Woodford Neighbourhood Forum meeting with Tom Morrison MP 20th June 2026

Four representative of the Woodford Neighbourhood Forum management committee, Robin Berriman, Evelyn Frearson, Jude Craig and David Berry, met Tom Morrison MP and Cllr Dallas Jones at Woodford Community Centre on Saturday 20th June to discuss issues around Government planning guidelines and housing targets which are having an adverse impact on the draft new Stockport Local Plan and driving a separate wave of developers submitting proposals for large developments on Green Belt in and around Woodford ahead of the Local Plan.

Worry and work overload. We discussed the resulting worry for residents and the work overload for Council staff.

Reduction in Government housing target numbers. We asked whether a reduction could be achieved for Stockport. Tom reported that he, and the Hazel Grove MP, Lisa Smart, have raised the problems associated with the high housing targets in Parliament, but so far ministers have been resistant to suggestions of reducing them.

Grey Belt. We asked whether there is there any possibility that the concept of grey belt could be removed from the Government planning guidelines, or amended to be in line with the rhetoric from ministers, who have stated that it only applies to areas such as disused petrol stations that have little value as Green Belt. Tom reported that the concept of grey belt is unlikely to be removed, but there are strong arguments for it to be amended, which he will continue to push for.

Cumulative impact. We showed Tom our map which illustrates the fact that, if all the developments with planning permission, or proposed in Local Plan, or proposed separately by developers were to proceed, then it would amount to over 5,000 new dwellings within a short radius of the middle of Woodford, when the village was only 550 houses in 2013 and very little infrastructure has been added since then apart from Woodford School, which is already oversubscribed. Tom supported our view that this is not an acceptable situation.

Infrastructure. Clearly major improvements in infrastructure, including roads, education and healthcare services would be needed to support the large increase in housing required by Government. Tom said that a Local Plan is the best way forward because it plans for infrastructure requirements alongside new development.

Planning application deadlines. We noted that the Council is failing to make decisions on planning applications by the statutory 3-month deadline and asked whether this risked developers following the example of Harrow Estates, who went to appeal with the Woodford Garden Village extension application because the deadline for a decision had elapsed. Tom acknowledged that the Council is overloaded, but there is a low risk of other

developers following Harrow's example, which is to date an unusual strategy. The 3-month deadline can be extended by agreement between the Council and the applicant.

Next round of consultation on the Stockport Local Plan. This will start in September to avoid consultation during the school holidays and will be completed by the end of 2026.

Consultation in Woodford. We suggested that, given the volume of development proposed in Woodford, it would be appropriate to hold a consultation event at Woodford Community Centre. Tom and Dallas agreed that this should be planned.

Council's consultation website. We reported that residents, including ourselves and members of other Stockport neighbourhood forums, had difficulties in finding the many documents which provide evidence to support the plan. There was a variety of routes through many links, which was confusing. This was reported to council staff in a feedback meeting for forums set up by the Council. Many residents also found it difficult to respond to the draft plan via the online route. The Council is looking into improvements for the next round of consultation.

Explanatory letter from the Council to residents. We suggested that the Council should be encouraged to send a letter to residents about the next draft of the plan, summarising the main points, the main changes from the first draft, and how to make comments.

The plan covers 80% of the housing target. We asked whether this is likely to suffice or whether the Planning Inspector conducting the Examination of the Local Plan is likely to ask the Council to plan for more housing. Tom reported that the Council has liaised with the appropriate Government department and is confident that this will be acceptable.

Validity and accuracy of consultants' reports. We raised concerns that inconsistencies and inaccuracies have been found in reports prepared by consultants on behalf of the Council as part of the preparation work for the Local Plan. The Green Belt Assessment by LUC is causing particular concern because it has a major influence on site selection and residents groups have found inconsistency in the criteria used for assessing whether different parcels of land can be classed as grey belt. Other inaccuracies have also been found. We asked whether such reports are checked by the Council, or just accepted and used. Tom agreed to follow up on those concerns.

Evelyn Frearson, 1st July 2026