



The Woodford Centre

Woodford War Memorial & Community Centre
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Ian Harrison
Town Centre and Major Developments
Regeneration Manager
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall
Edward Street,
Stockport
SK1 3XE

13th June 2011

Dear Ian

Re: Closure of BAe site, Woodford – Design Workshops

I write to you on behalf of the Management Committee of the Woodford War Memorial Community Centre (WWMCC). We have attended the recent exhibition at the Centre and are aware of the design workshop meetings being held this week. Unfortunately, due the timing of the workshops and the significant commitment that would be required to attend all sessions, despite having a committee of 13 people, none of our members are able to attend.

Therefore, we felt it would be appropriate to feed our thoughts into the design workshops by way of this letter. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this letter with all stakeholders, as there are sensitivities regarding the potential impact the BAe site development could have on the existing Community Centre, which is understandably dear to the hearts of many in the community. We intend to implement consultation with the full Centre membership (all Woodford residents) when potential opportunities for the Centre are a little clearer.

We do not propose to comment on any of the four scenarios that have been presented in the exhibition as we, as a committee, have no significant objections to any of the scenarios. It is however clear, from our discussions within the community that there is a significant expectation that the development of the BAe site will provide significant improvements to the facilities and infrastructure within Woodford. Under Key Issue 5: Community Facilities of the Key Issues Document, it is stated that “The provision of new and improved community facilities will be an integral part of any new development. These will build on existing facilities and be agreed with the appropriate agencies as part of the future planning agreements”.

To date, we have had no direct discussions with any of the agencies involved in the BAe site redevelopment. We appreciate that this consultation may be proposed at a later date, but we have had no advice to this effect.

The Centre’s management committee would like to draw your attention to the following points:

1. The Centre is a key part of the community

The Centre is utilised by a wide range of members of the community including badminton, bridge and dog clubs, Women’s Institute, Woodford Players (who continue to thrive and win many awards for their professionalism and performances), salsa dancing, live music nights and fundraising events. The Centre is available for private hire and hosts a number of wedding receptions, birthday parties, corporate events and reunions. Thankfully, the Centre is utilised in some form nearly every day of the year and is able to cover the operating costs which are in the region of £100,000 per annum.

2. The Centre is self-funding and run by volunteers

An important feature of the Centre is that it is a charity run by volunteers from the community and does not draw on any public funding support at present. The Centre

was originally constructed in 1953, using donations from the community, as a memorial to those who gave their lives to serve in the forces in WWII. Since then, it has been entirely self-funding.

3. Funds are needed to meet the future need

As the building is nearly 60 years old, it is in need of refurbishment or renewal if it is to continue to serve the community. We have recently replaced the floors in both halls and redecorated the Centre, but we do not have the resources required to preserve the Centre for the long term.

While the current Centre serves the existing community well, it is not going to sustain an increase in the community of up to 127%. Renewal and expansion of the Centre facilities on the current site is the preferred solution, as we believe that provision of new facilities on the BAe development site could be divisive, leading to the creation of separate, rather than an integrated, Woodford communities.

4. Potential for combined facilities with a new school

We anticipate that a new school will be needed for the enlarged community. A combined school and community centre facility on the current Centre site is not feasible for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Centre site is not large enough to accommodate both an expanded community centre and a school. Secondly, as the Centre is used throughout the day and many evenings, school activities are unlikely to be compatible with the community's requirements. In addition, the security requirements of the school may be incompatible with the activities of the Centre. However, if the Centre site could be expanded, there is no reason why the Centre and school facilities could not be located in the same site.

5. Potential for combined community centre and sports club facilities

We consider that there is a tremendous opportunity to expand the Centre to include some additional land between the Centre and the village Cricket Club, thereby creating a more inclusive community facility. The Cricket Club is in desperate need of a new club house (the existing facility is over 100 years old) as it has been very

successful in attracting a junior membership (which is at capacity again this year). The Queensgate School Football Club, set up just 10 years ago, has 19 teams playing matches every weekend during the season and needs 5 pitches every Saturday and Sunday to support these teams. The Centre's playing fields are not very well drained but could be brought up to an operational standard relatively quickly. The additional land between the Centre and the Cricket Club would need to be acquired but would potentially facilitate the provision of some football pitches. A combined football and cricket club house would provide the necessary facilities for the clubs to build on their recent growth and success.

The Centre currently has a car park to accommodate over 100 cars, and access onto Chester Road is adequate to meet any increase in capacity. By integrating the needs for a new Centre with the Cricket Club and the Football Club there may be some possibility of drawing on additional grants from the Football Association and English Cricket Board. Overall, such a combined facility would undoubtedly preserve the community of Woodford in the historic centre of the village and ensure the new development is integrated into the village.

We are very keen to understand what support the Centre can expect from the redevelopment of the BAe site in order to ensure it remains a core facility within and expanded community. As we hope we have shown in this letter, we are prepared to be very open minded about the options available to create a new and/or improved facility in the Centre of Woodford.

No doubt we will need to compete with a significant number of other organisations seeking support from the BAe development to secure their futures, and we would welcome any opportunities to meet with them to co-ordinate the development of a sustainable community. The development of the BAe site represents a "once in a lifetime" opportunity for the agencies involved to deliver a community legacy for Woodford in much the same way as the community came together to build the Centre back in 1953.

We would welcome a meeting with the Planning Officers and BAe advisers to discuss the content of this letter as part of the design consultation process.

We have copied this letter to Woodford Community Council, the local councillors, MP and the Bramhall South Area Planning Committee.

Many thanks for taking the time to consider this letter and we look forward to meeting with you and any other stakeholders in due course. I can be contacted on 07771 947839 or by email – Silklands@yahoo.co.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Freeth'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the top of the 'h'.

Andrew Freeth
Chairman
WWMCC