

## **Specific Site and Area considerations within the proposed Woodford Neighbourhood Area**

It is recognised that certain specific areas within the proposed overall Area for the proposed Neighbourhood Forum may have implications outside the immediate neighbourhood.

### **Highways Links - exclusion**

In particular these include “reserved corridors” for the extended SEMMMs route and that of a possible Poynton Bypass. Since the actual routings for these transport links are not identifiable upon the ground at the present time they are encompassed within the Area. However, the proposed Forum appreciates that SMBC have these in progress and would understand and agree their exclusion from the Area as defined by them during this consultation process.

### **Woodford Aerodrome Boundary inclusion justification**

The Woodford Neighbourhood Plan Area should include the former aerodrome site for the following reasons:

#### **Position**

The aerodrome site is on the southernmost border of Stockport Metropolitan Borough. It has been within the parish of Christ Church, Woodford, since the formation of that parish in 1872.

The village of Woodford was part of Cheshire until 1974. It is a rural area and was only incorporated into the Stockport Metropolitan Borough when that was created in 1974. Its rural character has not, however, changed fundamentally since then, as the whole area lies within the Green Belt and has accordingly been protected from development through planning policies for over 70 years. The access to the aerodrome site is at the centre of Woodford and is greater than 1 km distant from any other part of Stockport Metropolitan Borough. The other boundaries of the aerodrome site are with Poynton, Adlington and Prestbury. Any development of the aerodrome is therefore an integral part of Woodford village.

#### **Aerodrome closure 2011**

The Woodford Aerodrome opened in 1924 and closed in 2011 and the administrative boundary between Cheshire and Greater Manchester still runs through the middle of the aerodrome. On the Cheshire side, the aerodrome falls within both Adlington and Poynton parishes. For nearly 90 years, the site was used in connection with aircraft manufacture, repair and maintenance including in particular the runway, aprons and associated areas. The closure of the site has major implications for the future use and development of land not only on the site but in the surrounding areas. The existence of the airfield acted as a barrier between the communities of Woodford, Poynton and Adlington with no public access across the site. Furthermore, the runway and aprons posed a major physical and design constraint on proposals for a bypass of Poynton, which have been considered over many decades. On the Cheshire East side, a number of local landowners have seen the closure and sale of the aerodrome for development as an opportunity to put their sites forward for possible development as part of Cheshire East Council’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, notwithstanding the whole site’s location within the Green Belt. The aerodrome site contains a range of buildings and uses which have the potential for re-use and some redevelopment; part of the site is clearly brown field containing those buildings.

### **SMBC Involvement**

The extent of this site comprises parts within both Stockport Metropolitan Borough and Cheshire East. It has been subject to valuable discussion, consultation and negotiation over the past few years, resulting in a Supplementary Development Plan (SPD) being adopted by SMBC in order to provide greater details on the policies of its development plan documents. Although this is quite correctly the guidance document for SMBC, it cannot set planning policy.

### **Local Area Partnership**

Again it is recognised that development upon it would have an impact on a wider area. Because of the scale and size of the overall site, Cheshire East Council Local Area Partnership (LAP) established a Woodford working group in early 2011 comprising a Committee with members of Cheshire East Council and Parish Councillors, specifically from Poynton, Adlington and Prestbury, who have been working with Woodford representatives over the past two years to identify and address issues arising from any development upon that site, further to which Woodford Community Council members took part in the Design Workshop Meetings initiated by SMBC in 2011. The proposed Forum is cognisant of the contents of the Stockport SPD referred to earlier; however that could only address the area within the SMBC boundary, the remainder of the overall site lying within Cheshire East. By inclusion of the section of the site contained within SMBC within the Neighbourhood Area it would permit appropriate and effective liaison with the neighbouring governances, facilitating Neighbourhood Planning either as a joint individual plan across Authority boundaries, or indeed Area Plans developed in parallel, with co-operation, integration, and consistency. This approach is compliant and a requirement of the Localism Act. Without inclusion it would indeed negate the objectives of the Act.

### **Local character**

Local residents accept that the re-use, conversion and selective redevelopment of the Brownfield parts of the site containing existing buildings should take place. They have particular aspirations for the future design and layout of the former aerodrome which can only be met by a comprehensive master plan irrespective of boundaries and achieved through the neighbourhood plan process in consultation and collaboration with adjacent communities. The overall objective would be to enable selective redevelopment of the aerodrome for appropriate uses in a form that respects the overall rural character and linear form of the existing Woodford area.

### **Localism**

The Localism Act 2012 through its “Duty to co-operate” provisions requires local authorities to co-operate in the spatial planning of their areas. The future of the aerodrome has to be seen as an opportunity to achieve long term planning solutions for the future of the aerodrome and adjacent areas. This includes appropriate definition of Green Belt boundaries and proposals for future uses of Green Belt land (such as outdoor sport and recreation, woodland, nature conservation, water and amenity uses).

### **Infrastructure planning**

Infrastructure planning to accommodate and facilitate future aerodrome uses in their entirety, not just those with high development value, should be done irrespective of administrative boundaries. Therefore, the inclusion of the aerodrome within the neighbourhood designated area would be in the interests of the proper planning of the wider area and their communities. Indeed, as proposed, there is no public access from or to any residential development on the site from any other location other than through Woodford itself.

## **Wider planning**

The definition of the local government boundary between the two authorities runs through the aerodrome site. However, the site has to be seen in its wider context in terms of the wider planning of areas within Stockport and Cheshire East. Cheshire East Council is still progressing its Local Plan, which will become the development plan for the area, so at this time it is not confirmed how many new houses will be required in the adjoining areas over the next 20 years. Poynton Town Council and Adlington Parish Council are both actively considering the designation of Neighbourhood Plan areas for their communities, particularly given the uncertainties arising from the closure of the aerodrome and the need to plan the future of the whole Woodford site in parallel across the administrative boundaries. To progress a Neighbourhood Plan at this time in parallel with Cheshire East's emerging Local Plan is therefore clearly appropriate and is indeed supportive of the wider planning of those areas. A neighbourhood planning approach to the aerodrome and its environs would provide a statutory basis for decision making on future planning applications based upon an up-to-date assessment of local and strategic needs.

## **Public Awareness**

In view of the public awareness already achieved, through leaflets, website, newsletters, and exhibitions, regarding possible development, it is not perceived that unrealistic expectations may be raised by inclusion of the BAe site. Through the Woodford United Group within Woodford Community Council considerable research and public consultation has already been carried out to identify issues concerning the community as a whole. Many of the findings are commensurate with a co-operative approach, both with SMBC and potential developers, to future development on the BAe site.

## **Potential Planning Applications**

It is appreciated that planning applications may be made on the BAe site prior to the establishment of an Area Plan. However, this should not be considered reason to exclude it from the proposed Area. We understand that there will most likely be several planning applications over a number of years, depending upon how the developers want to package the site, demand etc. It is therefore unlikely that detailed planning applications will have been received covering the whole of the developable area by the time the Neighbourhood Plan is in place. Therefore the Neighbourhood Plan can have significant influence on that part of the site not covered by agreed planning applications. Additionally, not including the site within the Neighbourhood Area may be detrimental to future residents of the site. Whilst every opportunity would be taken to involve them in any Neighbourhood Planning processes, by default they would have been unnecessarily disadvantaged since they would not be within the Area and therefore not automatically have the option to become members of the Forum.

## **Conclusion**

The closure of the aerodrome and its subsequent sale for development opens a new chapter in the future not only of Woodford, but also of the surrounding communities. The use and development of land and buildings has been severely constrained through the physical presence of the aerodrome and in particular the safety and operational requirements of an active airfield. The communities see the new opportunities provided by the Neighbourhood Plan and the Duty to Cooperate as a means to contribute to long term solutions for the future planning of the aerodrome site and its environs that meets the needs of the local communities, facilitates appropriate sustainable development and secures long term Green Belt boundaries following the closure of the aerodrome.