	✓	
Ms Evelyn Frearson (EF)	✓	
Mr Paul Goodman (PG)	✓	
Mr Terry Barnes (TB)	✓	
Ms Jane Sandover (JS)		Not heard from
Mrs Jude Craig (JC)	✓	
Mrs Janet DeVechis (JDV)	✓	
Mr Chris Coppock (CC)	✓	
Mr Brian Bagnall (BB)		✓
Mr David Berry (DB)	✓	
Mr Paul Rodman (PR)		Corresponding*
Ms Zoe Jones (ZJ)		Corresponding*

*Corresponding members wish to be kept in the loop and communicate via email, but cannot routinely attend meetings

Extra meeting to discuss concerns about recent planning decisions and implications for the future of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum and Plan

Declaration of conflicts of interest: None

Discussion: Slides were presented at the meeting to aid the discussion as follows:

Large development proposals

- Land South of Chester Road (LSCR) revised application, deadline 28th July
 - Highways mitigation proposals include shared cycle/footway on Moor Lane
- Handforth Graden Village application resubmitted, deadline 30th July. No action required
- Moor Lane planning application
 - Highways mitigation proposals shared cycle/footway on Moor Lane
- Upper Swineseye Farm - nothing new to report
- Hall Moss Lane (Bramhall) - nothing new to report
- Jenny Lane (awaited) - nothing new to report

Points raised:

- LSCR application is so different it should start again with developer consultation. It is now even bigger. Heath care and child care facilities welcomed.
- The changes may be the result of discussions with the council in an iterative process.

- Harrow/Redrow may object strongly to inclusion of shops.
- Shared cycle/footway considered inappropriate and unworkable. Many residents were upset about the loss of trees and grass verge on Moor Lane. RBB had written to Cllr Peter Crossen to raise his objections.
- Woodford is unusual because it is washed over by Green Belt which means the whole is under Green Belt policies.
- Stockport Local Plan will define a settlement boundary around a central area which will no longer be in Green Belt. Locations outside of the boundary will still be in Green Belt.

Actions:

- EF to write to SMBC stating that LSCR application should start again with developer consultation.
- EF to prepare bullet point response to LSCR for committee approval, submission and posting on social media a.s.a.p.

Post meeting note: As it was very close to the deadline to be sending a letter to SMBC, EF incorporated the “should repeat developer consultation point” into the response to the planning application.

NPPF 2024 Paragraph 155

The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed⁵⁶;
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework⁵⁷; and
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.

Points raised:

These points were carefully noted.

Small sites granted planning permission

- DC/095585 456 Chester Road – PIP for 1 dwelling. Allowed on appeal 13th January 2026. Provides case history
- DC/095548 Outline application 9 dwellings Moorend Farm 181 Woodford Road
- DC/097965 PIP for 4 dwellings off Church Lane
- DC/098809 PIP 3 dwellings off Hall Moss Lane

Points raised:

- Committee members were shocked by these decisions.

- The appeal decision had been used in a decision on the applications in the field off Church Lane.

Factors influencing appeal decisions

- Sites within a village or countryside could be grey belt
- Assessment should be at site specific level
- Sustainable/accessible allows car journeys to public transport hubs
- Golden rules apply to major sites
- Public objections not guaranteed to have influence
- Surface flooding not likely to result in refusal

Points raised:

- These were alarming results of planning and appeal decisions
- Not all sites within a village or countryside would be grey belt
- Grey belt is a very subjective concept

Inspector's report on 456 Chester Road appeal

- The appeal site lies within a parcel of land which is referred to as SEB7 in the Green Belt Assessment (GBA)2. The GBA assessment of SEB7 indicates it performs strongly against purpose (a) to (c) and weakly, or not at all, against purpose (d).
- Although SEB7 is important in preventing the merging of settlements, it does not mean that all the land within it is equally significant. Indeed, the impact of one dwelling within a row of existing development would be minor in this respect. In isolation the development of the appeal site would not noticeably or markedly bring the settlements closer together. As such, the appeal site does not strongly contribute to purpose (b), preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another.
- The appeal site constitutes grey belt land
- The building of one house on the small area of land that is the appeal site cannot reasonably be said to fundamentally undermine Green Belt purposes.
- Due to shortage of housing land supply there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed
- The site is in a sustainable location
- Not a major development so the Golden Rules do not apply

Points raised:

- Concern expressed about the assessment of the specific site of the development as Grey Belt, rather than the wider parcel, which was Green Belt, and the appeal case being cited in the officer's report on the development in the field off Church Lane.
- Larger site would have a greater chance than small one of meeting the 3 purposes of Green Belt used to define grey belt.

Planning Officer's report on DC/098809 for 3 dwellings

- Proposal contrary to the Stockport Development Plan. Very special circumstances arise due to NPPF 2024
- The proposal is compliant with para 155 in the NPPF: grey belt, accessible location, unmet housing need, not a major site so Golden Rules do not apply

- WNP infill policy is more restrictive than NPPF 2024
- WNP is inconsistent with NPPF2024 because it does not allow redevelopment of grey belt land, therefore NPPF is used for assessing whether development in Green Belt is inappropriate
- While the LUC parcel is Green Belt the specific site proposed meets the criteria for grey belt
- Given the large amount of Green Belt in the borough, removal of the small site would not undermine its purposes
- The site is considered accessible enough to comply with NPPF paragraph 155
- No highways objections
- ENV 1 does not prevent development within views and vistas
- ENV3 does not prevent removal of trees etc
- Conditions cannot be attached to a PIP application

Points raised: The implications arising from the WNP being apparently superseded by NPPF 2024 and not mentioning grey belt and ENV 1 and ENV 3 being dismissed as not impeding development were noted.

Planning Officer's report on DC/097965 for 4 dwellings

- Proposal contrary to the Stockport Development Plan. Very special circumstances arise due to NPPF 2024
- The proposal is compliant with para 155 in the NPPF
- Earlier refusal of planning permission on appeal for 2 dwellings on this site noted but this application is considered under a different planning regime than was the case in May 2021.
- WNP is inconsistent with NPPF 2024 because it does not allow redevelopment of grey belt land, therefore NPPF is used for assessing whether development in Green Belt is inappropriate
- While the LUC parcel is Green Belt, the specific site meets the criteria for grey belt
- Given the large amount of Green Belt in the borough, removal of the small site would not undermine its purposes
- Highways: Quiet Lane status – mitigation for traffic increase could be achieved
- Access: *“The application site fronts onto a wide (c.2.5-3.5m) grass verge, over which the proposed development would take access from”* Mistake here?
- Accessibility: the site has a reasonable degree of accessibility
- Policy H-2 - when there is less than a 5 year deliverable supply of housing (as is currently the case) the required accessibility scores will be lowered to allow the deliverable supply to be ‘topped up’ by other sites in accessible locations
- The scale of *[housing land supply]* shortfall is such that in order to genuinely reflect the current position in that regard the score has been reduced to zero. Site considered to be in an accessible location
- ENV3 does not prevent removal of trees etc
- Conditions cannot be attached to a PIP application

Points raised: This raised the same issues about WNF not being up to date with NPPF 2024 and policies being dismissed as not impeding development. The committee could not identify the wide grass verge referred to on Church Lane.

Post meeting note: There is a wide grass verge on Hall Moss Lane adjacent to part of the site for the DC/098809. It is possible that this point should have made in the report for that application not

DC/097965.

Planning Officer's report on DC/097965 9 dwellings

- Compliant with Stockport Development Plan
- Site is previously developed land
- WNP does not apply
- Modest harm to the openness of the Green Belt
- Sustainable location
- Under 10 dwellings so no need for affordable, but 4 proposed
- Residential amenity – not a problem
- Flooding – low risk
- Land contamination – developer to assess
- Contribution to open space required

Post meeting note: The officer's report stated:

“Policies in the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan regarding development in the Green Belt relate only to limited infilling (DEV1), replacement of existing dwellings (DEV2), extensions to existing dwellings (DEV3) and design of new development (DEV4). There are no policies that refer to redevelopment of previously developed sites such as this in the Green Belt.”

We believe that apart from DEV 1, policies in WNP apply to sites in Green Belt, Grey Belt or Previously Developed Land.

Stockport Local Plan

- Regulation 19 consultation awaited
- WNF had suggested use of Woodford Community Centre as an SMBC information point
- At forums meeting, SMBC mooted use of forums as guinea pigs for consultation portal

Thoughts for WNF actions

- Meeting with Poynton Town Council, Mon 2 7th July at 7 pm at Civic Hall
- BB suggestion: formally request a meeting with Emma Curle Ast Director of Place and Steve Gribbon the Chair of Planning and Highways Regulation Committee to discuss the implications of Grey Belt in Woodford and the WNP
- Messages about impact of interpretation of NPPF paragraph 155 to:
 - Tom Morrison
 - Andy Burnham
 - Kemi Badenock
 - Others: e.g. CPA?
- Publicity
- Liaison with other forums
- Liaison with other groups
- Improve information flow to residents
- WNF newsletter to cover: meeting with Tom Morrison, revised Russell Homes application, recent planning permissions for small sites, delay in next consultation of the Local Plan, resubmitted HGV application, ask for residents views

Points raised:

- TB noted that this marked a moment to pause for thought about a number of questions, including:
- What is the relevance of neighbourhood forums in the current political climate?
- How easy would it be to update the WNP to include the grey belt concept and bring into line with NPPF 2024?
- There was general discussion about whether this could be achieved easily without needing several stages of consultation. It was agreed that we should enquire with Steve Johnson.
- Would the new Stockport Local Plan include our policies? Would that be a point to close the forum?
- With questions to politicians we are asking for the NPPF to be revised before the most recent edition has been published following consultation.
- Publicity was not popular with the team
- It is difficult to let residents know about potentially contentious small planning applications. The WCC notice board and the notice board outside the Centre could be used.
- For this and general awareness of WNF ideas included WCC email list, leaflet in Parish Magazine (which already includes a regular ad for Centre, WCC and WNF)

Actions:

- It was agreed to carry on as we have been doing for now, responding to planning applications as before, but with reduced detail on the WNP policies if they continued to be given less weight.
- Send a message to Emma Curle and Steve Gribbon as proposed
- EF to ask Steve Johnson about amending the WNP
- RBB, DB, JC, EF and PG to attend meeting with Poynton Town Council
- EF to draft message to Emma Curle and Steve Gribbon along lines suggested by BB
- EF to draft newsletter

Post meeting note

Emma Curle responded offering the group a meeting in September. Date to be arranged. This will provide an opportunity to enquire about updating WNP.

Date of AGM

Action: EF to find date and venue

Evelyn Frearson 1st August 2026