

## ITEM

<b>Application Reference</b>	<b>DC/076482</b>
<b>Location:</b>	Old Hall Farm Old Hall Lane Woodford SK7 1RN
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	The demolition of existing agricultural buildings, the conversion of existing L shaped curtilage listed barn to form 4 dwellings, the existing detached curtilage listed barn to form 1 new dwelling, and the erection of 3 new-build dwellings with landscaping, access and associated works.
<b>Type Of Application:</b>	Full Application
<b>Registration Date:</b>	29.04.2020
<b>Expiry Date:</b>	20200624
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Jane Chase
<b>Applicant:</b>	P&R Galligan
<b>Agent:</b>	Annabelle Tugby Architects

### DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

Departure – Planning & Highways. Called up by Cllr Bagnall

### DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Planning permission was approved in 2015 for the demolition of redundant agricultural buildings, the conversion of a small redundant single storey agricultural building (referred to as the labourer's cottage) and a larger redundant 2 storey barn to create four dwelling houses with a single dwelling in the smaller building and three dwellings in the larger barn (demolishing part of this building) DC057629 refers. As approved the access to these dwellings together with parking was positioned to the west of the site with the gardens to the larger barn to the east. The approved site layout is appended to this report. The works approved by this planning permission have been commenced in that the buildings have been converted as per the approved plans however no external works in terms of the means of access, parking or amenity space provision have yet been carried out.

This application proposes amendments to this permission together with additional development in the form of 4 new dwellings. As originally submitted this is proposed as outlined below:-

- The demolition of various redundant farm buildings including 3 detached buildings of varying size and a circular tank (as already approved).
- The conversion of the single storey labourer's cottage into a 2 bed dwelling (as already approved). The 2 parking spaces to this dwelling would however now be positioned to the east of this building rather than the north as approved and access would be gained via the existing driveway to Old Hall. Private amenity space for this dwelling has been increased since the application was first submitted and as now proposed would be positioned mainly to the west and north of the building.
- The conversion of the larger 2 storey barn, retaining the element previously identified for demolition, into 4no. dwellings rather than 3 as approved (1 x 2 bed, 1 x

3 bed and 2 x 4 bed). Private amenity space for barns 1 to 3 would be positioned to the west of the converted building rather than the east as approved with that for barn 4 having been increased since the application was first submitted and being to the east of that dwelling (noting that this part of the barn was previously identified for demolition). Each dwelling would have 2 forecourt parking spaces proposed to the east of this converted barn rather than to the west as approved.

- To the east of the larger converted barn 3 no. detached 2 storey houses are now proposed that were not included in the 2015 approval. The northern most house would be positioned lengthways in relation to Old Hall Lane with the remaining 2 houses positioned lengthways to face the converted barn opposite to the west. The houses would be of a simple contemporary design with pitched roofs, gable ends, a 2 storey recess around which would be a frame projecting slightly from the building. Materials of external construction are proposed as being red/pink brick, bleached timber cladding, matt black timber framed windows, matt black steel detailing, concrete headers to windows and doors and a natural slate roof with conservation style rooflights. Externally each house would have a small landscaped front garden and larger private rear garden together with 2 forecourt parking spaces.

- Access to the 3 detached houses is proposed to the west, between these houses and the converted barn thus creating a courtyard arrangement.

- To the north of the converted labourer's cottage and to the west of the converted barn, outside of the curtilages of these dwellings, it is proposed to create a landscaped meadow area including a pond. Access to this area from the converted labourer's cottage and converted 2 storey barn would be gained by gates in the garden boundaries to these dwellings.

Members will note that the conversion of the labourer's cottage to create a single dwelling and the larger barn to create 4 dwellings has already been approved by DC057629 and that this permission has been commenced. It however remains the case that planning permission is required for the conversion of those buildings in the manner proposed by this application (seeking amendments to those dwellings in terms of the location of the amenity space, parking and access) as well as in relation to the additional development sought by this application.

Following the neighbour notification exercise and discussions with Officers the application has been amended to reposition the 3 new build dwellings further to the south. This amendment in particular moves the northern most dwelling closest to 1660 Old Hall Barn opposite the application site when measured corner to corner from between 15.4m and 21.4m distant as originally proposed to between 20m and 26m distant as now proposed.

The application is supported by the following documents:-

Planning Statement

Heritage Statement

Design and Access Statement

Protected Species and Habitat Survey

Energy Statement

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

## **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

The application site is located on the south side of Old Hall Lane and comprises a series of buildings within the curtilage of Old Hall Farm, a grade 2 listed building positioned to the south of the site. As the buildings are within the curtilage of this listed building, they are by default listed also.

The application site comprises a single storey former labourer's cottage to the west. To the north of this building are 2 redundant modern agricultural buildings, that to the north of the site being larger than that to the south. To the east of this is a long L shaped 2 storey barn with a single storey projection at its southern end. With the exception of the single storey element, this barn has recently been converted into 3 dwellings following the grant of planning permission DC057629. To the east of this barn is a redundant modern detached farm building of substantial size to the north of which is a large circular tank.

To the north of the site on the opposite side of Old Hall Lane is a period barn converted into 2 dwellings known as 1660 Old Hall Barn and 2000 Old Hall Barn (with 1660 Old Hall Barn being positioned closest to the application site). This building is grade 2 listed and comprises 3 floors of accommodation with the second floor of accommodation being within the roofspace. The building is positioned side on to Old Hall Lane with the side elevation facing the application site containing numerous windows at ground, first and second floor level. Elsewhere around the site is open countryside and farmland with the Avro golf course to the south east and Woodford Aerodrome to the north east. Access to the site is via Old Hall Lane which connects with Chester Road to the north.

### **POLICY BACKGROUND**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ("PCPA 2004") requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

#### **The Development Plan includes-**

Policies set out in the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review adopted 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006 which have been saved by direction under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; &

Policies set out in the Stockport Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

Policies set out in the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

#### **Saved policies of the SUDP Review**

LCR1.1 Landscape Character Area  
GBA1.2 Control of Development in Green Belt  
GBA1.5 Residential Development in Green Belt  
GBA1.6 Re-use of Buildings in Green Belt  
NE1.2 Sites of Nature Conservation  
L1.1 Land for Active Recreation  
L1.2 Children's Play

#### **LDF Core Strategy/Development Management policies**

CS1 Overarching Principles: Sustainable Development - Addressing Inequalities and Climate Change  
SD-3 Delivering the Energy Opportunities Plans – New Development  
SD-6 Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change  
CS2 Housing Provision  
CS3 Mix of Housing  
CS4 Distribution of Housing  
H-1 Design of Residential Development  
H-2 Housing Phasing

CS8 Safeguarding & Improving the Environment  
SIE-1 Quality Places  
SIE-2 Provision of Recreation & Amenity Open Space in New Developments  
SIE-3 Protecting, Safeguarding & Enhancing the Environment  
CS9 Transport & Development  
T-1 Transport & Development  
T-2 Parking in Developments  
T-3 Safety & Capacity on the Highway Network

### **Woodford Neighbourhood Plan**

ENV1 Respecting Views and Vistas  
ENV4 Supporting Biodiversity  
EMP3 Use of Rural Buildings  
COM3 Woodford's Heritage Assets  
DEV1 Limited Infilling  
DEV4 Design of New Development

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Supplementary Planning Guidance does not form part of the Statutory Development Plan; nevertheless it does provide non-statutory Council approved guidance that is a material consideration when determining planning applications.

Design of Residential Development  
Open Space Provision and Commuted Payments

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

A Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 19th February 2019 replaced the previous NPPF (originally issued 2012 & revised 2018). The NPPF has not altered the fundamental legal requirement under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations (such as the NPPF) indicate otherwise.

The NPPF representing the governments up-to-date planning policy which should be taken into account in dealing with applications focuses on achieving a lasting housing reform, facilitating the delivery of a greater number of homes, ensuring that we get planning for the right homes built in the right places of the right quality at the same time as protecting our environment. If decision takers choose not to follow the NPPF, then clear and convincing reasons for doing so are needed.

N.B. In respect of decision-taking the revised NPPF constitutes a "material consideration".

Para.1 "The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied".

Para.2 "Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

Para.7 "The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development".

Para.8 "Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in

mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) an economic objective
- b) a social objective
- c) an environmental objective”

Para.11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”.

Para.12 “.....Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed”.

Para.38 “Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way..... Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”.

Para.47 “Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing”.

Para.59 “To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.”

Para.108 “In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
- b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and
- c) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms

of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.”

Para.109 “Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.”

Para.110 “Within this context, applications for development should:

- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
- b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;
- c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
- d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
- e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.”

Para.117 “Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land.”

Para. 118 “Planning policies and decisions should:

- a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;
- b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;
- c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;
- d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure).”

Para.122 “Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

- a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
- b) local market conditions and viability;
- c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;

- d) the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- e) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places."

Para.123 "Where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site. In these circumstances:

- a) plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible. This will be tested robustly at examination, and should include the use of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. These standards should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential development within these areas, unless it can be shown that there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate;
- b) the use of minimum density standards should also be considered for other parts of the plan area. It may be appropriate to set out a range of densities that reflect the accessibility and potential of different areas, rather than one broad density range; and
- c) local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework. In this context, when considering applications for housing, authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight, where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards)."

Para.124 "The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities".

Para.127 "Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users<sup>46</sup>; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience."

Para.130 "Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design

should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development”.

Para.133 “The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”.

Para.134 “Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land”.

Para.141 “Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land”.

Para.143 “Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”.

Para.144 “When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. “Very special circumstances” will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”.

Para.145 “A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
  - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
  - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”



Para. 146 “Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are.....d) the reuse of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.”

Para.148 “The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.”

Para.153 states “In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:

- a) comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and
- b) take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption”.

Para.165 “Major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there

is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate. The systems used should:

- a) take account of advice from the lead local flood authority;
- b) have appropriate proposed minimum operational standards;
- c) have maintenance arrangements in place to ensure an acceptable standard of operation for the lifetime of the development; and
- d) where possible, provide multifunctional benefits.”

Para.170 “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- 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;
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”

Para.175 “When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>58</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.”

Para.178 “Planning policies and decisions should ensure that:

- a) a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination. This includes risks arising from natural hazards or former activities such as mining, and any proposals for mitigation including land remediation (as well as potential impacts on the natural environment arising from that remediation);
- b) after remediation, as a minimum, land should not be capable of being determined as contaminated land under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and
- c) adequate site investigation information, prepared by a competent person, is available to inform these assessments.”

Para.179 “Where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner.”

Para.180 “Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;
- b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and
- c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”

Para.184: “Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance.....these assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they

can enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.”

Para.190 “Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.”

Para.192 “In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation and
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”

Para.193 “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

Para.194 “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.”

Para.195 “Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.”

Para.196 “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

Para.213 “existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)”.

### **Planning Practice Guidance**

The Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place (launched in March 2014) and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

### **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

DC057629 – Full application seeking the conversion of existing redundant barns to create four dwelling houses together with associated alterations and car parking, in

addition to the demolition of non heritage buildings/structures. Approved 2015 and implemented in part.

DC057630 – Listed building application seeking the conversion of existing redundant barns to create four dwelling houses together with associated alterations and car parking, in addition to the demolition of non heritage buildings/structures. Approved 2015 and implemented in part.

DC/076483 – Listed building application seeking the demolition of existing agricultural buildings, the conversion of existing L shaped curtilage listed barn to form 4 dwellings, the existing detached curtilage listed barn to form 1 new dwelling, and the erection of 3 new-build dwellings with landscaping, access and associated works. This application forms the following item on this agenda.

### **NEIGHBOUR'S VIEWS**

The application has been advertised by way of site and press notice. The occupiers of neighbouring properties have been notified of the receipt of this application.

In respect of the application as originally submitted:

2 letters have been received objecting on the following grounds:-

- The 3 new build dwellings will be out of character with the proposed barn conversions on this site and also with the existing barn conversions across the road at Old Hall Barns.
- We feel that the addition of a further 4 dwellings to the 4 dwellings already approved on the site would constitute over development of the site.
- There are currently only 15 dwellings on Old Hall Lane (including Old Hall Farm), so the resultant additional 8 dwellings on this site would significantly increase the traffic down the lane. Old Hall Lane is an unadopted (past Low Eaves & Dellhaven) and unmaintained single track lane with blind bends, in a very poor state of repair in places, often frequented by walkers and cyclists. We therefore feel that this increase in traffic would impact negatively on highway safety.
- The current relatively modern out-buildings of Old Hall Farm are dilapidated, and in need of some upgrading or preferably demolition. We are not completely opposed to the new development but would respectfully request that the entire development of 3 new houses be moved a further 6.5m away from our property or alternatively, the closest house in the development would be removed completely from the development. Clearly a new development which can be seen within a view of a listed building lies within the setting of that listed building. It cannot therefore be disputed that such a development could potentially affect the setting of the listed building.
- The proposed development would be located side on to our property at a closest distance of 16.44m from our property (facing its longest elevation). To the front of our property we only have 1 window and 1 door. The side of our property is where the vast majority of our windows, light and current privacy exist. The new development would overlook virtually all of our main windows at very close proximity. Our property is already fairly dark inside due to the conversion not having many windows (and respecting its 17th century heritage).
- Overdevelopment or overcrowding of the site particularly where the proposal is out of character in the area. For example the 3rd new build in the proposed development is located partially in the footprint of a disused silage tank. The demolishing of all of the current agricultural building and tanks have already been used to justify the building of a very new large barn located on Old Hall Farm. Suggesting that these building could now be demolished to make way for 3 additional new build

developments does not seem to be fair (in the sense that they have been already used to justify another building for planning purposes).

2 letters have been received supporting the application on the following grounds:-

- The development will improve and enhance Old Hall. The plans represent some of the old style planting and fencing schemes present in other preserved house, buildings and estates within Cheshire. The development will only enhance Old Hall Lane and the homes already here with the use old reclaimed and new materials.
- The new plans seem very much in keeping with the way Old Hall Lane was intended. The buildings all look to be sympathetic to the area and will protect and enhance the Green Belt. This will be a massive improvement on the dilapidated buildings currently there. The new view for anyone travelling down Old Hall Lane will be a vast improvement.

Neighbours were notified of the amendments to the siting of the new build dwellings. In response to this, 1 letter has been received reiterating previous objections.

### **CONSULTEE RESPONSES**

Planning Policy (Green Belt) – The application proposes the conversion of existing buildings, provision of amenity space and erection of new buildings. In respect of the conversion and amenity space I am satisfied that the proposals meet the requirements of Saved UDP Policies GBA1.5 and GBA1.6 together with para 146 of the NPPF.

The erection of three new dwellings does not accord with saved UDP policies relating to Green Belt, although the NPPF offers a more up-to-date policy position regardless. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF finds the construction of new buildings as inappropriate development in the Green Belt and lists a number of exceptions. The proposed new build development does not meet any of the exceptions listed under Paragraph 145 and also none of the forms of development considered appropriate under Paragraph 146. As such, it should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt and a case for very special circumstances is required under Paragraph 143. Paragraph 144 gives substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt and notes that a case for very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

It is noted that the volume, scale and footprint of the proposed development will be significantly reduced beyond that existing and to be demolished. As such I think it is unlikely that the new dwellings will dominate their surroundings when compared with what it will replace. In addition, areas of hardstanding will be reduced by over 50%. The overall objective has been to ensure the farmhouse is the most prominent building on-site and the effect of this has been to concentrate the proposed dwellings, both conversions and new build into a courtyard layout which reflects the site's historic form. This has helped to decrease the overall footprint of built form on-site and the presence of the new area of open land incorporating the meadow and pond to the west and sensitive landscaping and boundary treatments to reinstate the farmyard makes a further positive impact.

Whilst neither local nor national policy specify what demonstrating a case for 'very special circumstances' should entail there is considerable case law which suggests that adhering to the following approach is likely to be suitable:

- Identify (with evidence) an essential objective that the proposal is intended to meet;
- Demonstrate that that essential objective could not reasonably be met in a less harmful way (i.e. consideration of other sites outside of the Green Belt or alternative

sites within the Green Belt but where less harm would be caused or which would amount to a form of development excepted by NPPF paragraph 89 – now paragraph 145)

- Demonstrate that the proposed development would meet the essential objective and that doing so clearly outweighs the degree of harm caused by the proposal (this should include demonstrating that the essential objective could not be achieved less harmfully by an alternative scheme at the same site).

The applicant has provided a number of considerations, and these are as follows in italics. I have provided additional wording where I feel it strengthens their case, and then there are further thoughts underneath from me on their significance:

- *Positive impact on the heritage value of Old Hall Farm, with considerable efforts to re-establish the original farmyard and courtyard setting.* I agree this carries the most weight, and is supported adequately by the Heritage Statement.

- *Positive impact on the openness of the countryside/Green Belt, with reduced volume and footprint, removal of large unattractive agricultural buildings and sensitive landscaping/boundary treatments, thereby meeting Paragraph 141 by enhancing the visual amenity of the Green Belt.* I think this also carries significant weight given that the resultant reorganisation of the site buildings increases views, reduces the built-up nature of the site and removes as far as possible any impacts of domesticating a greenfield site therefore creates an overall improvement in openness. This is very rare and is often not achieved even on a PDL site, and so I think it is worth recognising as an overriding and therefore 'very special' material consideration. In doing so, the proposal has met Paragraph 141 in terms of retaining and enhancing the beneficial use of Green Belt by improving its visual amenity such as via the removal of unsightly buildings and the opening up of views of the listed building.

- *A design solution that addresses the site's unique opportunities and constraints which is clearly preferable in respect of harm to openness than the alternatives.* This is of less weight but still a worthy factor to include in the round and it is crucial in demonstrating compliance with case law, as described below.

- *Positive impact on housing supply* This should only be given very limited weight due to the small numbers involved.

In my view, the applicant has fulfilled the criteria advocated by case law, in that the essential objective is to provide a sensitive scheme for the redevelopment of the listed Old Hall Farm site that respects its heritage and seeks to reduce its impact on the Green Belt. It has been proved, in my view, that, despite having existing consents for dwellings and being in a position where needs could be met by exercising their rights to provide the required dwellings via permitted development, the applicant is committed to this essential objective and has rejected these alternatives which would clearly cause more harm to openness.

I view that the positive impact on heritage, the enhancement to the visual amenity of the Green Belt, the optimal design solution and contribution to housing supply together form a set of considerations that clearly outweigh the in-principle harm and other harm. As such I advise that very special circumstance exist and that permission should be granted.

Conservation Officer – Old Hall Farm is a Grade II listed farmhouse and its associated historic farm buildings, constructed prior to 1948 and comprising part of the former farmstead, are to be treated as listed buildings because they form part of

its curtilage. In addition, a former detached barn located adjacent to the site on the north side of Old Hall Road is listed Grade II in its own right. Historically this large C17th brick barn formed part of the Old Hall Farm complex but it is now in separate ownership.

The impact of proposed development upon the significance of these designated heritage assets, including their fabric and setting, should be given great weight in the determination of the application (see NPPF paras 193-2010).

It is acknowledged that previous planning consents have been obtained for the conversion of the historic outbuildings within the curtilage of Old Hall Farm, in addition to the repair, restoration and extension of the Hall itself. The current proposal involves the retention and conversion of a rear extension to the main range of outbuildings previously proposed for demolition and this is to be welcomed. The elements of the site proposed for demolition within the current application do not have any special historic or architectural interest and there is no objection to their loss; indeed their removal will open up new public views of the Hall and its associated farm buildings, contributing to an enhancement of their setting.

The underlying concept for the layout of the proposed scheme, to create a nucleated collection of structures arranged around a central courtyard in association with a landscaping strategy that reinforces the rural and agricultural character of the wider site and its setting, is to be welcomed. The overall form, scale and external materials of the proposed new buildings are complementary to the immediate context, following the characteristics of the retained historic buildings within the site. With careful attention to detail, the introduction of contemporary detailing to external elevations of the new buildings will not have a detrimental impact upon the traditional setting of the farm group. Subject to any approval, conditions will be required to ensure that the selection of external materials is appropriate and the design of architectural details are sympathetically handled.

A heritage statement has been submitted in support of the application and it is considered that this represents a thorough assessment of the significance of the site and the impact of the proposals upon the various historic assets that are affected, including the Grade II barn listed barn on the north side of Old Hall Lane. This building is in separate ownership and has previously been converted to residential use.

A very positive aspect of the scheme is that the modern agricultural sheds, silo and tank will be removed, improving the setting and sightlines towards and around the listed Hall. Through sensitive design (siting/layout, massing, materials/details, landscaping) the submitted scheme will result in an overall enhancement in the setting of the Hall over the existing arrangement. The design balances the aim of protecting the openness of the wider countryside setting and providing a suitably clustered character found in traditional nucleated farmsteads. Whilst the submitted scheme does not restore an original layout, it respects the historic open character of the area to the west of the site (as evidenced in historic mapping), and this is to the advantage of the immediate setting to, and views of, of the Hall. The Hall is the earliest and most important historic structure on the site and the current proposal will reinforce the primacy of the Hall within the immediate context of the farmstead. The submitted design has been directly informed by reference to Historic England published research and guidance into the character, form and layout of Cheshire

farmsteads in order to ensure the proposals are consistent with the local and regional distinctiveness of similar groups of agricultural buildings located within the countryside.

Whilst a greater level of development is proposed than a previously approved consent (DC057629), it is considered that the current proposal does not result in further harm to the heritage values of the existing heritage assets or the ability to appreciate those values. Moreover it results in a degree of enhancement through an increased level of retention of the existing historic farm buildings – a building attached to the south east end of the C19th rectangular barn, previously identified for demolition, is to be retained and sympathetically converted. The landscaping plan and the layout of the wider scheme also represents an enhancement upon the previously approved scheme, with more attention paid to maintaining a sense of openness and provision of shared spaces, avoiding overt domestication of private gardens, and a reappraisal of vehicle and pedestrian circulation, access and parking. Taken overall, it is considered the traditional agricultural character of the site will be maintained and the new development will have a positive impact upon the setting of heritage assets in light of its compatibility of form, scale, layout and landscaping in conjunction with the sensitive conversion of all existing historic buildings.

Planning Policy (Energy) – the Energy Statement is compliant with policy SD-3 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Engineer – As I understand the site has consents for the conversion of barn buildings into four dwellings and renovation of the Old Hall with conversion to residential. This application is for barn conversions to now deliver five dwellings and for the construction of three new dwellings. Having regard to the existing Old Hall renovation to residential there would then be a total of nine dwellings at the site, as opposed to the five originally consented.

The earlier permission for the conversion of redundant barn buildings into 4 dwellings alongside the existing Old Hall conversion includes improvements to the means of access/public right of way to mitigate for increased vehicular and vulnerable traffic.

I had concern with this scheme on the grounds of poor accessibility although when determining the application weight was given to the regenerative benefits of re-use of the barns which are within the curtilage of a Grade II listed building and this enabled the proposal to be considered in conformity with Policy H2 at the time and for permission to be granted.

In this case and whilst I acknowledge that Policy H2 criteria no longer requires an accessibility score to be achieved, it remains a fact that the site is not accessible and I question how much weight can then be applied in terms of regenerative benefit.

The NPPF and Council Policy require residential development to be sited in locations that are demonstrably accessible to public transport, walking and cycling opportunities, amenities, retail opportunities, education establishments, health facilities, places of employment and all other services which residents can reasonably expect to enjoy. This enables a focus for development towards the more accessible locations and to ensure that the most appropriate sites are brought forward for residential development.



It is highly likely that development would be car trip dominant due to the remoteness of the site from services and amenities and such practice is counter to National and Local Planning Policies. For example the walking distance between the site and a bus stop situated on the route of a bus service is in excess of 700m and the service is not high frequency. I also note that this stop will be extinguished and relocated to the Garden Village site in the near future and this increase the remoteness of this site. The travel distance to the nearest School exceeds 3000m; the nearest shop is in excess of 1500m away with the nearest District Centre well in excess of 300m away and the nearest Health Centre and Rail Station are both in excess of 4000m away. The remoteness of the site is only likely to lead to a car reliant form of development, public transport travel is not realistic and walking and cycling for the purposes of anything other than leisure is highly unlikely. Sustainable travel modes would not be likely to be prioritised.

I can only reach a conclusion that a more intensive form of residential development that does not deliver regenerative benefit as a mitigating factor can only be inappropriate in a location that is not accessible or sustainable. The proposal would be contrary to NPPF paragraphs 103, 104, 108 and 110 Policies CS9 and T-1 within the Core Strategy and as such I have to reach a conclusion of opposition to the scheme.

I am minded of the recently approved residential and commercial development at the Garden Village that this will bring forward some small improvement to the general accessibility of the Woodford Area. I am doubtful that significant weight can be applied in this respect as meaningful measures have yet to be delivered on the site, for example the School and commercial interests which will provide some improvement to site accessibility. If it is felt that this factor and other planning policies are applicable and should carry weight in overriding the fact that the site is inaccessible to deliver housing I would strongly urge that measures agreed to improve the unadopted part of Old Hall Lane are incorporated into this scheme. This is necessary to mitigate for the intensification in use of the route and address safety concerns that arise from introducing additional vehicular movement on a public right of way. Other measures/conditions will be necessary in terms of access formation and visibility requirements, parking and turning space, cycle parking and electric vehicle charge facilities.

Nature Development Officer – The site has no nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise. Many buildings have the potential to support roosting bats. In addition, the application site is located amid suitable bat foraging habitat. All species of bat are protected under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The latter implements the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. Bats are included in Schedule 2 of the Regulations as ‘European protected species of animals’ (EPS). Under the Regulations it is an offence to:

- 1) Deliberately capture or kill a wild EPS
- 2) Deliberately disturb a wild EPS in such a way that significantly affects:
  - a) the ability of a significant group to survive, breed, rear or nurture young, or to hibernate or migrate.
  - b) the local distribution of that species.
- 3) Damage or destroy a breeding place or resting site of such an animal.

Bat survey work was carried out as part of previous planning applications at the site, including an inspection survey and dusk activity surveys in 2013 and activity surveys (a dusk and a dusk/dawn) undertaken in June 2018. Two common pipistrelle bats were observed emerging from two of the buildings on site (one from each building).

The buildings are referred to as B3 and B6 in the submitted site demolition and proposed site plans (those being the long barn and the labourers cottage. These buildings have been retained and converted under the proposals. It is understood that conversion works have now been completed on B3 and B6 as part of the existing planning permission for the site.

Update survey work was carried out in 2020. This involved an update internal and external inspection survey of barn B2. No evidence of roosting bats was observed but owing to the presence of potential roosting features, two emergence surveys were undertaken (in August and September). All survey work has been carried out by a suitably experienced ecologist and follows best practice survey guidelines. No bats were recorded to emerge from the barn during the activity surveys. Common pipistrelle activity was recorded across the wider site.

The barns and vegetation on site offer suitable habitat for breeding bird and disused swallow nests have been recorded within the barns during previous bat surveys (2013). Disused swallow nests are also recorded in Barn B2 during the 2020 update surveys. The nests of all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

From aerial photos there appears to be a pond located approximately 20m north of the application area. Ponds and their surrounding terrestrial habitat have the potential to support amphibians such as great crested newts (GCN). GCN receive the same level of legal protection as bats (outlined above). The pond was subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) survey in August 2020 which assesses the suitability of the pond to support GCN. The HSI score is 0.8 (which is excellent suitability, not medium as stated in the GCN assessment letter). Nonetheless the habitats on site are considered to be unsuitable for GCN (hard standing). This concurs with a GCN assessment undertaken in 2015 as part of the previous planning application. It is therefore considered that providing Reasonable Avoidance Measures are followed the risk of GCN being present within the application area and impacted by the proposed works is low.

#### Recommendations:

There is considered to be sufficient ecological information to allow determination of the current application. Roosting common pipistrelle bats have been previously recorded on site (in buildings B3 and B6). It is understood that conversion works on these buildings have now been undertaken as part of existing planning consent for the site and so this work would have needed a European Protected Species License (EPSL) or a Mitigation Class Licence (formally known as a LICL) from Natural England. No evidence of roosting bats has been identified within Building B2 (the remaining barn proposed for works which has been identified as offering bat roost potential). Bats can be highly cryptic in their roosting behaviour and can regularly switch roost sites. It is therefore recommended that an informative is attached to any planning consent granted so that the applicant is aware of the potential for roosting bats to be present. It should also state that the granting of planning permission does not negate the need to abide by the legislation in place to protect biodiversity. If at any time during works evidence of roosting bats (or any other protected species) is discovered on site, works must stop and a suitably experienced ecologist be contacted for advice.

Providing that Reasonable Avoidance Measures are followed during works, the risk to GCN is considered to be low. The submitted GCN Method Statement (Leigh Ecology Ltd, dated 25 September 2020) details appropriate measures which should be implemented in full and this can be secured via condition.

Ecological conditions can change overtime and so should works have not commenced within 2 years of the August 2020 survey, an update survey may be required to ensure that the ecological impact assessment is based on sufficiently up to date baseline data. This can be conditioned if necessary.

No vegetation clearance/demolition works should take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation/buildings for active birds' nests immediately before vegetation clearance/roof works commence and provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. Any such written confirmation should be submitted to the LPA.

Mitigation will be required for the loss of potential bird nesting habitat on site and this can be mitigated for through the provision of bird boxes on new and refurbished buildings and retained mature trees. Details should be submitted to the LPA for review.

Any proposed lighting should be sensitively designed so as to minimise impacts on wildlife associated with light disturbance (following the principles outlined in Bat Conservation Trust guidance: [http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bats\\_and\\_lighting.html](http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bats_and_lighting.html)). The submitted landscape plans show up-lit trees and this would not be recommended due to potential disturbance to foraging and commuting bats particularly given the proximity of previously recorded roost sites.

Biodiversity enhancements are expected as part of developments in line with local (paragraph 3.345 of the LDF) and national planning policy (NPPF). This should include provision of bat and bird roosting and nesting facilities to not only mitigate for loss of potential bird nesting and bat roosting habitat, but also provide enhancements for these species. Details of the proposed type, location and number of bat and bird boxes should be provided to the LPA and this can be secured via condition.

The proposed landscaping scheme includes mixed native species hedgerows and wildflower areas along with creation of a pond. These measures are welcome within the proposals. Details of the proposed seed mix/plug planting of the wildflower area should be provided along with future sympathetic management (e.g. mow late July once wildflowers have set seed and remove arisings). The pond should be designed so as to maximise benefits to biodiversity (such as gently sloping edges and shelved areas; undulating margins; planting with native aquatic and marginal species) and details submitted to the LPA along with proposed future management . Ponds are listed as a Priority Habitat in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GMBAP).

Woodford Neighbourhood Forum – There is no reference to the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan in the supporting documents however the proposal fails to comply with policy DEV1 'Limited Infilling'. Comprising land occupied by agricultural buildings, the site does not fall within the definition of previously developed land and therefore is not in compliance with para 145g of the NPPF (redevelopment of previously developed land) nor any of the other excepted forms of development set out in para 145.

Development should comply with policy DEV4 'Design of New Development' of the WNP.

The proposed development will be visible from the adjacent public right of way. Policy ENV1 of the WNP is therefore relevant. A greater volume of development

compared with the existing buildings is proposed. Therefore, a careful assessment needs to be made on whether the proposal will have a greater impact on the vista over fields from footpath 1HGB and whether it complies with policy ENV1. Should any development be permitted, we recommend that conditions include planting of native trees and hedges in strategic positions in order to provide screening and retain the rural character of the setting.

Any native trees and hedges on the site of the proposal should be retained to accord with policy ENV3 'Protecting Woodford's Natural Features'.

To accord with policy ENV4 'Supporting Biodiversity' should any development on the site be permitted, we recommend that the conditions include the planting of native trees, hedges and flowering species to support pollinators. These could be planted strategically to provide screening.

The proposals are in very close proximity to a listed building and need to be assessed for their impact on this heritage asset and to accord with policy COM3: 'Woodford Heritage Assets'.

The Neighbourhood Forum would like to see new development being designed to maximise the retention of surface water on the development site and measures to minimise runoff; for surface water drainage to be considered in liaison with the Local Lead Flood Agency, the public sewerage undertaker and the Environment Agency. Surface water should be discharged in the order of priority as set out in the NPPF.

The proposal fails to comply with UDP Review policies GBA1.2, GBA1.5 and LCR1.1.

United Utilities - The site overlies the sandstone rock, in a Groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ) 2. This forms an aquifer, abstracted at depth by United Utilities for public drinking water supply at a nearby borehole. We note from the application form that the applicant is proposing a private package treatment plant – we recommend that the Environment Agency is consulted on this proposal. This infrastructure will not be adopted by United Utilities.

The package treatment plant, must be designed to ensure that the discharges do not pose an unacceptable risk of pollution to groundwater, in order to protect United Utilities drinking water abstraction sources in the vicinity of the site. It is currently unclear whether there is a potential risk of wastewater pollution from the new packaged treatment plant, installed in strata overlying the SPZ2, surrounding the UU drinking water abstraction borehole. We therefore request a condition be imposed to secure the submission and approval of details relating to ground conditions and proposed package treatment plant.

Conditions should also be imposed to ensure that foul and surface water are drained in separate systems and that details of the drainage strategy for the site (SUDS compliant) is submitted and approved.

## **ANALYSIS**

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para10). Para 11 of the NPPF reconfirms this position and advises that for decision making this means:-

- approving developments that accord with an up to date development plan or

- where the policies which are most important for the determination of the application are out of date (this includes for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where the LPA cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing), granting planning permission unless:
- the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of importance (that includes those specifically relating to the protection of heritage assets and the Green Belt) provides a clear reason for refusing planning permission or
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.

In this respect, given that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year deliverable supply of housing, the relevant elements of Core Strategy policies CS4 and H2 which seek to deliver housing supply that are considered to be out of date. That being the case, the tilted balance as referred to in para 11 of the NPPF directs that permission should be approved unless:

- there are compelling reasons in relation to the impact of the development upon the Green Belt to refuse planning permission or
- the adverse impacts of approving planning permission (such as the loss of the recreational land or impact on residential amenity, highway safety etc) would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

This assessment is explored below.

### **Housing Delivery**

Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that a wide range of homes are provided to meet the needs of existing and future Stockport households. The focus will be on providing housing through the effective and efficient use of land within accessible urban areas.

Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy directs new residential development towards the more accessible parts of the Borough identifying 3 spatial priority areas (Central Housing Area; Neighbourhood Priority Areas and the catchment areas of District/Large Local Centres; and other accessible locations). Policy H-2 confirms that 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. This position has been regularly assessed to ensure that the score reflects the ability to 'top up' supply to a 5 year position. However, the scale of shortfall is such that in order to genuinely reflect the current position in that regard the score has been reduced to zero. The reduction of this score to zero means that for the purposes of housing delivery, all sites within the Borough will be considered as being accessible.

The application site is therefore within an accessible location for the purpose of housing delivery and the proposal accords with policies CS2, CS4 and H-2 of the Core Strategy. The provision of 4 additional dwellings beyond that already approved on this site whilst not significant will assist in addressing the undersupply of housing within the Borough and weight should be given to this element of the proposed development.

Core Strategy policy CS3 confirms that in accessible locations such as the application site development should achieve a density of around 30 dph.

The NPPF at para 122 confirms that planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land taking into account several factors

including the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens) and the importance of securing well designed and attractive places. Para 123 confirms that where there is a shortage of land for meeting identified housing need it is especially important that policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site. In these circumstances:-

- Plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible
- The use of minimum density standards should also be considered and it may be appropriate to set out a range of densities that reflect the accessibility and potential of different areas
- Local planning authorities should refuse planning applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land.

The density of the proposed development equates to 39 dwellings per hectare which accords with the minimum expected density of 30 dph for this location. It should also be noted that the consideration of density is not simply the application of a numerical figure and regard also has to be paid to the impact of the development upon the character of the area, the setting of the adjacent listed buildings, amenities of existing and future occupiers together conditions of highway safety. Subject to a satisfactory assessment in this respect (set out below), the density may be considered acceptable and in generally in compliance with policy CS3.

Policy EMP3 of the WNP confirms that proposals for the re-use and replacement of rural buildings will be supported providing the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces. Such development should not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within in.

The proposal is contrary to EMP3 in that the buildings to be converted will not be in the same use. Noting however the extant consent and the ability to convert agricultural buildings to alternative uses under Permitted Development rights, it would be extremely difficult to argue for the retention of the agricultural use of these buildings (which in any event ceased many years ago as is evidenced by their condition). Issues of impact on the Green Belt are dealt with below.

### **Green Belt**

Policy GBA1.2 of the UDP Review confirms that there is a presumption against the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt unless it is for one of 4 purposes (agriculture & forestry; outdoor sport & recreation; extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings; limited infilling or redevelopment of Major Existing Developed Sites). Forms of development other than new buildings, including changes in the use of land, will not be permitted unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. Proposals for the reuse of buildings will be assessed against policies GBA1.5 and GBA1.6.

Policy GBA1.5 of the UDP Review confirms that new residential development in the Green Belt will be restricted to dwellings for the purposes of agriculture and the re-use of buildings as provided for by policy GBA1.6. GBA1.6 confirms that the conversion of buildings of permanent and substantial construction will be permitted.

The only policies relating to development in the Green Belt within the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan are DEV1 'Limited Infilling' comprising the development of a

relatively small gap between existing dwellings for one or two dwellings and DEV2 'Replacement of Existing Dwellings'. DEV1 advises that limited infilling should comprise the completion of an otherwise continuous and largely uninterrupted built frontage of several dwellings visible within the streetscene. Given that the proposed development does not comprise nor claims to comprise limited infilling, this policy is not relevant to the consideration of the application. DEV2 is not relevant to the application either as the development does not propose the replacement of an existing dwelling. As such there are no policies in the WNP relating to development in the Green Belt that are relevant to the proposed redevelopment of this site.

The NPPF was published in 2012, revised in 2019 and post-dates the UDP Review. As the NPPF sets out the Government's most up to date policy position in relation to development in the Green Belt and as such greater weight should be afforded to this Framework than the Green Belt policies in the UDP Review.

The NPPF confirms that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved other than in 'very special circumstances' (VSC). (para 143). A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as 'inappropriate' in the Green Belt; exceptions to this are set out at para 145. The carrying out of engineering operations and the re-use of a building of permanent and substantial construction are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided it is (para 146).

In response to this Members are advised that the labourers cottage and 2 storey barn are both considered to be buildings of permanent and substantial construction. Their conversion will preserve openness and will not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. The creation of the amenity space through the movement of earth and the making of permanent changes to the land form is considered to comprise an engineering operation. This element of the proposal will also preserve openness and will not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. As such these elements are considered to be in compliance with UDP Review policies GBA1.2, GBA1.5 and GBA1.6 together with para 146 of the NPPF.

As the site comprising agricultural land and buildings does not fall within the definition of previously developed land (PDL) the erection of the new build dwellings does not fall within any of the exceptions set out in UDP Review policy GBA1.2 or para 145 of the NPPF. This element of the proposed development must be therefore be considered 'inappropriate' in the Green Belt and can only be approved where very special circumstances (VSC) exist.

As outlined below, the applicant has sought to demonstrate the following VSC as required by para 143 of the NPPF (with their comments in italics):

#### Heritage Considerations

*In its existing state, the listed building comprising the main farmhouse is in a dilapidated state with evidence of timber decay to the external frame. Consequently, after evaluating the level of decay, emergency propping and scaffolding has been erected as part of urgent works required to support the building. The applicants are committed to the preservation of the listed building and have obtained planning permission for the repair, renovation and extension of the farmhouse due to the urgent need to combat the steady decline in the building. This listed building will be brought back into use with a significant improvement from its current appearance in line with its original appearance.*

*The building has been listed due to its appearance and historical value owing to its link with the Davenport family. The Old Hall Farm has communal value deriving from the aforementioned link to the Davenport family and the authenticity of its original appearance/ materials. However, in its current state the communal value is limited due to the surrounding buildings blocking views towards the listed building. This also impacts upon the aesthetic value of the listed building, with a limited appreciation of its historical value due to the surrounding structures.*

*The existing buildings on site are also significantly larger in scale than the listed farmhouse. This also impacts upon the setting of the listed building, with the more dominant buildings within the immediate setting consisting of large agricultural sheds which detract from the importance of the listed building in the wider landscape.*

*Following extensive discussions with the Council's Conservation Officer, key principles were outlined for the restoration of Old Hall Farm. This includes ensuring a reduction in built volume, attention to soft and hard landscaping and ensuring the proposed new builds do not dominate or overlook the listed farmhouse.*

*Considering these points, redevelopment of Old Hall Farm through the design solution proposed ensures the following;*

- Retention of the Old Hall Farmhouse (Grade II listed building);*
- Improved views into the site to allow an appreciation of the listed building, both aesthetically and in terms of its historical value;*
- Re-establishment and reflection of the historical built form of Old Hall Farm and its original setting;*
- Surrounding buildings do not compromise or detract from the Farmhouse due to scale and appearance, but rather complement and harmonise with the listed building;*
- Sympathetic landscaping to ensure integration with the character of the Old Hall Farm site.*

*Combined, the above will ensure an appropriate redevelopment of Old Hall Farm while improving the setting of the listed building, its appreciation to the wider community and ensuring complementary buildings are brought forward. The above aims have been met through the proposed layout and should be given significant weight in favour of the proposals.*

*The accompanying Heritage Statement considers this further and highlights "that the net impact of the proposed development will be positive, whereby the works will enhance the visual and spatial setting of the listed building. Whereas this enhancement will not necessarily have a notable impact on the listed building's significance, it will open up views of the listed building and thereby provide a greater scope for appreciation of the newly renovated dwelling. For this reason, and mindful of the sympathetic nature in which the scheme has been designed with due deference to the significances of the site and the character of the former farmstead, the proposals present no appreciable risk of harm to the significances of the listed building and therefore satisfy the requirements of planning law and policy as it relates to conservation of the historic built environment."*

LPA Response: The assessment of the proposed development upon the heritage assets on this site is explored further in this report. For the purposes of demonstrating VSC it is acknowledged that the existing farmhouse was in a state of significant disrepair and it is noted that this dwelling is currently undergoing refurbishment and extension following the grant of planning permission and listed



building consent. It is important to note that the applicant does not make the case that the proposed residential development comprising the conversion of existing buildings and erection of new is required to fund or enable the refurbishment of the farmhouse. There is also no suggestion that the refurbishment of the farmhouse will not occur if the proposed development does not proceed. Indeed, as the refurbishment and extension of the farmhouse is underway, clearly that proposed is not required to enable these works.

Notwithstanding this, it is accepted that the works required to the farmhouse are substantial, will be lengthy and that a considerable investment is being made by the applicant to secure the significant enhancement of this heritage asset. Such investment is to be applauded, however, for the purpose of determining this application, it is not considered to carry sufficient weight as to justify the VSC required to justify additional development which is otherwise inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Turning to the proposed development, the historical link of the site to the Davenport family is noted and it is agreed that in particular, the size and current state of the large scale modern agricultural buildings seriously detract from the setting of the heritage asset blocking views of it from Old Hall Road. The applicant has worked extensively with the Council's Conservation Officer with a view to restoring the wider farm complex in a way that is true to the historical significance of the site. This includes not only the refurbishment of the farmhouse but the removal of unsightly modern buildings allowing for views into the site to appreciate the listed farmhouse together with the establishment of a clustered farmstead.

For the reasons set out above by the Conservation Officer and below in the analysis relating to the impact of the development upon the heritage assets, it is accepted that the proposed development will enhance views of and the setting of the listed farmhouse through the removal of unsightly modern agricultural buildings, the opening up of the vista from Old Hall Lane and the creation of a nucleated farmstead. In order to establish whether VSC exist to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt (which by definition will be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt), the question of whether the proposed development in its entirety is essential to achieve an enhancement to the listed building should be considered. In addition to this consideration should also be given to whether a lesser form of development, such as that already approved, would achieve the same enhancement of the listed building.

In response to this Members are advised that a very positive aspect of the scheme is that the modern agricultural sheds and tank will be removed, improving the setting and sightlines towards and around the listed Hall. Through sensitive design and proficient implementation the submitted scheme will result in an overall enhancement in the setting of the Hall. Referencing the approved site layout appended to this report and comparing it with that proposed by this application, Members will however see that the approved development already secures the removal of these modern buildings and also opens up the aspect of the farmhouse from the west on Old Hall Lane. As such, the development now proposed is little different in this respect and indeed it could be argued that the lack of development as previously approved to the east of the converted 2 storey barn would also open up views of the farmhouse from Old Hall Lane to the east.

The current application however proposes the replace the parking for the converted 2 storey barn on the opposite side of this building within a courtyard created by the retention and conversion of the projection to the barn and the

erection of 3 detached dwellings. The removal of this parking from the west of the barn along with the access required to serve it and its replacement with a larger landscaped area including gardens to the dwellings in the converted 2 storey barn will however significantly improve the setting of the farmhouse beyond that already approved and weighs in favour of the proposed development.

It is acknowledged that this enhancement could be secured in any event without the erection of 3 new detached dwellings and therefore it is necessary to consider this element in terms of added benefit to the significance of the heritage asset. In this respect the Council's Conservation Officer has advised that the design has been developed with the aim of balancing openness of the wider countryside setting with the need to create the character of a clustered farmstead. Moreover it results in a degree of enhancement through an increased level of retention of the existing historic farm buildings – a building attached to the south east end of the C19th rectangular barn, previously identified for demolition, is to be retained and sympathetically converted. The landscaping plan and the layout of the wider scheme also represents an enhancement upon the previously approved scheme, with more attention paid to maintaining a sense of openness and provision of shared spaces, avoiding overt domestication of private gardens, and a reappraisal of vehicle and pedestrian circulation, access and parking.

The Conservation Officer confirms that the greater level of development sought by this application is to be welcomed on account of the re-creation of the former open area to the west of the site (as evidenced in historic mapping) which will be to the advantage of the immediate setting of the Hall and the creation of a nucleated farmstead arranged around a central courtyard, which is wholly appropriate having regard to the age and historic use of the site and will reinforce the rural and agricultural character of the wider site and its setting.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the development now proposed will deliver further benefits to the significance of this heritage asset beyond that expected to be delivered through the application of development plan policies, that are not secured by the extant permission and that cannot be secured by a lesser form of development. This weighs heavily in favour of the application in terms of demonstrating VSC.

#### Green Belt Impact

*The lack of impact from the development upon the key characteristics of the Green Belt parcel should be taken into consideration. The wider Green Belt parcel is primarily serving two purposes which aim to prevent encroachment into the countryside and to prevent merging of neighbouring towns. The proposed development will not impact upon any of these two purposes of the Green Belt, and this should be considered in the determination of this application. With the resulting reduction in the volume of development upon the site (from 9001m<sup>3</sup> to 4442m<sup>3</sup>), it is considered the proposals deliver a unique opportunity to enhance the Green Belt.*

LPA Response: In this respect, the applicant has considered the purposes of including land within the Green Belt as set out at para 134 of the NPPF (such as preventing towns from merging and encroachment into the countryside) and has concluded that the proposed development does not cause any impact. Members are however advised that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and conflicts with the purpose of including land within it. As such, the applicant's argument that the proposed development does

not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt carries little or no weight.

The applicant makes reference to the fact that the proposed development will result in a significant reduction in the volume of built development upon the site which in turn will enhance the Green Belt. In this respect it is noted and accepted that the demolition of the existing modern agricultural buildings (with a volume of 6602m<sup>3</sup>) and the erection of 3 detached houses (with a combined volume of 2043m<sup>3</sup>) will result in a significant reduction of built development on the site (4559m<sup>3</sup>). Members are advised however that whilst the proposed development will enhance the visual qualities of the Green Belt through the removal of unsightly development, it cannot be held to enhance the openness of the Green Belt as it replaces development that is appropriate in the Green Belt (the agricultural buildings which by definition have no adverse impact on openness) with development that is inappropriate in the Green Belt (the erection of 3 dwellings which by definition do have an adverse impact on openness).

It is therefore concluded that little weight should be attached to this consideration in terms of demonstrating VSC on the basis that all development in the Green Belt is expected to either maintain or enhance the openness and the visual quality of it.

#### Design Solution

*The proposed development provides a high quality design solution to the unique characteristics and features of Old Hall Farm. The proposed Masterplan has been designed with due consideration of the Councils feedback, appreciation of the heritage and Green Belt value of the site. The resultant scheme provides the following design solutions to the site:*

- *The retention of the Grade II listed Farmhouse*
- *An overall reduction in scale*
- *Sympathetically designed buildings*
- *Reinstated access to the north east and courtyard*
- *Removal of competing buildings to allow greater appreciation of the Farmhouse*
- *Landscaping Improvements*
- *Improved vistas into the site from Old Hall Lane*
- *Re-establishment of the historic Old Hall Farm setting*

*Combined, the above key characteristics of the proposed design ensure a holistic approach is taken to the redevelopment of Old Hall Farm. The proposed scheme allows for the redevelopment of Old Hall Farm through a high quality design which goes above and beyond any single standard solution.*

LPA Response: The impact of the development upon the significance of the heritage asset is acknowledged and as confirmed above, it is considered that this benefit weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development when considering if VSC exist. That aside, development plan policies would in any event expect development to be of a high standard of design and as such, this in itself would not constitute the circumstances required to justify VSC.

#### Landscape and Visual Impact

*A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted as part of this application. The LVIA identifies and assesses the significance of change as a result of the development in both the landscape and visual amenity. The LVIA considers background information, baseline studies and the proposed development to assess the impact of the proposed development.*

*When assessing considering the proposals as a whole, the LVIA concludes; “Contextually, the proposed development will only occupy a very small part of the much wider landscape. Much consideration has been given to the finished appearance and exact location of the development in relation to the remainder of the site and when considered holistically, the proposals will significantly enhance the current visual appearance of the site and the once open space to the front of the Old Hall Farmhouse will be reinstated, replicating the setting as shown on historical maps dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and will aim to restore some of the lost openness of the green belt and enhance the setting of the site.”*

LPA Response: It is accepted that the proposed development will have a significant and beneficial impact upon the landscape character of the area through the removal of unsightly dilapidated buildings. This is however already secured by the extant permission. This current application however proposes additional landscaping works to the west of the site together with the relocation of parking into courtyard areas screened from wider views within the landscape. It is considered that these elements will bring an enhancement to the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development that is not secured by the extant permission. This weighs in favour of the proposed development in terms of demonstrating VSC.

#### Housing Supply

*NPPF paragraph 73 is clear that “Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old. The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of ‘5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land’ or ‘20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply”.*

*Stockport’s 5 year housing land supply assessment 2018-23’ statement, states that the Council currently have a 2.8 year housing land supply when taking into account past shortfall and a 20% buffer. This is significantly less than the required five-year supply and hence, according to the NPPF, ‘relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date.*

*The Council’s lack of a five-year housing land supply, although not considered to demonstrate very special circumstances exist in isolation, is still a material consideration in favour of the development and is relevant to the determination of this planning application, adding significant weight in favour of the development.*

LPA Response: The applicant is correct in noting that the NPPF requires LPA’s to maintain at least a 5 year deliverable supply of housing. In this respect the Council cannot demonstrate compliance with this requirement nor has done so for a period of time with currently only 2.8 years of housing land supply.

The proposed development will deliver 4 additional dwellings beyond that already approved by DC057629. At a time of continued undersupply whilst the proposed development will not make a significant contribution, it will assist and collectively applications of this nature can make a more meaningful contribution. Members are advised that whilst the lack of a 5 year housing supply is material to the consideration of this application, as has been confirmed by Government Ministers, unmet housing demand rarely provides the VSC required to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Whilst unmet housing demand may

be temporary, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt will be permanent. Noting also that the application proposes only 4 additional dwellings beyond the 4 already approved and will make only a limited contribution to the undersupply of housing, it is considered that little weight be attached to the proposal in this respect when considering if VSC exist.

### Conclusion of VSC

In deciding whether VSC exist to justify otherwise inappropriate development in the Green Belt, para 144 of the NPPF confirms that LPA's should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

In this respect, it is noted that whilst the conversion of the labourer's cottage and the 2 storey barn together with the creation of a large amenity area to the west of the site accords with saved policies GBA1.2, GBA1.5 and GBA1.6 of the UDP Review and para 146 of the NPPF. The erection of 3 detached dwellings fails to accord with saved policies GBA1.2 and GBA1.5 of the UDP Review and para 145 of the NPPF. This element of the development is therefore inappropriate in the Green Belt, is by definition harmful to its openness and conflicts with the purpose of including land within the Green Belt.

The case presented by the applicant in relation to the impact of the development upon the Green Belt, the design merits of the proposal together with the contribution that the development will bring to addressing the position of housing under supply, has been fully considered. Whilst material to the consideration of the application, for the reasons stated above none of these carry sufficient weight alone to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Para 184 of the NPPF confirms that the heritage asset is an irreplaceable resource and one which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to its significance so that it can be enjoyed for its contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Para 192 of the NPPF also confirms that in determining planning applications, LPA's should take account of:-

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

In response to this Members are advised that the proposed development delivers an added enhancement of the setting and significance of the heritage asset beyond that already approved. The development:-

- will put all of the buildings of heritage significance to a viable use consistent with their conservation.
- will make a positive contribution by preserving and converting existing buildings and will add to the economic viability of the community through the construction and occupation of the proposed development and
- will make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness through the re-creation of clustered farmstead as well as securing an enhanced landscape setting to the farmhouse.

For these reasons, it is considered that the proposed development secures enhancements to the significance of the heritage asset that are not already

secured by the extant permission and would not be secured by a lesser form of development. This weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development and in conjunction with the enhancements to the landscape and visual quality of the area that this scheme will deliver, is of such significance to outweigh the harm that will arise to the openness of the Green Belt. As such, it is considered that the applicant has demonstrated the VSC required to justify otherwise inappropriate development in the Green Belt consistent with para's 143 and 144 of the NPPF.

### **Landscape Character Area**

Saved policy LCR1.1 confirms that development in the countryside will be strictly controlled and will not be permitted unless it protects or enhances the quality and character of the rural area. Where it is acceptable in principle it will be sensitively sited and designed, constructed of materials appropriate to the locality and be accommodated without adverse impact on the landscape quality of the area. Development should improve the appearance of the countryside, notably by removing unsightly existing development.

The character appraisal forming part of the UDP Review notes that located at the extreme south of the Borough, the relative flatness of the Woodford LCA has facilitated the establishment of Woodford Aerodrome, the major part of which lies in Stockport. The land, which is in predominantly pastoral use with medium sized, even and rectangular field patterns, slopes away gently to the valley of the River Dean along the south-western boundary. Land in this area is in predominantly pastoral use with medium sized, even and rectangular field patterns.

This area contains a significant number of the remaining ponds in the Borough and these should be protected for their ecological value. Reinstatement of degraded hedges in the area, and the planting of new areas of woodland, particularly along the urban boundary and along the existing and proposed major road lines, should be encouraged.

Policy ENV1 of the WNP confirms that development should respect local character. In doing so it should recognise and take into account the importance of views and vistas listed in the Plan (including that over the site from the public right of way to the east/south east of the site).

In support of the application is a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which notes:-

*- The position of the proposed dwellings has been carefully considered to cause minimum visual impact upon the landscape. A sympathetic approach throughout has been taken with the design proposals utilising carefully chosen materials to match the vernacular style and heritage associated with the site. The landscape design will help to reflect more of the historical layout of the site, particularly when looked at in context with the large meadow area proposed to the west.*

*- No hedges or trees require removal or are otherwise impacted upon by the proposed works and this is judged to present a low magnitude of change in the existing landscape resource.*

*- Field studies, combined with office-based desk studies indicate that some visibility of the proposals is likely, particularly to the south and east primarily within a radius of up to 0.5 km from the site. Some visibility will be possible from the more open land to this southern quadrant of the study area, towards and immediately within the environs of the River Dean and also towards the western perimeters of the Avro Golf Club. Beyond this distance the potential visual impact*

*is considered to be negligible and its small scale will diminish considerably. Many views will be limited by existing vegetation, notably mature and established tree planting and high hedgerows, and a small number of built structures, including other farm and agricultural buildings within a close range up to 1km. It is recreational users, i.e. walkers and ramblers using public rights of way who are most likely to experience views, but these receptors are not likely to experience any substantially adverse visual effects. Cyclists, golfers and horse riders are unlikely to be affected by the proposal as their attention is most likely to be focused upon the activity they are pursuing.*

*- Carefully chosen viewpoints have been assessed which represent a range of different views and viewing distances. From the footbridge across River Dean on the public right of way to the south of the site and the lay-by adjacent to the western airfield perimeter to the south east, it is considered that the development would have a low beneficial effect, improving the local visual amenity, by replacing the existing dilapidated, corrugated metal agricultural barn and redundant tank. It is not apparent that the proposals would be visible along the western approaches of Old Hall Lane due to high hedgerows and similarly along Wilmslow Road, to the north west, as hedgerows and mature tree planting to field boundaries typically screen close-mid range views in the direction of Old Hall Farm*

*- Contextually, the proposed development will only occupy a very small part of the much wider landscape. Much consideration has been given to the finished appearance and exact location of the development in relation to the remainder of the site and when considered holistically, the proposals will significantly enhance the current visual appearance of the site. The once open space to the front of the Old Hall Farmhouse will be reinstated, replicating the setting as shown on historical maps dating from the 18th century and will aim to restore some of the lost openness of the green belt and enhance the setting of the site.*

Members are advised that the applicant has carried out a thorough assessment of the impact of the proposed development upon the Landscape Character Area and in this respect it is considered that the application has addressed the requirements of CS policy LCR1.1 and WNP policy ENV1. Views of the site whether those in close or long range will be enhanced by the regeneration of the site in a manner sympathetic to the heritage asset and rural character of the locality, the creation of the landscaped amenity area to the west of the site and the relocation of the parking to within secluded courtyard areas. In these respects the proposed development is considered to be an enhancement upon that already approved. Precise details of landscaping (hard and soft) can be secured by condition as can the materials of external construction thus securing compliance with saved UDP Review policy LCR1.1 and policy ENV1 of the WNP.

### **Impact on the Heritage Asset**

The main farmhouse is grade 2 listed and being within the curtilage of this building, the adjacent ancillary buildings are also listed; Core Strategy policy SIE3 therefore applies. This policy confirms that development which preserves or enhances the special architectural, artistic, historical or archaeological significance of heritage assets will be welcomed. Loss or harm to the significance of a heritage asset will require clear and convincing justification and will only be permitted if there is clear evidence that there is no other viable means of securing its preservation and that no viable alternative use can be found. New uses will be permitted for listed buildings if the use for which the building was designed for it no longer viable, the proposed use would preserve the architectural or historic interest of the building and the proposal would not detract

from the amenities of the surrounding area or cause traffic danger. Where a new use is acceptable the Council may relax controls over land use, density, plot ration and other matters of detail where this facilitates the preservation of the building.

The NPPF at chapter 16 confirms that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation and
- b) The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality and
- c) The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation ((and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) (para 193)).

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification (para 194).

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (para 196).

Policy COM3 of the WNP confirms that new development affecting a heritage asset, including the setting of the asset, should conserve or enhance the asset in a manner according to its significance.

The Heritage Statement submitted with this application assesses the significance of the heritage asset and notes the following:-

*- Old Hall Farm comprises a detached C16-C17th farmhouse (grade II listed and currently being renovated and extended), an altered extended C19th brick barn, a small C19th brick former labourer's cottage and cart shed and a series of C20th steel framed shelter sheds of varying size, form a cluster of buildings (the farmstead) set amidst fields on the south side of Old Hall Lane. There is also a converted former C17th barn on the north side of the Lane which was formerly part of the farmstead and is grade II listed (and under separate ownership).*

*- The historic origins of Woodford Old Hall are outlined in "Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society" from 1908iv. The text explains the connections with the Davenport family and, whereas the text suggests the primary seat of family shifted from 'Old Hall' to 'New Hall' (1630), more recent research tends to indicate that the New Hall was actually of secondary importance built for junior members of the family. New Hall (Farm) is a grade II\* building within half a mile to the east of Old Hall Farm.*

*- The arrival of farm buildings between 1871 and 1935 is depicted on the historic maps, with those of most interest being the central long barn range and the small former labourer's cottage with accompanying cart shed and storage loft, both dating from the mid C19th with alterations and additions dating from the latter*



period of the C19th. The barn was a multifunctional building including animal housing and storage space, and the building shows clear evidence of phased extension/development (figure 8) which suggests an intensification of farming activity through the C19th. The small cottage/cart shed also has clear evidence of extension with a new part added to the west, as also depicted on the 1871 and 1896 maps. It was not uncommon for farms to provide living accommodation, often for seasonal workers, and features such as the chimney and windows show that this building had a domestic use.

- Modern farm buildings were added to the farmstead through the C20th and the farmstead was extended eastwards. In 2015 permission was granted for the conversion of the main C19th barn situated centrally into residential use, with demolition of the barn's south eastern addition. Demolition of the newer C20th farm buildings was also part of this scheme.

- The following priorities for conserving significance have been identified, which stem from an understanding of the site's historical development, its extant heritage values and the impact of the conversion/demolition scheme granted consent in 2015:

*Conserve primary views of the farmhouse.*

*Conserve evidence of the former cottage/cart shed's original function.*

*Ensure other new development is spatially detached from the farmhouse.*

*Employ a design approach which respects the extant qualities of the farmhouse and retained farm buildings, avoids overt pastiche and ensures any new buildings harmonise with the site in a manner which is readily interpretable as a contemporary intervention.*

- Mindful that the varied scheme includes retention of all parts of the barn (i.e. it excludes the planned demolition of 2015), it is reasonable to deduce that the varied scheme conserves a greater amount of the barn's evidential value than was previously planned. Furthermore, given that the varied scheme seeks to retain the agricultural character of the building, albeit with the formation of some new openings, re-opening of blocked former openings and insertion of some rooflights, the new proposals also follow the design ethos and spirit of the previously approved scheme. For these joint reasons, it would be reasonable to state that at the very least the varied scheme would result in no appreciable harm to the significance of the listed farmhouse, and through greater retention of C19th building fabric the revised scheme possibly results in benefits when compared with the 2015 scheme.

- With regards to the new dwellings, these have been design in a manner that reflects the simple design and character of agricultural barns (principally the combination barn typology) using a palette of materials which matches and harmonises with the existing barn range. The new dwellings have been specifically designed to avoid the introduction an overtly domesticated character to the farmstead and have been positioned in approximately the same location as the C20th farm building due for demolition (east of the barn range). Herein, it is readily apparent that the effective replacement of the C20th farm building with the new dwellings will result in a net improvement in the aesthetic qualities of the site, which, although not directly associated with heritage value, does improve the overall visual setting and appearance of the site and listed building. This improvement is further enhanced by the demolition of C20th structures on the west side of the barn range, work that will open up views of the listed building from the north and north west.

*- In terms of alterations to hard and soft landscaping across the site, this has been designed to avoid over segregation of space, therefore retaining a sense of the farmyard environment and avoiding too many overly domesticated features. Whilst the landscaping is not particularly relevant to the heritage values and significances of the listed building (mindful that the house, or 'Hall', was not originally part of a farmstead), the net impact of the proposed changes is once again an enhancement to the visual qualities of the site and the formation of a spatial setting that acknowledges the historical status and importance of the listed building.*

*- For these combined reasons, and with specific consideration to the significances of the listed building, there would appear no reason to suggest the scheme will cause any harm to significance and that the net impact of the proposals will be wholly positive. This of course comes 'hot on the heels' of the positive impact currently accruing through the ongoing renovation of the listed building.*

The assessment of the application in this respect has been carefully considered by the Council's Conservation Officer. Members will see from his comments as recorded above in this report that the inclusion in the current proposal of the retention and conversion of the outrigger to the main range of outbuildings previously proposed for demolition is to be welcomed. The demolition of modern agricultural buildings which have no special historic or architectural interest together with the landscaping of this area will open up new public views of the Hall and its associated farm buildings, contributing to an enhancement of their setting. It is also acknowledged that the creation of a nucleated farmstead is historically appropriate for this site and will reinforce the rural and agricultural character of the wider site and its setting. The new build dwellings are also considered to be complementary to the immediate context.

The heritage statement submitted with the application provides a robust analysis of the impact of the development upon the significance and setting of the listed buildings adjacent to the site. The scheme has been informed by direct reference to research published by Historic England in relation to the character, form and layout of Cheshire farmsteads. In this respect it is considered that the proposal will deliver an enhancement of the setting of the main farmhouse. Whilst additional development is proposed beyond that already approved, it is considered that this through the further retention and conversion of listed curtilage buildings and the landscaping of the wider site (which pays more attention to openness, shared spaces, garden areas, access and parking) will result in further enhancement to these heritage assets beyond the previously approved scheme.

In terms of 1660 Old Hall Barn, it is considered that the removal of the unsightly circular tank and the substantial modern barn and its replacement with a clustered farmstead which is historically accurate to the site, will enhance the setting of this adjacent listed building. Further to revisions, the dwelling closest to this existing dwelling will now be positioned between 20m and 26m away. As such the proposed development will be further away from 1660 Old Hall Barn than the modern circular tank is at present and will have a footprint significantly smaller than the existing large barn to be demolished. As well as proposing a form of development more appropriate to the setting of 1660 Old Hall Barn, the new adjacent new dwelling will be further away from Old Hall Barn and of a size much smaller than that existing. Taking these factors into account and noting the Conservation Officers comments about the acceptability of the design approach,

it is considered that the setting of this neighbouring heritage asset will be enhanced by the proposed development.

In this regard the proposal is considered compliant with Core Strategy policy SIE3, policy COM3 of the WNP and chapter 16 of the NPPF.

### **Impact on Character of the Area/Residential Amenity**

Policy H1 of the Core Strategy confirms that development should be of a high quality, respond to the character of the area within which they are located and provide for good standards of amenity. This is reinforced in Core Strategy policy CS8 which welcomes development that is designed and landscaped to a high standard and which makes a positive contribution to a sustainable, attractive, safe and accessible built and natural environment. Policy SIE-1 of the Core Strategy also confirms that development which is designed to the highest contemporary standard, paying high regard to the built/and or natural environment within which it is sited, will be given positive consideration. Specific regard should be paid to the use of materials appropriate to the location and the site's context in relation to surrounding buildings (particularly with regard to height, density and massing of buildings).

The NPPF at chapter 12 sets out the Government's most up to date position on planning policy and confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Planning decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.

Policy DEV4 of the WNP requires all new development in Woodford to achieve a high standard of design. New residential proposals should demonstrate how they respect and respond to the rural character of the area.

The consideration of the application in terms of its impact on the Landscape Character Area as set out above is much the same as that in relation to the general character of the locality. In this respect it is considered that the removal of the existing modern agricultural buildings to the west of the site, the relocation

of the parking into courtyard areas, the conversion of the labourer's cottage and long 2 storey barn together with the provision of the extensive landscaped area adjacent to these dwellings will significantly enhance the appearance of the site when approaching from the north. These works will appear in keeping with the character of the main farmhouse and adjacent listed buildings opposite and will retain/enhance the predominantly rural character of Old Hall Lane. Conditions can be imposed to secure details of external materials of construction and landscaping both hard and soft.

In relation to the 3no. detached dwellings, Members are advised that the Council's SPD 'Design of Residential Development' encourages development that respects local character and acknowledges that replicating past architectural styles is not appropriate. Design should reflect the locality but be honest to the current time and techniques of building design and construction. Contemporary design can also be used in historically/architecturally sensitive areas provided extra care is taken in the design approach and understanding of the surrounding context.

The removal of the modern agricultural buildings will clearly enhance the character of the locality. The construction of the proposed dwellings in a contemporary approach is considered to reinterpret the barn vernacular in such a way so not to undermine the importance of the existing historic buildings on the site. The scale and proportions of the new build dwellings will match those of the existing adjacent 2 storey barn in terms of ridge and eaves height and the proposed materials will reflect that existing using soft, textured pink brick with pale mortar to echo the existing barns, slate roofs and matt black timber windows. Details of precise materials of external construction together with landscaping both soft and hard can be secured by condition.

The design of these new dwellings, reflects that of the simple agricultural barns adjacent avoiding an overly domesticated approach. The use of contemporary architecture as oppose to a pastiche of that existing will ensure that the development is of its time and contributes to the historical evolution of the site without undermining its importance.

In considering the impact of the proposed development upon residential amenity, regard is paid to the existing adjacent occupiers and the future occupiers of the proposed development. In this regard, the Council's SPD 'Design of Residential Development' is material to the consideration of this application.

The Council's SPD confirms that a feeling of privacy both within a dwelling and garden, is a widely held desire that the Council has a duty to secure for the occupants of existing and new housing. In general terms the design and layout of a development should minimise overlooking and should not impose any unacceptable loss of privacy on the occupiers of existing dwellings. Minimum space standards are set out in the SPD.

The farmhouse aside, the closest existing residential occupiers are at 1660 Old Hall Barn to the north of the site on the opposite side of Old Hall Lane. The side elevation of this barn faces the application site and contains several habitable room windows with 3 windows to a study and kitchen diner at ground floor, 1 window to a bedroom at first floor and 1 window to bedroom at second floor. Currently these windows which provide the main aspect from this dwelling, face the circular tank on the site adjacent to Old Hall Lane beyond which is a large agricultural building.

Following the demolition of these buildings, as part of the wider courtyard development of 3 new build houses, the application proposes the erection of a 2 storey detached house adjacent to the Old Hall Lane frontage and opposite the side elevation of 1660 Old Hall Barn (new build dwelling no.1). The rear elevation of this proposed house would contain 3 habitable room windows at ground floor and 4 habitable room windows at first floor. To address objections and concerns regarding the siting of this dwelling in relation to 1660 Old Hall Barn, the siting of these 3 new build houses has been amended. As a result of this at ground floor level the habitable room windows facing 1660 Old Hall Barn will be positioned between 21m and 24.6m away and at first floor level 23.8m to 24.6m away. The Council's SPD advises that for 2 storey development such as that proposed there should be a distance of 21m between habitable room windows on the street side of dwellings. The proposed development complies with and exceeds this guidance, as such it is not considered that the proposed development will result in a loss of privacy or unacceptable degree of overlooking to or from 1660 Old Hall Barn.

In terms of the impact upon the visual amenities afforded by the occupiers of this neighbouring property, the presence of an unsightly metal tank positioned 10.6m from the side elevation of 1660 Old Hall Barn is noted. This tank measures 12m in diameter and rises to 4m in height. Immediately behind this tank is a substantial agricultural shed measuring 27.5m wide. Whilst these structures are appropriate to their location having regard to the agricultural use of the site, they are unsightly and their removal will enhance the visual amenities afforded by the neighbouring occupiers. The proposed dwelling closest to 1660 Old Hall Barn will be positioned further away than the existing circular tank by 11m, will be no higher than the existing building to be demolished but will have an elevation facing 1660 Old Hall Barn significantly shorter than that of the building to be demolished (15m vs 27.5m). Whilst neighbouring occupiers do not have a right to a view over adjoining land, the siting of the proposed development coupled with the opening up of this vista will significantly improve the visual amenities afforded from 1660 Old Hall Barn.

With regard to the internal layout of the proposed development and the relationship between the converted 2 storey barn and the proposed houses, there will be distance of 14m between the side of dwelling no.1 and the converted barn 26.6m between the front of dwelling no.2 and the converted barn and 22m between the front of dwelling no.3 and the converted barn. All these distances comply with and exceed the space standards set out in the SPD. In this respect it is considered that the future occupiers of these dwellings will benefit from an acceptable level of amenity.

Part of the front of dwelling no.3 faces the side elevation of barn conversion no.4 and at this point these dwellings are only 8.5m apart. The front elevation to dwelling no.3 at this point contains only non habitable room windows at ground floor (hall and corridor to wc and utility) and an ensuite window at first floor. The side elevation of barn no.4 contains only doors to the dining and sitting room at ground floor level and a small window to a mezzanine at first floor with the main aspect being to the front and rear. This relationship is 3.5m closer than the SPD advises however given the nature of the accommodation facing each other as outlined above, it is not considered that this relationship is unacceptable.

The front elevation of the existing farmhouse will face the front elevation of the converted labourer's cottage being 21m distant. This complies with the 21m required by the SPD. The distance from the main front elevation of the farmhouse to the side elevation of dwelling no.3 in the converted 2 storey barn

will be 21m also complying with the SPD however the distance to the rear elevation of dwelling no.4 will only be 16.5m, 4.5m short of that required by the SPD. This dwelling will however only be single storey in height and views from the ground floor habitable room windows will be obscured by the proposed garden wall to the south of this dwelling. Whilst there will be accommodation in the roofspace served by rooflights, these will be positioned to the north facing roofslope on the opposite side of the converted barn to the existing farmhouse. As such no loss of privacy will arise and this relationship is considered acceptable.

The SPD advises that whatever the size or location of a dwelling there will always be a requirement for some form of private amenity space ranging from balconies and roof gardens to communal private space and private front and rear gardens. Private amenity space should be usable, accessible, reasonably free from overlooking, allow for adequate daylight and sunlight and have regard to the size of the dwelling proposed. Unusable spaces such as narrow strips adjacent to roads and parking, steeply sloping areas or those in excessive shade should be avoided. For small family housing (2/3 beds) 75m<sup>2</sup> of space should be provided (50m<sup>2</sup> for terraced housing) and for larger houses (4/5 beds) there should be 100m<sup>2</sup>.

The conversion of the labourer's cottage will provide a 2 bed dwelling with double doors from the sitting room and bedroom 2 providing access to amenity space to the west and north of the dwelling. This space would comprise circa 120m<sup>2</sup> of amenity space which exceeds the 75m<sup>2</sup> required by the SPD.

Barn conversions no.1, 2, 3 and 4 will all have private rear gardens compliant with and exceeding the minimum required by the SPD (circa 252m<sup>2</sup>, 247m<sup>2</sup>, 168m<sup>2</sup> and 149m<sup>2</sup> respectively vs the 50m<sup>2</sup> to 100m<sup>2</sup> required). It is accepted that the garden to barn conversion no.4 is truncated by the siting of new build dwelling no.3 and is effectively divided into 2 areas. That closest to the house will provide around 35m<sup>2</sup> with that beyond around 114m<sup>2</sup>. Although that closest to the house would be smaller, it would still provide an attractive area to garden and sit out and would be supplemented by the larger area beyond. On this basis it is not considered that the provision for this dwelling would result in an unacceptable level of amenity for the future occupiers. It is also noted the converted labourers cottage together with barns 1, 2 and 3 will have access to the large landscaped area to the west of the site through private gates in their rear garden boundaries. This adjacent area will provide of over 1000m<sup>2</sup> of landscaped communal space and together with the private gardens proposed will ensure that the occupiers of these dwellings have an excellent level of amenity.

The new build dwellings would each have a private rear garden each in excess of 140m<sup>2</sup>. This significantly exceeds the 100m<sup>2</sup> suggested as appropriate by the SPD and again will ensure an excellent level of amenity.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development complies with policies H1, CS8 and SIE1 of the Core Strategy DPD together with policy DEV4 of the WNP.

### **Highway Safety and Parking**

Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy DPD requires development to be sited in locations accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. The Council will support development that reduced the need to travel by car. This position is followed through in policy T1 which seeks to focus development in designated centres as these are the most accessible and development within them will

facilitate a reduction in the need to travel. New development, notably that generating significant number of trips, will be required to be sustainably accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

Policy T2 requires parking in accordance with the maximum standards and policy T3 confirms that development which will have an adverse impact on highway safety and/or the capacity of the highway network will only be permitted if mitigation measures are proposed to address such impacts. Developments shall be of a safe and practical design.

This position is reflected in chapter 9 of the NPPF where at para 103 it confirms that significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This para acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural area and this should be taken into account in decision making.

The comments of the Highway Engineer in relation to the location of the site and its suitability for further residential development, noting the lack of connectivity to public transport is acknowledged. In this respect and in response to those comments, Members are advised accordingly:

At the time of considering the previous application, the Council's housing supply was higher than it currently is, then being 3.1 years of supply vs the 5 years as required by the NPPF. At that point in time in order for a site to be considered appropriate for residential development (in terms of accessibility) it had to achieve a minimum score of 34 (calculated using a model having regard to the proximity of a site to public transport, shops, services and amenities). The site scored 25 against the accessibility criteria, which was considerably below the minimum required score. When there is less than a 5 year supply and a site does not achieve the required accessibility score, policy H2 of the CS however allows for development where it achieves one of the listed regeneration benefits (one of those being the re-use of a listed building). Given the conversion of and significant benefit to the curtilage listed buildings secured by that application the proposal was considered to be in conformity with the local development plan and as such was approved.

Since the consideration of that application the supply of housing within the Borough has decreased further to 2.8 years vs the 5 year supply required by the NPPF. This level of undersupply is now so low that the required accessibility score has been reduced to zero. Whilst sites are not necessarily any closer to public transport connections than they were when the required minimum score was 34, this change means that any site within the Borough, irrespective of its location and connection to public transport can now be considered for residential development with the aim being that the lowering of the score will enable more sites to come forward for redevelopment thus addressing the position of housing undersupply.

The provision afforded by policy H2, that the residential redevelopment of a site that fails to meet the minimum accessibility score will only be acceptable if it secures a regeneration benefit is no longer relevant as clearly all sites within the Borough will now achieve the minimum accessibility score of zero. As such, for the purposes of housing delivery, residential development is considered acceptable in principle on any site (subject to there being no other policy objection).

In this respect it is accepted that the site has poor connections to public transport which will be worsened further once the bus stop is relocated to the garden village at the former aerodrome. It is also accepted that trips to the site will most likely be predominantly car borne. The Highway Engineer advises that the NPPF and Council Policy require residential development to be sited in locations that are demonstrably accessible to public transport, walking and cycling opportunities, amenities, retail opportunities, education establishments, health facilities, places of employment and all other services which residents can reasonably expect to enjoy. In this respect he advises that the proposal is contrary to policies CS9 and T1 of the Core Strategy and para's 103, 104, 108 and 110 of the NPPF.

In response to this position, Members are advised accordingly:

Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy confirms that housing should be provided in accessible locations. As the minimum required score is now zero, for the purposes of policy CS4 the site is in an accessible location.

Neither policy CS9 nor T1 state that all developments have to be in locations that are only accessible by public transport, cycling and walking. Clearly there is a focus on locations such as existing centres which are more accessible, however, neither policy states that all development should be in such locations. In this respect it is noted that whilst the site is not accessible by public transport, it is by walking and cycling thus complying in part with policy CS9. Furthermore, it has not been suggested by the Highway Engineer that the development will generate significant trips and as such, whilst accepting that the redevelopment of the site will generate car borne trips, the level and frequency of these are unlikely to be of a high volume. As with the approved scheme, a condition can be imposed to secure the upgrading of Old Hall Lane outside the application site together with the filling in of pot holes and carrying out patch repairs from the end of the highway adoption to the site boundary. This will deliver the enhancement to connectivity in relation to walking and cycling as required by policy T1.

In terms of the NPPF, para 103 confirms that significant development should be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This para acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural area and this should be taken into account in decision making.

Para 103 therefore requires only 'significant' development to be focussed on sustainable locations. That proposed is not significant being classed as a 'minor' application. Furthermore, the NPPF acknowledges that in rural areas there will be reduced opportunities to maximise sustainable transports solutions. The application site is located in such a rural area and as confirmed by the NPPF, this should be considered in decision making. For these reasons and noting that the site will be accessible by some sustainable modes (cycling and walking) it is considered that the proposal accords with para 103 of the NPPF.

Para 104 of the NPPF requires planning policies to support an appropriate mix of uses across an area and, within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities. The application does not however relate to a large scale site comprising rather an application seeking 'minor development'. As such, and noting that this para relates to the drafting of policy rather than the determination of applications, it is not considered that the proposal is in conflict.



Para 108 of the NPPF confirms that in decision taking it should be ensured that appropriate opportunities are taken to promote sustainable transport modes given the type and location of development. The proposed development is small in scale and located in a rural setting where opportunities to promote sustainable modes are not as wide ranging as they could be in more urban or suburban locations. Notwithstanding this, the development will secure through conditions improvements to Old Hall Lane which in turn will improve the connectivity of the site by cycling and walking. For these reasons the proposal is considered to be compliant with para 108 of the NPPF.

Para 109 of the NPPF confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be secure. It is noted that the Highway Engineer does not advise that there would be adverse impacts in either of these respects.

Para 110 advises that 'as far as possible' developments should facilitate access to high quality public transport. This does not confirm that all development must connect to public transport and noting the rural location of the site, it is acknowledged that it will not be possible to facilitate such access. This position is reflected in para's 103 and 108 which advise that in rural areas connectivity to public transport is not always possible and that this should be taken into account.

In conclusion therefore it is not considered that the proposal would fail to comply with NPPF paragraphs 103, 104, 108 and 110 nor policies CS9 and T-1 of the Core Strategy. The aim of transport policy both locally and nationally is to ensure that significant developments are sited in locations which are accessible by public transport, cycling and walking; the proposed development is not significant and will be accessible by cycling and walking. Furthermore, on developments which are not significant, connectivity with public transport should only be facilitated where possible and practical given the type and location of development. In this location such connectivity is not possible or practical.

It is noted that the Highway Engineer has no objection to the means of access into the site nor the level of parking provision. Each dwelling would have 2 parking spaces which accords with the Council's adopted standard. Conditions can be imposed to secure details of cycle parking, electric vehicle charging points, the construction of the access and parking areas as well as improvements to Old Hall Lane. On this basis the proposed development accords with policies CS9, T1, T2 and T3 of the Core Strategy DPD.

### **Other Matters**

Policies NE1.2 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance of the UDP Review and SIE-3 Protecting, Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment of the Core Strategy along with para's 170 and 175 of the NPPF seek to ensure that proposed development does not adversely affect protected species and secures enhancements for biodiversity. Policy ENV4 of the WNP seeks to ensure the conservation, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity. Development should achieve net gains in biodiversity.

The site has no nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise. Notwithstanding this, submitted with the application is an ecological survey of the site including the buildings to be demolished and converted together with updated bat surveys.

This information has been considered by the Council's ecologist who advises that no evidence of roosting bats has been observed nor were any recorded to emerge from the smaller element of the long barn now also to be converted during the activity surveys. Common pipistrelle activity were however recorded across the wider site. Disused swallow nests are also recorded in Barn B2 during the 2020 update surveys. The nests of all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

The habitats on site are considered to be unsuitable for GCN (hard standing) which corresponds with previous assessments of the site. As such providing Reasonable Avoidance Measures are followed the risk of GCN being present within the application area and impacted by the proposed works is low.

The Ecology Officer considers that there is sufficient information on protected species to allow the application to be determined. Although bats are not recorded in the buildings to be converted they can regularly switch roost sites. On this basis an informative should be attached to the grant of planning permission so that the applicant is aware of their legal responsibilities should roosting bats be subsequently encountered. Bat boxes within the development can be secured by condition to compensate for the loss of potential roosting opportunities.

A condition can also be imposed to ensure that Reasonable Avoidance Measures as outlined on the GCN Method Statement submitted with the application are followed during works and this being the case, the risk to GCN is considered to be low. Noting that ecological conditions can change overtime, a condition can be imposed to secure repeat surveys if the development has not commenced within 2 years of the August 2020 survey.

To protect nesting birds a condition can be imposed to ensure that no vegetation clearance/demolition works take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation/buildings and has provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. The provision of bird boxes throughout the development can also be secured by condition to compensate for the loss of nesting habitat on site.

External lighting can be controlled by condition to minimise impacts on wildlife associated with light disturbance.

Details of the proposed seed mix/plug planting of the wildflower area can be secured by condition along with management measures as can details of the pond design.

Having regard to the above, and subject to the imposition of conditions as recommended by the Nature Development Officer, the proposed development is considered compliant with saved UDP Review policy NE1.2, Core Strategy policy SIE-3, WNP policy ENV4 together with para's 170 and 175 of the NPPF.

Policy SD3 of the Core Strategy together with para 153 of the NPPF require developments to demonstrate how they will contribute to carbon reductions. To address this issue the application includes an Energy Statement which advises that having considered the inclusion of renewable technologies (solar voltaics, wind, micro hydro, district heating, solar hot water, heat pumps and biomas) none are financially viable. Notwithstanding this, the compliance of the

development with Part L of the Building Regulations will ensure that the proposal accords with policy SD3.

Core Strategy policies EP1.7 and SD6 require developments to demonstrate that no adverse impact will arise in relation to flooding and that development is designed in such a way as to avoid, mitigate or reduce the impacts of climate change. All development will be required to incorporate sustainable drainage systems so as to manage the run off of water from the site. This positioned is supported by the NPPF at para's 163 and 165.

Given the small scale of the proposed development there is no requirement for a flood risk assessment nor is there a requirement to set out at this stage the drainage strategy for the site. A condition can however be imposed to ensure that such a strategy, which is based upon sustainable principles, is submitted, approved and implemented as part of the proposed development. The comments of United Utilities in relation to the private package treatment plant proposed for the disposal of foul sewerage is noted. A condition can be imposed as requested to secure details of this and to ensure that there is no pollution of public drinking water supplies for the wider area. The proposal therefore accords with Core Strategy policy SD6.

Applications for new residential development are expected to make a contribution to formal recreation and children's play facilities in accordance with saved UDP policies L1.1 and L1.2 together with Core Strategy policy SIE2 and advice contained within the accompanying SPD. Funds raised can only be used for children's play within 100m (on a LAP), 400m (on a LEAP) and 1000m (on a NEAP) of the funding development so as to ensure a direct relationship between the new development and future investment of the contributions.

Noting that there are no children's play facilities within the threshold distances of the site. The application need only make a contribution towards formal recreation. This sum can be secured by a S106 agreement in the event that planning permission is approved.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The delivery of residential development on this site accords with policies CS2, CS4 and H-2 of the Core Strategy. The density of the proposed development accords with the minimum expected density set out in policy CS3 and the advice set out in para 122 of the NPPF.

The proposal fails to comply with policy EMP3 of the WNP in that the buildings to be converted will not be in the same use. For the reasons set out above, however, this is not considered unacceptable.

In relation to the Green Belt, there are no policies in the WNP that are relevant to the proposed redevelopment of this site.

The conversion of existing buildings and the creation of the large area of amenity space to the west of the site is considered appropriate in the Green Belt and complies with policies GBA1.2, GBA1.5, GBA1.6 and para 146 of the NPPF. The erection of 3 detached dwellings is however contrary to GBA1.2, GBA1.5 and para 145 of the NPPF, is 'inappropriate' in the Green Belt and can only be approved where VSC exist.

In this respect it is considered that the proposed development secures enhancements to the significance of the heritage asset together with the landscape and visual qualities of the area that are not already secured by the extant permission and would not be secured by a lesser form of development. This weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development and is of such significance that it is considered to outweigh the harm that will arise to the openness of the Green Belt. As such, it is considered that the applicant has demonstrated the VSC required to justify otherwise inappropriate development in the Green Belt consistent with para's 143 and 144 of the NPPF.

The impact of the proposed development upon the significance of the heritage assets within and adjacent to the site is assessed in the heritage statement submitted with the application. In this respect Officers conclude that the proposal will deliver an enhancement of the setting of the main farmhouse. The further retention and conversion of listed curtilage buildings, the relocation of the parking and the revised landscaping of the wider site will result in further enhancement to these heritage assets beyond the previously approved scheme. In this regard the proposal is considered compliant with Core Strategy policy SIE3, policy COM3 of the WNP and chapter 16 of the NPPF.

The design and layout of the site is such that it will enhance the appearance of the site, locality and landscape character area as well as safeguarding and improving the amenities enjoyed by the residential occupiers adjacent to the site. In this respect the proposal is compliant with policies LCR1.1, H1, CS8 and SIE1 of the Core Strategy DPD together with policy DEV4 of the WNP.

The concerns of the Council's Highway Engineer are noted. The aim of transport policy both locally and nationally is to ensure that significant developments are sited in locations which are accessible by public transport, cycling and walking; the proposed development is not significant and will be accessible by cycling and walking although it is accepted that it will not be accessible by public transport. It is noted that developments which are not significant, connectivity with public transport should only be facilitated where possible and practical given the type and location of development. In this location such connectivity is not possible or practical for the reasons set out in this report. In conclusion therefore it is not considered that the proposal would fail to comply with NPPF paragraphs 103, 104, 108 and 110 nor policies CS9 and T-1 of the Core Strategy.

The development accords with the Council's adopted parking standards. Conditions can be imposed to secure details of cycle parking, electric vehicle charging points, the construction of the access and parking areas as well as improvements to Old Hall Lane. On this basis the proposed development accords with policies CS9, T1, T2 and T3 of the Core Strategy DPD.

Subject to the imposition of conditions it is not considered that there would be any adverse impact on protected species and that gains to biodiversity can be secured. On this basis the proposal is compliant with saved UDP Review policy NE1.2, Core Strategy policy SIE-3, WNP policy ENV4 together with para's 170 and 175 of the NPPF.

The energy statement submitted with the application accords with policy SD3 of the Core Strategy together with para 153 of the NPPF in relation to carbon reductions.

A drainage strategy is not expected to be submitted at this stage of the application. A condition can however be imposed to ensure that such a strategy,

which is based upon sustainable principles, is submitted, approved and implemented as part of the proposed development. The comments of United Utilities in relation to the private package treatment plant proposed for the disposal of foul sewerage is noted. A condition can also be imposed to secure details of the private package treatment plant proposed so to ensure that there is no pollution of public drinking water supplies for the wider area. The proposal therefore accords with Core Strategy policy SD6.

The signing of a S106 agreement to secure a contribution to the enhancement of formal recreation would ensure that the proposed development is in accordance with saved UDP policies L1.1 and L1.2 together with Core Strategy policy SIE2 and advice contained within the accompanying SPD.

Having regard to the tilted balance in favour of the residential development of this site as set out at para 11 of the NPPF, Members are advised that the application of policies that protect areas of importance (the heritage assets and Green Belt) do not provide a clear reason for refusing planning permission. Whilst there will, by definition, be some harm to the openness of the Green Belt arising from the inappropriate elements of the proposed development, it is considered that VSC have been demonstrated through the enhancements that will be secured to the setting of the heritage asset and landscape qualities of the locality.

As such in accordance with para 11 of the NPPF it is recommended that the application should be approved subject to the conditions referenced in this report together with others considered reasonable and necessary, and subject to a S106 agreement to secure compliance with saved policies L1.1 and L1.2 of the UDP Review and SIE2 of the Core Strategy in relation to formal recreation.

As the application is contrary to the Development Plan, if Members of the Area Committee are minded to agree the recommendation then the application must be referred to the Planning & Highways Committee for consideration and determination.

**RECOMMENDATION** GRANT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS AND S106 AGREEMENT