



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 January 2026

by Elaine Moulton BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/W/25/3374953

Land adjacent to 456 Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, Cheshire SK7 1QS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs J Dixon against the decision of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/095585.
 - The development proposed is erection of one detached dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for residential development comprising the erection of 1 dwelling at Land adjacent to 456 Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, Cheshire SK7 1QS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/095585, dated 30 September 2025.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle, and the second (technical details consent) stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt where, according to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), development is inappropriate unless it falls within identified exceptions set out at paragraph 154 and 155. Paragraph 155 introduces the concept of grey belt and is a new exception included in the

¹ PPG Permission in Principle Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615

revision to the Framework published since previous applications on the appeal site were determined.

6. Saved policies GBA1.1, GBA1.2 and GBA1.5 of the Stockport Unitary Plan and Policy DEV 1 of the Woodford Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2033 have been referenced in the Council's decision notice. In this instance I consider that such policies are more restrictive than, and therefore not fully consistent with, the Framework. As such, in accordance with paragraph 232, I have relied upon the Framework in assessing whether the development would be inappropriate within the Green Belt.
7. The appeal site lies within a parcel of land which is referred to as SEB7 in the Green Belt Assessment (GBA)². The GBA assessment of SEB7 indicates it performs strongly against purpose (a) to (c) and weakly, or not at all, against purpose (d).
8. The PPG on Green Belt gives specific advice on how the contribution that land makes to the relevant Green Belt purposes should be assessed and how this should be used in the development management process. The Framework indicates that, subject to other considerations, the development of homes should not be regarded as inappropriate development if it would utilise grey belt land. The emphasis is therefore on the land where the development would take place rather than the wider area within which it lies. As a result, the focus in the appeal should be on the role of the site and whether it comprises grey belt land, rather than the role of SEB7.
9. In respect of purpose (a), the appeal site would not extend the settlement beyond the adjoining development, namely the Woodford Community Centre, or the ribbon of dwellings opposite. Therefore, the land is not at a critical point in containing or preventing the unrestricted sprawl of Woodford and the role it plays in this regard is limited. The proposal would be seen in conjunction with the adjoining dwellings and those opposite and would not result in an incongruous pattern of development. Overall, for these reasons, the appeal site does not contribute strongly to the purpose of checking the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area.
10. SEB7 lies within the relatively narrow gap between Woodford and the neighbouring settlement of Bramhall. Although SEB7 is important in preventing the merging of settlements, it does not mean that all the land within it is equally significant. Indeed, the impact of one dwelling within a row of existing development would be minor in this respect. In isolation the development of the appeal site would not noticeably or markedly bring the settlements closer together. As such, the appeal site does not strongly contribute to purpose (b), preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another.
11. As set out above, the GBA assesses SEB7 as performing weakly, or not at all, against purpose (d), which is to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. Based on the evidence before me, I agree.
12. Accordingly, the appeal site constitutes grey belt land as defined in the Glossary to the Framework. However, to conclude whether the proposal would be inappropriate development, or not, the provisions of paragraph 155 of the Framework need to be applied.

² Dated October 2025

13. The PPG gives advice about how to assess whether the development would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan. It advises that consideration should be given to whether, or the extent to which, the development of Green Belt land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way. This is a high bar. The building of one house on the small area of land that is the appeal site cannot reasonably be said to fundamentally undermine Green Belt purposes.
14. As the Council only has a 1.77-year supply of housing there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.
15. The appellant considers that the site lies within a sustainable location, which is not disputed by the Council. Based on my observations of the services and facilities available in Woodford and the bus services that can be accessed from the nearby bus stop, I agree.
16. Furthermore, the 'Golden Rules' are not relevant as the proposal is not major development.
17. Consequently, the proposal should not be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt as all of the criteria of paragraph 155 are met. Accordingly, no consideration of the effect of the development on openness is required.
18. I have found that the proposal would not result in an incongruous pattern of development. In addition, there is no compelling evidence before me to suggest that a single dwelling on the appeal site would be inherently harmful to the character and appearance of the area so as to support the conclusion that the site is unsuitable for residential development. I see no reason why the proposed dwelling could not be designed to respond sympathetically to the character of the area and such details will be dealt with at the second (technical details consent) stage.
19. In conclusion, the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and, as such, having regard to its location, the proposed land use, and the amount of development, the site is suitable for residential development.

Other Matters

20. The PPG makes it clear that it is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle. Therefore, although I acknowledge the conditions suggested by an interested party, I have not considered them in detail as I cannot impose them.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Elaine Moulton

INSPECTOR