

To:
Chuong Phillips - Principal Planning Officer
West Northamptonshire Council
Planning Service

Planning Application: 2026/2896/MAO - Pool Farm Field, Farndon Road, Woodford Halse

Applicant/Agent: Terra/ Twenty5 Planning Ltd

Proposal: Outline application, (all matters reserved except for access) for up to 50 dwellings, with associated infrastructure and enabling works, including open space, car parking and flood improvement works.

Summary of Objection

Woodford cum Membris Parish Council objects to the application.

The proposal is for a substantial residential extension of up to 50 dwellings beyond the defined settlement confines. On the information presently available, the proposal conflicts with the adopted spatial strategy for the rural area, would generate additional car-dependent travel, and has not demonstrated that necessary infrastructure, drainage, ecological, landscape and highway impacts can be made acceptable. The Parish Council requests refusal unless and until the applicant demonstrates compliance with the development plan read as a whole and with relevant national policy.

The objection is advanced principally by reference to the adopted development plan: the WNJCS; the Daventry Settlements and Countryside Local Plan Part 2; and the made Woodford cum Membris Neighbourhood Development Plan. The emerging West Northamptonshire Local Plan and the supplied 2025 neighbourhood-plan review are relied upon only to the extent that their lawful decision-making weight permits.

The reasons put forward for proposing the application are based upon incorrect assumptions.

Planning History

This application is a re-application of WND/2021/0575 which was disposed of on 19/8/2025 this was because no decision was made, in excess of 12 months from the statutory time period. (See Appendix 1). The Officers' Delegated report dated 18/8/2025 stated that whilst the application was validated 17/11/2021 the discussion regarding whether the application would make the flooding issues in Pool Street better or worse had not been resolved.

In the Regulation 18 Consultation in 2024 for the new WNC Local Plan, Terra put the site forward, ref Response ID ANON-PP6G-NBY-E and number 79 on the Site Allocation Options spreadsheet. The site was NOT included in the Reg 18 consultation as it looks like the application would not meet the planning criteria for an exception site.

Contrary to the reasons put forward for accepting this proposal the Parish Council's responses are:

The Parish Council has worked with WNC to ensure that the culvert [beneath Hinton Road at Ash Way] which takes water away from Pool Street is kept clear and combined with the use of preventative usage of sandbags - this has improved any flooding issues.

In fact, in 2024 there was insufficient flooding in Pool Street to trigger an investigation. The Section 19 Report states that one property was affected in 2024. The only actions relating to Pool Street following the exceptional 1 in 100-year weather event in 2024, was that residents should prepare a Household Emergency Plan.

No recommendations were made for any preventative action to Pool Street. (See Appendix 2 WNC Flood Investigation Report, completed 2025). Building on Pool Farm Field is likely to cause flooding and once the houses have been built the field cannot be reinstated to absorb rainwater.

Building on Pool Farm Field is likely to cause more flooding in Woodford Halse

The applicant has included a 77-page Flood Report trying to justify this development on the basis of creating a flood defence, but the report itself states on Page 3 that there is <0.1% chance of flooding.

Their report quotes the Sep 2018 Flood Report but includes dates past 2018 but does not quote the Section 19 Report in Sep 2025 (again in Appendix 2); because it does not indicate action required in Pool Street. The risk of surface water is on the road and indeed that is where the water flows.

This has assessed the risk in Pool Street of flooding which would affect the houses there as a 1 in 200-year event.

Currently, the field is called 'Pool Farm Field' for the very reason that rainwater pools on the field as it absorbs rain and slows the runoff from the field down into the culvert.

There is no issue of flooding and therefore there is no need for a flood defence.

However, if houses were built on the field, they would remove this natural defence and until the houses were built it is impossible to know whether the flood defences proposed would prevent the resulting flood water not only causing an issue in Pool Street but also creating additional problems in other areas of the Village south of the culvert. Any building which increases the flow of water through the village will place properties to the south and east of the village at greater risk of flooding.

The village already has the houses at Upton Close & Woodford Meadows both built on a flood plain.

Should these proposed dwellings be approved, the developer should indemnify the residents of Pool Street and houses to the south and east of the village in case of any flooding caused in perpetuity. This should be a condition of any approval.

In 2021 the developers were also offering to provide a site on the development for a community building this is not included in this current application so there is no proposed benefit to the village of the development. (See Appendix 3 - the proposed S.106 Agreement in WND/2021/0575. The copy on the WNC planning register inadvertently refers to WND/2021/0757).

The building of houses on this field would therefore solely rely on creating an 'Exception Site' outside of the Village Boundary.

This is contrary to:

- The WNC strategic planning policies.
- National Planning policies.
- Emerging West Northamptonshire Local Plan.
- Made Woodford cum Membris Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Creating an 'exception site' to meet local need for housing.

The housing needs survey cited in the application is out of date, the figures are quoted inaccurately, and any identified need is already being addressed by the 27 homes currently under construction (WNC planning approval 2023/6687/FULL). The current housing register has only some 10 families, to our knowledge, from this Parish requesting housing in the Village and so there will be a surplus of some 17 affordable homes in Woodford Halse by December 2026.

There is no identified housing need in Woodford Halse.

The application also suggests building houses in Woodford Halse will address the need for housing in Northampton. It is not possible to travel to work in Northampton from Woodford Halse by public transport. In fact it is not possible to even travel to work in Daventry for employment, except by private car. This means that any families who were to live in these houses would be reliant on private car journeys for employment, access to education, medical facilities, retail and for leisure, contrary to the National Planning Policies.

Affordable housing is only beneficial if people who need affordable housing can afford to live where it is built.

The applicant claims to have had only 7 responses to their pre-consultation on this application. However, the leaflet which was sent to some properties in the Village was inadequate and the time scale only a few days for response, wholly inadequate for a reasoned response from parishioners.

Objections on the basis of lack of infrastructure.

There will be substantial objections to this proposal which would have an unreasonable impact on not only Woodford Halse but also Byfield. There has already been a substantial response from residents in response to both the Bloor Homes [residential development off Byfield Road] proposal and also the draft WN Local Plan.

This objection is advanced principally by reference to adopted development plans; the emerging West Northamptonshire Local Plan and the recently revised 2025 Woodford cum Membris Neighbourhood Development Plan review are only relied upon to the extent that their lawful decision-making weight permits.

1. Conflict with the Rural Settlement Strategy and Development Outside the Village Confines

The application site lies outside the defined village confines and is therefore in the countryside for policy purposes. A development of up to 50 dwellings is not minor infill and would represent a material outward extension of the settlement. The starting point is the plan-led system: applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposal conflicts in principle with the spatial strategy in WNJCS Policies S1 and R1 and with Daventry Part 2 Policies RA1, RA2 and, where applicable to the proposal advanced, RA6. WNJCS Policy R1 directs rural development through the settlement hierarchy and requires development to respect the character and environmental quality of rural settlements; its policy text also provides that development outside existing village confines is permitted only in specified circumstances. No clear case has been demonstrated that a 50-dwelling market-led scheme falls within those circumstances.

The made Woodford cum Membris Neighbourhood Development Plan and its defined spatial strategy must also be applied. The Parish Council's supplied 2025 review reinforces the local objective of managing housing growth within the village confines and has been waiting for acceptance by West Northamptonshire Council since December 2025.

This proposal would create incremental outward expansion and weaken the distinction between the settlement and surrounding countryside. In 2014, the development of houses to the west of the Farndon Road (in the same vicinity as this application) was rejected by the LPA, a decision upheld by the Planning Inspectorate on the basis of maintaining the western boundary of the village (ref: APP/Y2810/A/14/2216520).

Policy references: NPPF (Dec 2024, amended Feb 2025), especially paragraphs 11–12 (plan-led decision-making), 82–84 (rural housing) and relevant sustainable transport/design provisions; WNJCS Policies S1, S10 and R1; Daventry Part 2 Policies RA1 and RA2, plus RA6 only where its criteria are engaged; made Woodford cum Membris NDP, including applicable housing/settlement policies. 2025 review: Policy WH6 and related settlement-confines provisions, subject to statutory weight.

2. Housing Need, Housing Mix and Any Rural-Exception Case

The application should not be justified by a general assertion of housing demand alone. The applicant must identify the development-plan route by which housing outside the settlement confines is said to be acceptable and provide proportionate evidence addressing that route. If reliance is placed on a rural-exception rationale, the proposal must satisfy the specific criteria of WNJCS Policy H3 and relevant national policy on rural exception sites. A scheme of up to 50 dwellings cannot simply be described as meeting local need without robust, current evidence of the type, tenure and scale of need, together with a mechanism securing the qualifying affordable housing in perpetuity where required.

A review of property available for sale and rent in Woodford Halse and Daventry demonstrates that whilst there is a low stock of rental properties currently in Woodford Halse, this is being supplemented by 27 new homes currently being built and there are 27 properties for sale. This housing stock ranges in price and demonstrates there is no shortage of available homes in Woodford Halse. Meanwhile in Daventry there are extensive properties for sale and a wide range, in terms of price of rental stock available.

The Parish Council's evidence on homes currently available for sale and rent may be relevant contextual evidence, but market availability is not by itself a complete test of objectively assessed housing need. The objection is therefore framed more securely as a failure to demonstrate the policy justification for development outside the confines and, if a rural-exception case is advanced, a failure to evidence compliance with the applicable exception-site criteria.

Policy references: NPPF paragraphs 61–67 and 82–84, as applicable; WNJCS Policies H1, H2, H3 and R1; Daventry Part 2 Policies RA1, RA2 and RA6 where engaged; applicable made NDP policies.

3. Infrastructure, Healthcare, Education, Water and Wastewater

The proposed development would add demand for healthcare, education, highways, drainage, water supply, wastewater treatment and other community infrastructure. The applicant has not demonstrated, on the material presently available to the Parish Council, that the additional demand can be accommodated at the time it arises or that necessary mitigation is deliverable.

The local medical centre in Byfield is currently over-subscription and has stated that there is no capacity for a further 100 patients.

The Parish Council understands that there is capacity at Primary Level in the village but all secondary schools are located outside of Woodford Halse and are over capacity with the urgent need for additional places in Daventry due to recent developments. Further development in Woodford Halse would mean more children travelling by bus or private car journeys but they would need school places to travel to. The West Northamptonshire Local Area SEND Update report forecasts a deficit of 777.8 secondary school places in Daventry.

The Parish Council requests formal, up-to-date responses from the relevant NHS bodies, education authority, water and sewerage undertakers, Lead Local Flood Authority and Highway Authority.

If network reinforcement is necessary, the decision-maker should be satisfied that it is technically feasible, funded and capable of delivery before occupation, with appropriately worded conditions or obligations where lawful.

The proposal should not be approved on the assumption that existing services will absorb additional demand without evidence. Necessary planning obligations must satisfy the statutory tests of necessity, direct relationship and fair & reasonable scale and kind.

Policy references: NPPF paragraphs 20, 34–35 and relevant infrastructure/community-facility provisions; WNJCS Policies INF1, INF2, BN7A and R1; applicable Daventry Part 2 infrastructure policies; made NDP Policy WH12 subject to statutory weight.

4. Employment Balance and Economic Sustainability

The proposal is residential rather than employment-generating development. The relevant planning concern is not that every housing scheme must itself create jobs, but whether the location and scale of growth are consistent with the settlement strategy and whether residents would have reasonable access to employment and services by sustainable modes.

Given very limited local employment opportunities and the absence of rail access, the Parish Council is concerned that the scheme would increase out-commuting by private car or isolate people away from employment opportunities. The areas offering the closest significant

employment opportunities are around Daventry, Banbury and further in Northampton, Milton Keynes and Rugby.

The applicant should demonstrate how the proposal supports a sustainable pattern of development rather than intensifying a dormitory-settlement function. This concern reinforces, rather than replaces, the primary objection under the rural spatial strategy.

Policy references: NPPF sustainable-development and rural-economy provisions; WNJCS Policies S1, S7, S8, R1, R2 and R3 as relevant; Daventry Part 2 rural-economy policies where directly applicable; made and emerging NDP employment policy WH17, subject to statutory weight.

5. Transport, Access, Highway Capacity and Car Dependency

Woodford Halse is a rural settlement with limited public-transport choice and substantial dependence on private vehicles for employment, secondary education, healthcare and higher-order services. A development of up to 50 dwellings would generate additional trips on the local network.

The application must demonstrate, through proportionate and robust transport evidence, that safe and suitable access can be achieved for all users, that significant impacts on the transport network can be cost-effectively mitigated, and that opportunities to promote walking, cycling safely and public transport have genuinely been taken.

Public transport takes the form of a highly subsidised Stagecoach 200 bus service (that may be withdrawn at any time of course if subsidy is withdrawn) that does not operate effectively to get residents to and from employment in the employment areas around Daventry and Banbury. Consequently, residents have to use private transport to get to work and also to leisure and secondary schools plus further education.

The Parish Council is particularly concerned about cumulative traffic effects, the condition and layout of local routes, and capacity at the Byfield, Fiveways/Doll's Hill roundabout. These concerns are supported by the traffic appraisal conducted by the Parish Council [which was submitted to West Northants. Council as part of the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation] and by ongoing discussions with West Northants. Council's Highway Department about the condition of local roads, particularly Byfield Road. It is suspected that the Road has no proper foundations over the full width of the road, given the heavy traffic of the industrial estates and the increased lighter traffic from the several housing developments over the past years.

The ability of the local road infrastructure to accommodate additional traffic should have been supported by the highway authority infrastructure review requested in 2019. Since then, further development in the village has placed severe strain on the road network, and the emerging Local Plan makes no provision for rebuilding Byfield Road.

Planning application DA/2017/0826 report from WNC Highways dated 21.12.2021 (see Appendix 4) states that the Local Authority firmly objected to the planning application on the grounds of highway safety and the over capacity of local highway at the Five Ways roundabout, the double roundabout on the A361 at Byfield.

The Parish Council requests explicit current assessment of cumulative committed development and realistic trip distribution to employment, schools, healthcare and retail destinations.

In the absence of satisfactory evidence and enforceable mitigation, the proposal would conflict with the development plan's objective of reducing the need to travel and prioritising sustainable modes and may fail the national tests for transport impacts.

WNJCS Policy C2 is particularly relevant since it states: *“Development will be required to mitigate its effects on the highway network and be supported by a transport assessment and travel plan prepared in accordance with current best practice guidelines as issued by the department for transport or the relevant local authority.”* And *“New housing, employment, commercial and retail development in the four towns of Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley and primary service villages will be expected to achieve the modal shift targets .. by maximising travel choice from non-car modes.”*

This development would be 100% reliant on car transport and stating that a bus stop is within walking distance is of no use if there are no buses which provide travel to employment.

The bus timetable demonstrates that buses do not reach the employment areas in Daventry nor Banbury at the times that industrial workers need to be there. Typical shifts start at 7 am and later shifts finish at 10 pm and include Sundays when there are no buses.

The car transport movements surveyed by the applicant is restricted to the Farndon Road but that is not where the issues with traffic will be. In the first instance it will be the flow of 50 cars out through the village to the Byfield Road and hence to 'Doll's Hill' and the 'Five Ways Roundabouts'.

On P9 of the proposed residential travel plan the developer is proposing that the occupants of the houses would walk or cycle to the amenities in the Village. The nearest two listed are a takeaway which is no longer there and the Social Club. The Co-op is stretched beyond capacity with no bread or milk available past mid-day since it was built to serve c. 2,000 people in 1982 and is currently already stretched to over 4,200 people just in the Parish alone. The reality is that these households will shop by car in Daventry or Banbury or have their groceries delivered bringing further larger vehicles to the village. Unbelievably, the proposal suggests that people should cycle along Byfield Road which would be extremely dangerous. Undertaking surveys of how people are travelling or providing them with leaflets will not make travel less car reliant.

The previous application included a map showing the impact of traffic on the houses in Ash Way, Membris Way and Hinton Road. This version does not but we have created it. (See Appendix 5).

At commuter times, up to 50 additional cars could enter and leave the village via Membris Way and Ash Way or along Hinton Road. These routes are not suitable for this level of traffic and could create an environmental hazard when vehicles queue. Membris Way and Ash Way were designed to restrict traffic speeds, while Hinton Road is reduced to single-file traffic by parked cars. For these reasons, the routes are unsuitable both as the application states as bus routes and for the additional traffic generated by this proposal.

There have been significant public speeches which provide Government clarification of the new planning policies. In Appendix 6, there are a selection which explain the policy of new housing being built where people can travel to work by means of public transport or by walking or safe cycle routes.

The Connectivity Score for Woodford Halse from the Department for Transport Connectivity Tool shows that the Parish falls with the lowest decile of sustainable transport connectivity nationally. (Scores of 30-38), while connectivity by car is comparatively strong (65-73) this imbalance is

reflected in the Census data which shows that approximately 88-90% of residents commute by car. Confirming a clear structural reliance on private vehicles. This is private car travel is primarily out along Byfield Road which is not a road built to modern standards. It is neither wide enough for the dual passage of HGV vehicles nor surfaced to cope with the volume of current traffic.

(See Appendix 7 – John Russell Transport Planning - Transport Appraisal re Department for Transport Connectivity Tool Section 3 in particular).

Policy references: NPPF Chapter 9, particularly paragraphs 109–118 as applicable; WNJCS Policies C1, C2, C5, S10, R1 and R3; Daventry Part 2 Policies ST1/ST2 applicable made NDP transport policy. 2025 review: WH15, subject to statutory weight.

6. Character, Landscape, Heritage and Settlement Form

The site occupies a countryside-edge location. The proposal would extend built development beyond the established confines. Woodford Halse has already experienced ‘urban creep’. This expansion is altering the unique nature of Woodford Halse as a railway settlement village and is changing the settlement edge, local landscape character, views and the perceived separation of Woodford Halse from surrounding countryside.

See Appendix 8 which shows the number of developments approved over 2 dwellings since 1980. This totals 829 new dwellings, and the population of the Parish has doubled from 2,169 in 1975 to 4,284 in 2021 (the latest population survey). Despite this huge increase, there have been no infrastructure improvements (transport, water, sewerage, medical facilities, public transport, etc.) and has created a monumental increase in the use of private transport.

Woodford Halse has a distinctive historic identity associated with its earlier villages and later railway development. The applicant must demonstrate how the proposed layout, density, access, building heights, green infrastructure and landscape structure respond to that character. Although detailed appearance is reserved, outline permission would establish the principle and quantum of development; unacceptable landscape or settlement-form effects cannot simply be deferred to reserved matters.

This development is adjacent to the conservation area around Hinton and will have a major impact on this area by the traffic flow which will go through what is currently a quiet village residential area with a large number of bungalow properties housing elderly residents or through the conservation area where the road is single file traffic.

The loss of the Field will change the settlement form, where there is currently a small remaining distinguishment between Woodford Halse and Hinton.

Policy references: NPPF Chapters 12 and 16, including paragraphs 131–141 and 202 onwards as applicable; WNJCS Policies S10, BN5 and R1; Daventry Part 2 design, landscape and heritage policies applicable to the site; made NDP Policies WH2/WH3 and other relevant character policies.

7. Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure, Drainage, Flood Risk and Climate

Development of the site would replace permeable land with buildings, roads and other hard surfaces and may affect habitats and ecological connectivity. The applicant must demonstrate an acceptable drainage strategy based on the drainage hierarchy and sustainable drainage systems, with runoff rates, exceedance routes, maintenance and off-site effects properly addressed. There is no way back from this development. Once the field is lost, surface water flow will increase and if this results in flooding beyond what the proposed flood defence can remedy it will be too late. The field has a wide range of habitats and species with functional connectivity to the south and north of the site.

The Parish Council requests a robust ecological assessment covering habitats, protected and priority species and functional connectivity. The application must demonstrate compliance with the statutory biodiversity net gain regime, including the required biodiversity metric, habitat plan, delivery mechanism and long-term management, unless a lawful exemption applies.

Local residents, who will submit their own objections, bear witness to the range of species using the land and will be submitting further evidence in objection to this development.

Since this site contributes to a wider green-infrastructure connection, the proposal should demonstrate how that function is retained and enhanced. Increased transport emissions and climate resilience should be considered as part of the overall sustainability assessment.

Policy references: NPPF paragraphs 161–182 (flood risk and climate) and 187–201 (natural environment), as applicable; WNJCS Policies S10, BN1, BN2, BN3, BN7 and BN9; applicable Daventry Part 2 environmental policies; made NDP Policy WH1 and any site-specific green-space/ecology policies actually engaged.

8. Weight to the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Evidence

The statutory development plan must be read as a whole. The made Woodford cum Membris Neighbourhood Development Plan forms part of that plan and is a material part of the decision-making framework. The Parish Council's 2025 review, whilst still awaiting approval, (submitted after consultation in December 2025) document is locally important evidence of current objectives.

Accordingly, this objection does not overstate the 2025 review as already adopted. Instead, it relies first on the Made Plan and adopted strategic and Part 2 policies, while inviting the decision-maker to give the emerging review such weight as is lawful having regard to its stage of preparation, unresolved objections and consistency with the NPPF.

The Parish Council's view that Woodford Halse should be reclassified from Primary to Secondary Village is a representation on emerging policy, not the current adopted classification. The objection therefore does not assume that reclassification has already occurred. Even on the current adopted basis, the Parish Council contends that a 50-dwelling extension outside the confines has not been shown to satisfy the applicable "exception" criteria.

Policy references: NPPF paragraphs 12, 48–50 and neighbourhood-planning provisions as applicable; WNJCS Policy R1; Daventry Part 2 Policies RA1 and RA2; made Woodford cum Membris NDP; emerging 2025 review only according to statutory weight.

Conclusion and Requested Decision

For the reasons set out above, the Parish Council requests that planning permission be refused.

The proposal would introduce a substantial residential extension beyond the defined settlement confines and has not demonstrated compliance with the adopted rural spatial strategy or that its transport, infrastructure, drainage, ecological, landscape and settlement-form impacts can be made acceptable.

The Parish Council's primary case is conflict with the development plan read as a whole. Any reliance on the NPPF 'tilted balance' should be addressed only after the Local Planning Authority has established the current housing-land-supply position and the applicability of NPPF paragraph 11. If paragraph 11(d) is engaged, the decision-maker must apply the current Framework accurately.

The Parish Council further requests that, before determination, the LPA obtains and publishes up-to-date consultation responses on highways, education, healthcare, foul drainage/wastewater, surface-water drainage and ecology, and require any outstanding technical evidence necessary to assess cumulative effects & deliverability and enforcement of mitigation.

Appendices:

1. Decision on WND/2021/0575.
2. Flood Investigation Report
3. WND/2021/0525 Proposed 106 Agreement
4. WNC Highways Department response to DA/2017/0826
5. Impact on local roads
6. Government Ministerial Speeches re: travel and infrastructure
7. John Russell Planning Transport Appraisal 2026
8. Planning Approvals of more than 2 dwellings since 1980

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