

Woodford Aerodrome

Public Meeting 15th October 2009

Note of comments

Introduction

On 15th October 2009 Stockport Council organised a public meeting for local residents to hear about and discuss the future use of the existing BAE site at Woodford. The meeting was attended by over 250 people who heard from Jim Welch of BAE Systems, Mark Hunter MP for Cheadle, Bryan Leck, councillor for Bramhall South and from Ged Lucas, Richard Leyshon and Dave Bryant, officers of Stockport MBC. There followed a number of round-table discussions during which residents were asked for their thoughts on the future of the site.

The following notes are intended as a summary of comments from all those discussions. This means that some of the points made may conflict with each other. It is not intended that this summary conveys a consensus, but a broad overview of the opinions expressed.

Are these the right issues?

The Council should have particular regard to:

- Highway access and impact on existing highway network
- Public transport in the area needs to be improved
- Need for services (schools, doctors, etc.). This should either be funded by BAE or legal agreements with developers
- Concern over possibility of night-time uses causing noise/light pollution
- Any development should be complementary and beneficial to the existing Woodford community and its character

Development outside MEDS Areas?

- Some objection to this, based on desire to see all open land retained
- Some support for this, qualified dependent on scale of development, access and layout
- Could only be assessed when provided with a specific scheme or type of development
- Preference for remainder of land becoming accessible for recreation

Residential use?

- 450 should be the limit (doubling size of existing village), however it is recognised that this may not be of a large enough scale to provide the necessary infrastructure
- 1400 additional houses is too many
- The current roads are not able to cope with existing traffic
- Would need guarantee of SEMMMS road if development were to take place
- Would not welcome high density houses – need family homes, decent plot sizes
- Need planning conditions to restrict levels of housing
- Do not want cheap housing in Woodford
- Provide housing for the elderly and disabled
- Concern that development on one side of the main road could result in parallel, not integrated, communities

Employment use?

- Preference for office over industrial development
- Insufficient infrastructure in place to support large scale employment use

- Retain the manufacturing element with 'green schemes' i.e. wind turbines/solar energy
- Jobs and skills should be retained
- Should seek to continue aircraft manufacture in north area of site
- Don't think there is the demand for employment development
- Not a good area for employment uses
- Warehousing will not create employment
- There will be access and nuisance issues caused by HGVs
- Has the advantage of reducing the number of dwellings that could be developed
- Better to develop area A than B as B would require development of the open land to serve it

Mixed use?

- Support for this option
- Scale of development important, in line with other comments regarding the impact on the community, highways, etc.
- Issues raised in other options also relevant

Runway retained?

- Get rid of runway
- Could be retained and used for a private air club
- Suggest the southern part of site is used to support runway
- Create an 'airfield community'
- Possibly reduce length of runway, potentially reducing impact of air traffic on residents
- Keep the runway provided use does not increase beyond current levels
- Use runway as a drag strip
- May be difficult to stop expansions if used for general aviation

Open space use?

- Use as parkland and form lakes
- Whole site needs tackling at one time as one site – can't leave out green belt issues until later and focus only on MEDS sites. Must look at it as a whole
- Trees on the site should be surveyed and protected

Other uses suggested

- Leisure use
- Community use
- School
- Country park
- Sporting facilities – sailing, canoeing, 50m swimming pool, sports pitches, a race track and cycle track were mentioned, including retaining or extending the existing golf course
- Need to explore funding options for sporting options e.g. Sale Sharks stadiums, Olympic rowing lakes
- Hotel, possibly in conjunction with a golf course
- Air Museum
- Farming

Amalgamate the MEDS areas?

- Support for Area A (north site) to be added to Area B (i.e. to have development on the south of the site), but not the other way around
- However some residents to the south of the site would wish to see B amalgamated with A
- Issue of how to connect the two MEDS areas

Other related issues raised

- SEMMMS relief road will not cure existing traffic problems
- Would like Poynton bypass to be built. This could go through the BAE site
- Need public open space for any new residents
- Existing residents need more open space
- Development should not be nearer to existing houses than existing BAE buildings
- Green belt should be retained and Woodford and Poynton kept separate
- There may be a drop in the value of houses in the Woodford area as a result – who will compensate for the loss of value?
- Increase in carbon emissions from cars related to new residential development
- Heritage of site is important
- Any uses should be environmentally friendly, e.g. biomass, energy efficient heat pumps.
- Concern over the possibility that the buildings could be left to become derelict or could be demolished if it was a way around paying business rates
- The impact of a new road on occupiers will be a significant factor in whether there would be resident support
- Concern over piecemeal development and different parts of the site being sold off and developed separately. The Council may not be able to control or influence the redevelopment of the site

Consultation arrangements

- Current arrangement is felt to be not long enough for initial consultation. People want time to prepare ideas
- Council should come back again to discuss preferred option, with reasons
- Further consultation wanted when there are more firm plans

Questions raised during discussions

- Could the Council purchase the land, perhaps for recreational uses?
- Will BAE sell the whole site or just MEDS sites?
- Why is the working farm owned by BAE included in the site?
- Has BAE had any discussion with the golf club?
- What is the ownership issue of access routes onto the site?
- Why are MEDS areas larger than existing building footprints?
- Is there access to Area B from Cheshire East?
- Will there be an option for adjoining residents to buy land adjacent to their properties?
- How will the Council prevent the green space from becoming overgrown and unable to be used even for recreational use?
- What have other councils done with other similar sites?