

ITEM 1

Application Reference	DC/086482
Location:	Flora Cottage 438 Chester Road Woodford Stockport Stockport SK7 1QS
PROPOSAL:	Demolition of Existing Outbuildings to erect 3 detached Single Storey Dwellings with the Retention of the Existing Flora Cottage. Single storey extension to Flora Cottage following demolition of existing conservatory.
Type Of Application:	Full Application
Registration Date:	09.09.2022
Expiry Date:	20221104
Case Officer:	Osian Perks
Applicant:	On Point Developments Ltd
Agent:	B2 Architecture Ltd

UPDATE POST 9th MARCH 2023 AREA COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme Area Committee on 9th March 2023, Cllr Powney raised concern that the demolition of Flora Cottage had commenced despite this being shown as retained on the proposed plans. As a consequence, members agreed to defer consideration of this application.

Following discussions with the applicant and a visit to the site, the Case Officer is informed that only the conservatory adjoining the property has been demolished and it is the applicant's intention to replace this with a single storey extension of comparable size. Elevational drawings and floor plans showing the extension have now been submitted and comprise part of this application. The assessment of this element of the scheme is given in the report, below.

DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

This application is a departure from the Development Plan and has been called-in by Cllr Bagnall. Should the Bramhall & Cheadle Hulme South Area Committee be minded to grant permission under the Delegation Agreement, the application should be referred to the Planning & Highways Regulations Committee as the application relates to a Departure from the Statutory Development Plan.

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The submitted application seeks full planning permission for the erection of 3no. 2 bedroom detached bungalows. The bungalows would be arranged around a shared access from Chester Road each with 2 forecourt parking spaces, a small front

garden and larger private rear garden. Two house types are proposed; however, all would measure 10.5m wide and 8.3m deep with a butterfly roof (comprising 2 mono-pitched roofs with a central valley) rising 2.5m to 3.5m.

Plots 1 and 2 would be positioned such that the front elevations of these bungalows face the eastern boundary of the site towards the garden centre whilst plot 3 would be positioned facing Chester Road. The side of plot 1 would be 7m from the rear garden boundary of Flora Cottage being separated from it by a turning head serving the development and 12.2m from the rear elevation of this cottage (flank – flank). Plot 2 would be positioned 2.0m to 4.0m from plot 1 and plot 3 would be 2.0m to 12.0m from plot 2 and 1m from the eastern boundary.

The vehicular entrance to the site be widened to a minimum of 5.5m for distance of 10m measured from the kerbline together with a turning head within the site. 2 parking spaces are proposed to each new dwelling together with 2 retained spaces for Flora Cottage.

In addition to these dwellings, a small extension to Flora Cottage is proposed. The existing conservatory extension to the property has been demolished, and it is proposed that a single storey extension, built with a mono-pitched roof, is erected in its stead. The plans submitted show the conservatory had a width of 3.9m and a depth of 2m, an eaves height of 2.1m and a maximum height of 2.9m. The proposed extension would have a width of 5.1m and a depth of 2m, an eaves height of 2.4m and a maximum height of 3.4m.

A similar permission to the current proposal for three dwellings on the site remains extant (outlined application ref: DC/076685 approved in May 2021 and a reserved matters application ref: DC/080596 approved in July 2021). The proposed dwellings under this current application are situated in the same approximate positions as and are of a similar design to those previously approved with the main difference between the previously approved dwellings and those now proposed being that the current application proposes a slight increase in the footprint of each dwelling. The previously approved dwellings had a footprint of 9.5m x 8.0m. The proposed dwellings under this application would have a footprint of 10.5m x 8.3m. The eaves heights and ridge heights remain the same.

The proposed development, including Flora Cottage and its proposed extension, would have a volume of 1163m³ and a footprint of 364m². It would cover approximately 20% of the site.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site is located on the north side of Chester Road and comprises a 2-storey detached cottage to the front of the site (Flora Cottage), to the side of which is a vehicle access. The vehicular access lead to a variety of single storey buildings formerly used as a commercial kennels and cattery which was owned and run by the occupiers of the cottage. These buildings have subsequently been demolished earlier this year. Following this, the conservatory adjoining Flora Cottage was also demolished.

Prior to the demolition of the kennels, cattery and the conservatory, the buildings on site (including Flora Cottage) had a volume of 1723m³ and a footprint of 738m². They covered approximately 40% of the site.

Site levels to the rear of Flora Cottage where the kennel/cattery buildings were sited are lower than those to the front of the site.

To the side (east) of the site is an open parcel of land beyond which is Woodford Garden Centre. To the rear (north) is a parcel of open land within which is a tennis court. To the other side (west) is a small supermarket (Budgens) accommodated within a 2-storey detached building with a flat above and an access to the side running the depth of the application site. Opposite the site is an entrance into the former Woodford Aerodrome which is currently undergoing redevelopment.

The UDP Proposal Map identifies the application site as being within the Woodford Landscape Character Area and the Greater Manchester Green Belt within Stockport Borough. The application site also does not relate to any heritage assets.

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 31st 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 17th March 2011.

Saved policies of the SUDP Review

- LCR1.1 Landscape Character Areas
- LCR1.1a The Urban Fringe Including the River Valleys
- GBA1.1 Extent of Green Belt
- GBA1.2 Control of Development in Green Belt
- GBA1.5 Residential Development in Green Belt
- L1.1 Land for Active Recreation
- L1.2 Children`s Play

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

LDF Core Strategy/Development Management policies

- 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 and Amenity Open Space in New Developments
- SIE-3 Protecting, Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment
- CS9 Transport & Development
- T-1 Transport & Development
- T-2 Parking in Developments
- T-3 Safety & Capacity on the Highway Network

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

- ENV3 Protecting Woodford's Natural Environment
- ENV4 Supporting Biodiversity
- 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.

- Sustainable Transport' SPD.
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD
- Open Space Provision SPD
- Transport in Residential Areas

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

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 20th July 2021 replaced the previous NPPF (originally issued 2012, revised 2018 & 2019). 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”.

National Planning Policy Framework.

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”.

Parap.124 “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 125 “Area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places. 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.126 “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.132 “Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot”.

Para.137 “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.138 “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.147 “Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”.

Para.148 “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.149 “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.150 *“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:*

- a) *mineral extraction;*
- b) *engineering operations;*
- c) *local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
- d) *the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*
- e) *material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*
- f) *development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order”.*

Para.151 *“When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources”.*

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.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

J/42029 - Addition of first floor to single storey wing at rear and widening of wing. Granted May 1988.

DC/076685 - Erection of 3no 2 bedroom bungalow dwellings on the plot behind Flora Cottage (Flora Cottage will be retained), utilising existing site access from the highway. Approved May 2021.

DC/080596 - Reserved matters (appearance and landscaping) in relation to DC076685 for the erection of 3no 2 bedroom bungalow dwellings on the plot behind Flora Cottage (Flora Cottage will be retained), utilising existing site access from the highway. Approved July 2021.

NEIGHBOUR'S VIEWS

No comments received.

CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Highways – no objection, subject to conditions.

The proposed dwellings include parking to policy standards.

The additional traffic generated by 4 dwellings will not, when compared to that generated by previous use, result in any severe detrimental impact on the operation of the highway.

As noted on the outline approval for development of this site, the shared drive is to be widened to 5.5m for the initial 10m from the kerbline of Chester Rd to permit vehicles to pass within the access. Full details of the proposed shared access are required. Widening of the existing dropped kerb to accommodate widened shared drive will require additional permissions outside any granted by planning approval.

With the width of footway and verge adequate vehicle visibility splays are available within the adopted highway.

Applicant should confirm the provision of 1m x 1m pedestrian visibility splays at each side of the shared drive where it meets the back of footway within which nothing obstructs visibility above 600mm from footway level.

Vehicle charge points are provided to each dwelling. Full details required.

Paving to shared drive is noted as permeable and reference is made to use of combined kerb/drainage and to landscaping acting as a swale. These features would suggest compliance with sustainable drainage policies but full details of driveway and parking areas construction and drainage are required, including an assessment of ground permeability to confirm the suitability of the proposed construction/drainage.

Details of construction and drainage of replacement hardstanding to Flora Cottage required to demonstrate compliance with sustainable drainage policies.

Demolition and Construction Management Plan required to ensure measures put in place to impact on adjacent highway and on neighbours`.

Arboricultural Officer – No objection, subject to conditions.

The proposed development will potentially have a small negative impact on poor specimen tree/shrub located on site with the proposed works within proximity of the trees/shrubs on site and adjacent to the site. The proposed works require working in proximity of poor specimen trees.

The main concerns for this site is the potential for tree encroachment as well as accidental tree damage during deliveries, storage and construction works to the site, therefore the construction traffic and material storage needs to be directed away from or not located within proximity to the retained trees in the area which will have a negative impact on the trees systems, therefore an advisory on exclusion zone will be required for the protection of the trees including those neighbouring the site. A suitable condition should be attached to any subsequent approval requiring trees to be fenced off in accordance with BS 5837:2012 during construction and no work, excavation, tipping or stacking of materials shall take place within any such fenced off area during construction.

The proposed landscaping plan, which is detailed with all species, locations and stock sizes, is considered acceptable. The planting proposed as part of the scheme will enhance amenity and biodiversity in accordance with council policy and assist in SUDs potential as well as increasing the biodiversity of the area. The trees offer a limited level of biodiversity/habitat benefit and as such they compensate for the impact of the development.

Woodford Neighbouring Forum – ‘We have no comments on this application’.

ANALYSIS

Principle of Development

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 10). 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 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 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 to genuinely reflect the current position in that regard the score has been reduced to zero. As such the accessibility of the application site is considered to be acceptable and the proposal accords with policies CS4 and H-2 of the Core Strategy. The provision of 3 dwellings will assist in addressing that shortfall and weight should be given to this aspect of the proposed development.

Core Strategy policy CS3 confirms that developments in accessible suburban locations may be expected to provide the full range of houses from terraced properties to large detached dwellings and should contain fewer flats. Development in accessible urban locations such as the application site should achieve a density of 30 dph.

The NPPF at para 124 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 125 confirms that 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. Importantly section b) states, 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;

The density of the proposed development equates to 21 dwellings per hectare which is below the minimum expected density of 30 dph for this location. Notwithstanding this 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, amenities of existing and future occupiers together with 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.

- *Green Belt/Landscape Character Area*

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; extensions and alterations or replacement of existing dwellings; limited infilling or redevelopment of Major Existing Developed Sites). The proposed dwellings do not fall within any of these exceptions and therefore for the purposes of policy GBA1.2 must be considered 'inappropriate'.

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; re-use of buildings and development that meets the requirements of policy GBA1.7 in relation to Major Existing Developed Sites. The proposed dwellings do not fall within any of the exceptions and therefore for the purposes of policy GBA1.5 must be considered 'inappropriate'.

Policy GBA1.5 of the UDP Review also stipulates that extensions and alterations to existing dwellings where the scale, character and appearance of the property are not significantly changed will be acceptable. The proposed extension to Flora Cottage, by virtue of its small size relative to the conservatory it replaces is considered to accord with this policy.

The NPPF was published in 2012, recently revised in 2021 and post-dates the UDP Review. 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'. (para 148). A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as 'inappropriate' in the Green Belt. Para 149 provides exceptions to this. One exception is the redevelopment of previously developed land (PDL) provided the proposed development has no greater impact on openness than that it replaces. Another exception given is 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.

The extension to Flora Cottage currently proposed is modest in size and comparable to that of the conservatory it replaces. It is considered that by virtue of its size and design, it would not result in a disproportionate addition to Flora Cottage and as such accords with para 149 of the NPPF. Further to this, in regards to its impact upon the Green Belt, the proposed extension would be largely screened, when viewed from Chester Road, by Flora Cottage and as such, its impact would be minimal.

The glossary to the NPPF defines PDL as 'land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agriculture or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments' and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface infrastructure have blended into the landscape.'

When the extant permission for three dwellings was granted in 2021, the site was considered to be previously developed land given the presence of buildings associated with the kennels and cattery on the site. The approved development was considered to have no greater impact upon the green belt than these pre-existing buildings and was therefore considered to comply with paragraph 149 of the NPPF.

The site is still considered to accord with the definition of previously development land and as such an assessment has to be made to ascertain whether the proposed development would have a greater impact upon the openness of the green belt than the buildings recently demolished.

The buildings recently demolished comprised low level, mainly flat roofed structures which occupied much of the site. Including Flora Cottage, they had a combined volume of 1723m³, a floor area of 738m² and (excluding Flora Cottage) were circa 2.3m high except for a masonry building to the rear of the site which is 3.5m high. The application advises that these buildings including Flora Cottage occupied 40% of the site.

In comparison the proposed buildings will also be single storey in height and evenly spaced across the site. Including Flora Cottage and the proposed extension to it they, will have a combined volume of 1163m³ and a floor area of 364m². The

proposed bungalows will be 2.5m to 3.5m high. The application advises that the proposed dwellings including Flora Cottage will occupy 20% of the site.

It can therefore be concluded that the proposed development will be of similar height to the buildings demolished and will have a volume and footprint which are significantly less than that buildings formerly on the site. Therefore, in terms of the scale the proposed development, it will not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

In terms of the position of the development formerly within the site and its relationship with the wider Green Belt beyond, when viewed from Chester Road, the lower level of the site and low height of the buildings now demolished enabled views over the site to the trees along the rear boundary and the undeveloped Green Belt beyond. It is considered that the position of the proposed access along the eastern boundary together with the front gardens to the bungalows proposed increases the openness of the Green Belt within the site by opening up the site where there were buildings. The siting of plots 1 and 2 are such that they are unlikely to be visible in views from Chester Road with only the front elevation of plot 3 being visible. Given that the bungalow on this plot will be of similar height to the previous development on the site, it is considered that there will be no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt in this respect.

Although plots 1 and 2 may not be publicly visible, the openness of the Green Belt must be preserved for its own sake. In this respect, even though the maximum height of the bungalows on these two plots will be slightly higher than the previous development in this location, it is considered that the reduction in volume and floor area along with the spaciousness afforded by the siting of the dwellings and access road is such that there will be no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

As such, the entirety development proposed is considered to accord with the exception given in paragraph 149 of the NPPF (above) and would have a positive impact upon the openness of the Green Belt over the buildings which it replaces, recently demolished.

In relation to the Landscape Character Area, policy LCR1.1 confirms that 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 areas. Where it is acceptable in principle, development should be sensitively sited, designed and constructed of materials appropriate to the area and be accommodated without adverse impact on the landscape quality of the area.

Being sited to the rear of Flora Cottage and at a slightly lower ground level, the proposed bungalows and extension will not be prominent in public views of the site. Notwithstanding this it is considered that having regard to the layout, scale and design of the development the amenities of the Landscape Character Area will be enhanced. The proposed development is therefore considered compliant with policy LCR1.1 of the UDP Review.

Impact on Character

No harmful impact.

Policies H1, CS8 and SIE1 of the Core Strategy seek to ensure that development proposals respond to the character of the area. This is reflected in the NPPF at paragraphs 117, 122, 124 and 127. Policy DEV4 of the WNP requires all development in the WNP area to achieve a high standard of design and to respect and respond to the rural character of the area.

The character of the locality is derived from a mix of residential and commercial uses. Built development however generally comprises single and two storey buildings. Architectural styles are generally 20th century although it is understood that Flora Cottage itself is much older. Opposite the site is the residential redevelopment of the former aerodrome site

The layout of the development around a shared driveway with small front gardens and larger rear gardens is considered an appropriate response to the locality. Furthermore, it is considered that the development will not be visually prominent comprising small scale dwellings rising only 2.5m to 3.5m, positioned at a lower level than Chester Road and plots 1 & 2 screened from view by Flora Cottage.

In terms of appearance, the proposed dwellings would be of a simple footprint and would be finished in grey metal and cedar vertical timber cladding with black aluminium detailing. Red brick is also proposed to be used on the elevations. Most notably the proposed dwellings would benefit from butterfly wing roofs. Overall, the dwellings would be of a contemporary style. Whilst the proposed contemporary design may not be characteristic of the area, it should be noted that there is little uniformity in the character of the development near to the site and the proposed development is very similar in its character and appearance to the scheme previously approved on the site.

The proposed extension to Flora Cottage would be of similar size to the conservatory it replaces and appear subservient and sympathetic to the host dwelling by virtue of its size and design.

On this basis the development in terms of layout, scale and appearance is considered compliant with policies H1, CS8 and SIE1 of the Core Strategy, para's 117, 122, 124 and 127 of the NPPF and DEV4 of the WNP.

Impact on Amenity

No harmful impact.

Core Strategy policy H1 confirms that good standards of amenity and privacy should be provided for the occupants of new and existing housing. This is reinforced by policy SIE1 which confirms that satisfactory levels of amenity and privacy should be maintained for future and existing residents. The NPPF confirms that development should create places that promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. Regard is also paid to the Council's SPD 'Design of Residential Development' which advises on privacy distances and garden sizes. The closest residential property to the proposed development is a flat above the retail premises to the west of the site. The layout of the development accords

with the privacy distances set out in the Council's SPD and as such there will be no adverse impact on the amenities of the existing neighbouring occupiers.

In terms of gardens, 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. 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 and the character of the area. Unusable spaces such as narrow strips of ground adjacent to roads and parking, steeply sloping areas or those in excessive shade should be avoided. Except in exceptional circumstances the standard of 75 sqm for a 2 bed dwelling will apply. The gardens to the proposed houses exceed the minimum suggested by the SPD thus ensuring a high level of amenity for the future occupiers of the proposed development. The private garden of Flora Cottage would be retained as existing. The area covered by the extension proposed is a publicly visible part of the curtilage, visible from the proposed driveway shared with the other proposed dwellings. As such, it would not encroach upon existing private amenity space of Flora Cottage. For the above reasons the proposed development will ensure an acceptable level of amenity for existing and future occupiers in accordance with policies H1 and SIE1 of the Core Strategy DPD, the NPPF and the Council's SPD.

It is considered the proposal by way of design would be an acceptable form of development and would not prejudice the amenity of residents in terms of overlooking, loss of day/sunlight. As such, the proposal would be in accordance with policies H-1 & SIE-1 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Highways

No harmful impact.

Core Strategy policies CS9, T1, T2 and T3 together with the NPPF and the Council's SPD's seek to ensure that development is directed towards accessible locations, causes no adverse impact upon the safe and effective operation of the highway and provides access and parking that is safe and practical to use.

The site is in an acceptable location for new residential development being accessible by public transport, cycling and walking. The level of development sought will not give rise to levels of traffic that will be harmful to highway safety.

The application includes the entrance to be widened to a minimum of 5.5m for distance of 10m measured from the kerbline which complies with the Council's design guidelines and will ensure that the site can be accessed in a safe manner.

The provision of 2 parking spaces per dwelling accords with the Council's maximum parking standards. Furthermore, there is sufficient space within the site for refuse and other delivery vehicles to safely turn and exit the site in a forward gear. Details of the construction of the driveway and parking spaces can be secured by condition as can sightlines at the junction with Chester Road and electric charging points for each dwelling. The Council's Highway safety engineer has been consulted and raised no objection (see consultation response above).

On the basis of the above the proposal is considered compliant with Core Strategy policies CS9, T1, T2 and T3 along with advice contained in the NPPF and Councils SPD's.

Trees and Landscaping

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF indicates that development should minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity.

Core Policy CS8 of the Adopted Core Strategy DPD states:

'Development will be expected to make a positive contribution to the protection and enhancement of the borough's natural environment, biodiversity and geodiversity. Sites, areas, networks and individual features of identified ecological, biological, geological or other environmental benefit or value will be safeguarded.'

Core Policy CS8 of the Adopted Core Strategy DPD stipulates the following:

'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 will be given positive consideration.'

It goes on to state:

'Development will be expected to make a positive contribution to the protection and enhancement of the borough's natural environment, biodiversity and geodiversity. Sites, areas, networks and individual features of identified ecological, biological, geological or other environmental benefit or value will be safeguarded.'

And

'Proposals which seek to sustainably manage areas of nature conservation value as a resource, including for purposes of recreation, education and/or the small-scale harvesting of woody matter as a fuel, will be given positive consideration so long as they are not harmful to the environmental value of the area.'

Policy SIE-3 (Protecting, Safeguarding and enhancing the Environment) states:

'Development proposals affecting trees, woodland and other vegetation which make a positive contribution to amenity should make provision for the retention of the vegetation unless there is justification for felling, topping or lopping to enable the development to take place. Even where there is a strong justification for a proposal the design should maximise the potential for retaining some mature planting, and replacement planting of appropriate species and covering a similar area should be provided within the site or nearby.'

Policy ENV3 of the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan states:

'The protection and/or enhancement of Woodford's natural features... will be supported.'

Policy ENV4 of the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan states:

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

Despite the planting plan submitted showing some on site trees would be retained, it is apparent that following the demolition of the cattery and kennels, several of these have been felled. To ensure biodiversity net gains on site, it is considered that a revised planting scheme should be submitted which provides appropriate mitigation. Such a planting scheme can be secured via the imposition of an appropriately worded condition.

Other matters

Following recent revisions to the national planning guidance 'planning obligations' tariff style payments can now be sought on 'minor' applications. As such the provisions of UDP Review policies L1.1 and L1.2 together with Core Strategy policy SIE-2 apply.

L1.1 "Land for Active Recreation" confirms that the Council will seek to achieve an overall minimum standard for the Borough of 2.4 hectares per thousand population for active recreation. Provision of land for formal sports is below the desired level. Within this standard, 0.7 hectares per thousand population should be available within easy access of homes for children's play. The Council will seek to achieve and maintain these standards however calculations will also be made in response to particular proposals.

L1.2 "Children's Play" confirms that in considering development proposals the Council will take account of children's play needs and will require where appropriate the provision of suitable and accessible space and facilities to meet these needs. This policy will be applied through the use of standards and through the detailed consideration of development proposals.

SIE2 "Provision of Recreation and Amenity Open Space in New Development" confirms that development is expected to take a positive role in providing recreation and amenity open space to meet the needs of its users/occupants. In those parts of the Borough with a deficiency in recreation and amenity open space, small new residential developments will be required to contribute towards the provision of open space for formal and casual recreation and children's play in locations which are accessible to future occupiers.

In order to address the shortfall of children's play and formal recreation within the Borough, these policies seek to ensure that residential development makes a contribution towards the provision and maintenance of such facilities. Whilst contributions towards formal recreation are secured on all applications for new residential development those in relation to children's play are only sought when there is an existing facility within the threshold distances of the site as set out in para

3.340 of policy SIE2. In this instance there are no children's play areas within the threshold distances and as such the proposal is only required to make provision in respect of formal recreation. This contribution will be secured by way of a S106 in the event that the recommendation to grant planning permission is agreed.

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1. That being the case and noting the small scale of the proposed development there is no requirement for a Flood Risk Assessment. To accord with policy SD-6 a condition should be imposed to secure details of the drainage of the site which should adopt the hierarchical approach set out in the NPPF (that being the discharge of water in the following order of priority: to an adequate soakaway or some other form of infiltration system; to an attenuated discharge to watercourse or other water body, an attenuated discharge to public surface water sewer and finally an attenuated discharge to public combined sewer).

Policy SD-6 requires new development to consider ways in which carbon emissions arising from the construction and occupation of the development can be reduced. The application does not include an Energy Statement in this respect however this can be secured by condition.

The site is not known to be contaminated and as such there is no requirement for an assessment in this respect. An informative can however be attached to any grant of planning permission advising the applicant of the need to report any unexpected contamination to the Council and to seek further advice.

CONCLUSION

The delivery of residential development on this site accords with policies CS2, CS3, CS4 and H2 of the Core Strategy DPD. The dwellings proposed are considered to comprise the redevelopment of PDL that will have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than that recently demolished and the extension to Flora Cottage is considered to be a proportionate addition comparable to the conservatory which it replaces. As such the entirety of the development is appropriate in the Green Belt and compliant with para 149 of the NPPF. It is also considered to have a positive impact upon openness, over the development it replaces. The scale, layout and appearance of the development will cause no harm to the Landscape Character Area or the locality in general. The proposal is thereby in accordance with saved policy LCR1.1, Core Strategy policies H1, CS8 and SIE1 together with DEV1 of the WNP. The layout of the proposed development accords with and exceeds the guidance set out in the Council's SPD and therefore will cause no harm to the amenities of existing or future residential occupiers in accordance with Core Strategy policies H1 and SIE1. The development provides for safe access and parking in accordance with the Council's maximum standards and will not give rise to conditions prejudicial to the free flow of traffic on the adjacent highway network. The proposal therefore accords with Core Strategy DPD policies CS9, T1, T2 and T3.

Subject to the imposition of conditions and informatives there will be no harm arising in relation to biodiversity, drainage. The proposal therefore accords with policies SD6 and SIE3 of the Core Strategy DPD and policies ENV3 and ENV4 of the WNP.

Having regard to the tilted balance in favour of the residential development of this site as set out at para 11 of the NPPF, it is considered that planning permission as set out in the application submitted should be approved. The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of importance (that includes those specifically relating to the protection of the Green Belt) do not provide a clear reason for refusing planning permission nor will there be any adverse impacts arising from the grant of planning permission.

As such the application is recommended for approval subject to the conditions reference in this report together with other considered reasonable and necessary together with a S106 agreement to secure compliance with policies in the UDP Review and Core Strategy that seek to secure contributions to formal recreation.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant – subject to conditions and S106.