

SMBC Presentation at WCC AGM

Mr Paul Rubinstein, Service Director, Regeneration, from Stockport MBC, was the guest speaker at the recent Woodford Community Council AGM, which was held on 25th November 2010.

He opened his presentation by referring to the cancellation of the Nimrod project, following the Government's spending review, and the consequent earlier closure of the site. BAE was currently in negotiation with the MoD regarding the actual date for closure, which was expected to be in mid 2011, with decommissioning taking three to six months. BAE would be doing its best to redeploy staff wherever possible to avoid loss of valuable skills. The planning framework had been established for a 2012 closure and these timescales were now being reviewed. With regard to the MAELR (Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road), the scheme had not been scrapped because it had not yet been submitted for approval, but it was very unlikely that any central funding would be allocated. Consideration was being given to re-phasing and re-financing the scheme locally.

Mr Rubinstein provided background information about the site: it was set within the Green Belt, covered a total area of 204 hectares, of which approximately 42 hectares were designated Major Existing Development Sites (MEDS) and as such could be lawfully developed as industrial sites without planning permission. The MEDS and most of the site were situated within Stockport Metropolitan Borough, with the eastern undeveloped area being in Cheshire East. Initial discussions with BAE had begun in 2008 and Stockport was actively working with BAE and with Cheshire East. Woodford had been identified as an Opportunity Site in the Stockport Core Strategy and a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was currently being prepared to identify the appropriate level of development and prepare a master plan. To this end a project plan has been put together and agreed between Stockport Council and BAE Systems. The first stage of this involved evidence gathering in 13 areas:

- Historical Development of the Site
- Understanding The Area
- Housing
- Employment
- Other Appropriate Uses
- Transport
- Sustainability / Energy
- Future Runway Uses
- Heritage and Conservation
- Use of Open Space
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Local Infrastructure – Schools etc
- Development Appraisals

It was essential that the proposals included in the master plan were deliverable and a number of main development issues had been identified, including the size, scale and type of the development, viability, impact on highways and public transport, community infrastructure required and demolition and remediation costs. The timescale for the completion of the SPD had been set before the earlier closure had been announced and it would now need to be compressed, which would not be easy because of the need for Public Consultation. It was anticipated that a number of options, based on the evidence gathered, could be put forward for consultation by mid-May to early June 2011 and realistically the earliest time that the final document could be available would be September 2011, rather than March 2012 as originally envisaged. The main forum for discussions/consultation would be the Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme South Area Committee

meetings, but special meetings could also be held in Woodford and representatives nominated by the Community Council could join fact-finding visits to other developments and BAE sites.

Mr Rubinstein then addressed the list of written questions submitted by the Community Council prior to the meeting. (Click [here](#) for a copy of the questions and answers.) NB you will need Adobe Reader to open this document - it is free from [here](#).

Further comments and questions were put forward and in response, Mr Rubinstein confirmed that the Council had no preference for housing over commercial, or vice versa. It was unlikely, however, that a large retail park would be acceptable, since current policy was to reinforce existing retail areas in town centres. An office park similar to Cheadle Royal could also be problematical because of the impact on traffic flows. He noted, however, that the SPD would be the Council's view of the preferred plan for the area and whilst it was hoped that it would assist BAE in marketing the site, a developer could put forward a completely different scheme or indeed split the site into multiple developments.