

LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP (LAP) WORKING GROUP SUBMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE BAe WOODFORD SITE

1. Introduction

- 1.1. There are seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) across Cheshire East, bringing together a wide range of local partners who focus collective effort on what really matters, delivering improved outcomes for local people and places. Their role is to improve services, ensure people influence decision making and to actively engage and empower communities.
- 1.2 The LAP has formed a BAe Woodford Working Group made up of representatives from the various communities surrounding the Woodford Site on both sides of the Cheshire East / Stockport boundary. The aim of the Group is to mitigate the impact of the development and identify sustainable benefits for the communities living in the immediate vicinity. The LAP has brought these communities under one umbrella giving it a stronger and more coordinated voice. The Terms of Reference for the Group are attached for information (Appendix 1).
- 1.3 The communities that took an active part in the Working Group were Woodford, Adlington, Pott Shrigley, Poynton, and Mottram St Andrew. The opportunity to get involved in the Working Group was offered to all communities in the vicinity. The working group submission is a working document and has been approved by all of the Councils involved and also strongly endorsed by the LAP Area Management Group. The working group welcomes feedback, which can be sent by email to **lap.wwg@gmail.com**

2. General

- 2.1 The communities welcome the acknowledgement by the site owner and local authorities that the future planning of the BAE Woodford site should be undertaken as a whole. Any future development proposals will have impacts in all directions around the site.
- 2.2 It is essential that the two local authorities (Stockport and Cheshire East) work closely together not only to secure the proper planning of the site itself, but also to ensure the delivery of appropriate on and off-site infrastructure commensurate with the scale of development proposed. Ideally, the communities would prefer a Master plan covering the whole site to be the Supplementary Planning Document, but they accept that the two authorities are at different stages of their development planning processes due to the recent re-organisation of local government in Cheshire.

3. Traffic Infrastructure

- 3.1 All of the surrounding communities are seriously concerned with the current levels of traffic especially at peak times. This is also evidenced by previous studies and the identification of the need for a relief road.
- 3.2 Therefore traffic arising from the new development is a major local concern particularly as any development is likely to increase congestion. As a consequence the location and capacity of a relief road (or roads) is considered critical to all communities to ease pressure on already congested roads and provide access to any new development. In addition, a full traffic management scheme is required for all the surrounding areas (including rural areas), based upon predicted traffic levels and directions from the completed development.
- 3.3 Examples of the major local roads already affected by serious congestion at peak times, in the experience of the communities, are the A523, A5149, A5102, A6, B5358, A555 plus many minor roads, and so any development must fully address traffic impacts.

4. Early Construction of Traffic Infrastructure

- 4.1 As a point of principle, the communities ask for consideration to be given to early construction of infrastructure, particularly highway works and traffic management (for construction traffic for example).
- 4.2 Given the site is currently in one ownership, it is therefore within the control of the owner to deliver this. The communities accept that this may not be possible in practice but would wish to see rigidly imposed thresholds for infrastructure provision as the development takes place.
- 4.3 The phased delivery of highway infrastructure and management in accordance with the Master plan and underpinned by a robust planning agreement and planning conditions imposed at the outline application stage, or equivalent, may be acceptable depending upon the details available at that time.

5. Local Services and Facilities Infrastructure

- 5.1 It is vital when considering the impact on all other local services and facilities that the two authorities take the lead in actively working with the wide range of public, private and voluntary organisations that will be involved in their delivery. The nature and density of the selected forms of development will determine the changes or additional service needs.
- 5.2 The communities will be happy to work with the local authorities and providers to seek to mitigate the harm of the development on all local services. The effect of any housing development on local public services, such as schools, doctors, dentists and community health services, must be considered.

6. Approved Design Code

- 6.1 With regard to the development itself, the communities hope that the Master plan and design process will produce an approved design code, which all development within the site should comply with. This should achieve good environmental standards rather than meeting the minimum statutory obligations, particularly given the semi-rural nature of the site.
- 6.2 The communities would prefer for the site to be sold to one developer with the proviso that parts of the site are not then sold off separately. However, any development which accords with the approved design code for the site should ensure consistency of quality and design across the site provided the code is strictly enforced. A consistent design code should be applied to any form of built development in both authorities.

7. Future use of Runway

- 7.1 The future use of the runway and adjoining areas have been the subject of discussion among the communities as all are affected to some degree by any aircraft noise. The communities would accept that any future use of the runway for aviation purposes must be the subject of a full appraisal (including detailed noise assessments and predictions) whether it requires planning permission or not. The communities would wish to be fully consulted on any new aviation use for the site.

8. Heritage Assets

- 8.1 In terms of heritage assets, the communities agree that the development should incorporate some physical recognition of the site and its part in local and national history. Communities have a variety of ideas as to how this might be done, but would also welcome other suggestions to ensure that this valuable history is retained for future generations, who may live, work and play on this site. The views of former BAE workers should also be sought on this matter. A heritage centre to be sited in a suitable location with good access was a common thread in discussions.

9. Use of Open Areas

- 9.1 The predominantly rural character of the area is appropriately reflected in its Green Belt status on both sides of the administrative boundary. It is essential that positive uses of the open areas be found which comply with national Green Belt policy i.e. that any uses are predominantly open and can act as a permanent green wedge or buffer between the development areas. Communities are aware that many suggestions have been put forward and that a number of local and national interests would welcome the opportunity to participate in such uses.

- 9.2 Suggestions coming forward include golf courses, lake, playing pitches, burial ground, waterways, cycleways, woodlands, allotments and bridleways. Through the provision of some combination of these options the open areas have considerable potential to link the communities together and also provide a unique opportunity to provide excellent leisure facilities for local people to enjoy.
- 9.3 What is required is a clear strategy for both the future use and management of these open areas being included in the Masterplan and Supplementary Planning Document. A community led charitable trust may be one suggestion worth pursuing.

10. Non-Merging of Major Existing Developed Site (MEDS)

- 10.1 The communities accept that the existing “MEDS A”, will need to be developed following cessation of the aviation use. Retention of the site in employment use is the preferred option, but it is acknowledged that this continuation of use seems unlikely, particularly in the short term. On the other hand, the site has the potential to retain the essential rural character of the Woodford area whilst at the same time creating a new iconic village centre with a range of local services (some of which would create employment opportunities) and associated mixed residential development. Objections would be raised to any suggestion of merging sites A or B or indeed of reducing the current gap between the two MEDS, all of which lies within the Green Belt.

11. MEDS B

- 11.1 The areas adjoining MEDS B are rural, predominantly in agricultural use with substantial areas of woodland; access to MEDS site B is potentially problematic. The community preference is for the flying related uses on this site to cease and for the MEDS B employment allocation to be replaced by an extension to the Adlington Trading Estate to the north and northwest on land within the ownership of BAE, accessed from a Woodford / Poynton relief road. This would improve access for a wide range of employment related uses and be commensurate with the existing character of that area, which is not suitable for any residential development.
- 11.2 The communities recognise that this option could be difficult particularly as the land adjoining the Adlington Trading Estate lies within Cheshire East. If this option cannot be pursued, some form of very low density residential development with suitable access arrangements onto the local highway network may be acceptable for MEDS B *but only if they are via a new Woodford / Poynton relief road.*

KEY ISSUES – RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS AT PUBLIC EXHIBITION (MAY 2011)

The public exhibition held week commencing 23 May 2011 identified a number of key issues and posed five questions. The Local Area Partnership (LAP) BAe Woodford Working Group has considered these questions and initial responses to the questions are given below.

Q1 *Should the development take place within the boundaries of the existing MEDS or should a more flexible approach be taken?*

The communities would be prepared to consider a more flexible approach being taken, subject to the provisos in the following questions (see also paragraphs 10 and 11 above).

Q2 *What should be the balance between employment and housing development?*

It is accepted that housing is likely to be the dominant use in any development on the BAE Woodford site but the development should provide a genuine mix of uses, so as to offer sustainable employment opportunities to residents of the new development. It is suggested below that employment uses should account for circa 25 per cent of the developable area.

Q3 *What type of development would you like to see on the site?*

As stated above, the communities would expect the site to be developed in accordance with an agreed design code (see paragraph 6 above), which should set high standards of sustainability. Housing development on the site should provide a suitable mix of dwelling types and tenures. The communities would not support development proposals with heights above three storeys.

Q4 *What type of transport measures do you feel the development at Woodford could reasonably deliver to enhance the site's accessibility and improve transport conditions in the local area?*

The communities believe that the development of this site must be linked, and phased with the delivery of a Woodford / Poynton Relief Road. Regardless of the nature of development eventually decided upon, the opportunity should be taken to provide high quality sustainable transport links, bus routes, footpaths, cycleways and bridleways between the communities adjoining the Woodford site. The new transport links must be sufficient to avoid any increase in traffic congestion in neighbouring communities.

Q5 *More development, particularly housing, will create more resources to improve local infrastructure and community facilities. It will also put more pressure on local roads and services. Would you like to see more*

development with more associated improvements, or less development with fewer improvements?

See the responses to the scenarios in the following section.

RESPONSE TO THE SCENARIOS OUTLINED AT THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Four Scenarios for development of the BAE Woodford site were presented at the public exhibition. These have been considered by the LAP Woodford Working Group, which makes the following initial responses: -

Scenario 1 – 42ha Employment Development

In many respects this scenario represents the communities preferred option, as it would retain and attract high technology and engineering industries for which the area is already well known. It is envisaged that, whilst traffic movements would no doubt increase from the present low levels of activity on the site, this scenario would potentially generate less traffic than the other three scenarios under consideration. It is, however, recognised that the potential for attracting a major employer to the site may be remote.

Given this assumption, the most likely outcome under this scenario would seem to be the sub-division of the existing buildings and disposal of the land and buildings in smaller parcels to developers and occupiers, which may take place over a period of several years. Such an outcome would, in the opinion of the communities, be undesirable with little opportunity to control the many uses that may take place on the site, some of which may be short-term or even unauthorised. Therefore, unless a suitable major employer can be attracted to the site, the communities are unlikely to support this scenario.

Scenario 2 – 42ha Housing Development

Two options are presented in this scenario – low density and medium density. It is appreciated that the low-density option produces a scale of development, which is significantly lower than that which currently exists on the site. However, the size, style and value of the housing would be commensurate with properties already existing in Woodford. It is noted that medium density development at 30 dwellings per hectare would produce 1,260 new homes; with a footprint more or less the same as the existing buildings but with reduced height and scale.

In the view of the communities this is the least desirable scenario, due to impact on the local highway infrastructure, schools, medical and other services. The communities would expect any development of this scale to include significant interventions to reduce these impacts including, for example, implementation of

the Woodford / Poynton Relief Road before construction commences. Any high density or high-rise development within the overall medium density would be strenuously resisted.

Scenario 3 – 42ha Mixed Use development, with low and medium density housing

This is the scenario closest to the aspirations of the communities, although it is not perfect. It is felt that the five hectares allocated to employment is a 'tokenistic' acknowledgement of the concept of mixed-use development and the proportion of the development allocated to employment use should be increased to around 25 per cent of the developable area, i.e. circa 10 hectares, with a corresponding reduction in the number of dwellings.

The reference to 'new school, health centre and local shops serving the enlarged community' is welcomed and the communities would wish to see these committed to in a planning agreement, along with the other community linking improvements, such as highways improvements, play areas, open spaces, cycleways and bridleways referred to above.

Scenario 4 – 61ha Mixed Use development with medium, low and very low-density housing

This is a very challenging scenario and, although resulting in a loss of Green Belt, it has the potential to provide significant benefits to the communities, especially those that are currently devoid of community facilities. It is, nevertheless, a controversial proposal and one that would need extremely careful planning if the communities are to be convinced of the benefits. It would need to be planned in such a way as to ensure the retention of a significant Green Belt buffer between Woodford and the neighbouring communities, whilst at the same time incorporating improved sustainable transport links. Delivery of the Woodford / Poynton Relief Road will be fundamental in persuading the local communities to support this scenario.

Planning agreements and policies for such a development would have to be very carefully worded, to prevent any subsequent attempts to increase the density of housing.

Conclusion

The communities recognize that development in some form is inevitable and feel any development will create significant additional demands on infrastructure, particularly roads. As a consequence they would like to see a Woodford/Poynton relief road from which access to any new development is provided, to take the pressure off Woodford and the surrounding area.

While contrary to existing planning policies in both Stockport and Cheshire East Scenario 4 could offer the greatest potential benefits for both the developer and the local communities. However the Communities are concerned about the loss of additional Green Belt land and feel giving it up should be a last resort. This approach could therefore only be supported if it is accepted that the Masterplan must cover the whole site and be the subject of the Supplementary Planning Document and Cheshire East equivalent. Strict planning controls and the provision of safeguards as set out above are essential.

Scenario 4 would **not be acceptable** to the local communities without the provision of a Woodford / Poynton Relief Road from which access to the new residential areas is provided.

15.06.11

LAP Working Group - BAE Woodford

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The BAE Woodford site is due to close towards the end of March 2011. 60% of the 504-acre site is within the Stockport boundary, including 103 acres of developable (Major Economic Development Sites) MEDS site A (North) and B (South).
- 1.2 Stockport MBC (SMBC) has identified these two MEDS as areas for development within their Core Strategy and is currently creating a Special Development Plan (SPD) for the part of the site within their Borough. The remaining 40% falls within the Cheshire East Council (CEC) boundary.
- 1.3 The evidence from SMBC core strategy consultation process shows that when initially faced with a suggestion by CASS Associates on behalf of BAE that the Woodford site could present development opportunities, SMBC expressed a view that the location was unsuitable because the infrastructure was not available to support it. They also acknowledged that it could be possible to address this issue. Quote taken from the Core strategy Issues and options paper “ *It is not accepted that the level existing of accessibility described by the consultee is sufficient to achieve sustainable development of the aerodrome site. It is accepted that the new infrastructure could be provided in conjunction with new development but in order to achieve the uplift in accessibility required the scale of development on this green belt site would need to be considerable and contrary to Draft RSS strategy for regeneration and Green Belt Protection.* “
- 1.4 At some point SMBC appear to have accepted that the two MEDS sites are suitable for development and as a consequence are producing the SPD to provide planning certainty for a potential developer.
- 1.5 A developer may still wish to apply for planning consent for a project contrary to the guidance provided by the SPD.
- 1.6 The conclusion of the SMBC core strategy consultation also shows that if the proposals or objections presented to SMBC by the different interested parties are not unanimous SMBC understandably select what they believe to be the consensus. It is therefore critical that submissions to SMBC during the consultation phase of the SPD should find consensus if they are to be taken seriously and have any impact on the decision making process.

**“WOODFORD AERODROME
SPD – PROJECT PLAN**

Consultation with the local residents, the landowner, Cheshire East Council and other interested parties has taken place with a variety of views expressed as to the favoured uses at the site. Although there was not a unanimous view, there was a clear desire for there to be a mix of employment and residential uses. There was less agreement on what the scale of those uses should be. However in conjunction with the evidence gathered so far and an assessment of the relevant policies, a mix of these two uses should form the basis for development at the site.

2. Aim

- 2.1 To mitigate the impact of development on the BAE Woodford site and identify sustainable benefits for the communities living in the immediate vicinity of the site within SMBC and CEC

3. Objective

- 3.1 To become proactively involved in the production of SMBC’s SPD and CEC’s Core Strategy at Town and Parish Council level
- 3.2 To coordinate and find common ground amongst the Parishes surrounding the BAE Woodford site
- 3.3 To formulate a plan/proposal to present to Stockport MBC and Cheshire East Council which is acceptable to all the Parishes surrounding the BAE Woodford site.

4. Proposed method

- 4.1 Each Parish to identify the issues relevant to their community from the development on the BAE site and select no more than three individuals to join a LAP core group. This will consist of the Parishes primarily affected by development on the BAE Woodford site. See 5
- 4.2 The LAP core group to diary a series of meetings to provide the opportunity for the Parish core groups at 5, to present the views of their Parish, to the representatives of the other Parishes.
- 4.3 The presentations to be followed by group sessions
- a) To identify the Common ground
 - b) To identify the points of difference
 - c) To attempt to find compromise

d) To produce a compromise agreement which if necessary acknowledges the points of difference.

4.4 Create a plan, which unifies the Parishes.

4.5 Present the plan to the individual Parish Councils and obtain agreement for it. Individuals on the Core group will need to be liaising and feeding back to their Parish Councils as the process progresses on a continual basis.

4.6 Present a plan to SMBC and CEC once accepted by the Parishes and the LAP.

5. Interested parishes.

5.1 Woodford, Adlington, Dean Row, Poynton. Bollington, Bramhall, Disley, Lyme Handley, Mottram St Andrew, Pott Shrigley, Prestbury.

Phil Hoyland

3 March 2011
(Ver 3.)