



Edition 2. February 2011

Events concerning the airfield are moving at a rapid pace. Two recent public meetings attracted very high attendances reflecting the degree of concern or interest, not only in the Woodford area but also in the surrounding communities such as Poynton and Adlington. The questions raised at these meetings reflected the residents' concerns. Should the development of the airfield be primarily concerned with [Jobs or Houses?](#) Should development take place before the necessary [Transport Infrastructure](#) is in place? These questions are coming to the fore at a unique time, a time when the coalition Government's *Localism Bill* is promising to give real power to neighbourhood groups and local communities so as to enable them to decide for themselves exactly how their community should develop. Is this [People Power](#) a mirage or a reality? The coming 6 to 12 months may well show whether the government's bill is man or mouse. The nation's media may well come to see the development of Woodford airfield as a test case which will set the standard for all such future developments. We need to be ready for the challenge!

As usual you may jump immediately to any topic that is of particular interest by using **Ctrl & click** on any underlined item. Also as usual, we have a [What's on in Woodford](#) section, to keep you informed of the local scene.

The circulation of this newsletter has quadrupled since the initial edition. We welcome all new readers, particularly those from the adjoining communities. Many thanks to all who have helped to spread the word. If somebody has forwarded this newsletter to you, and you wish to continue to receive future editions, then please send a simple request to newsletter@woodfordcommunity.co.uk

JOBS OR HOUSES?

The end of aviation – can new industries be attracted to Woodford?

A meeting was held on January 27th at Woodford Community Centre in which Paul Lawrence*, SMBC's Director of Regeneration, gave the preliminary (and provisional) findings concerning the airfield development. These findings included:-

- a) Large scale industrial activity is unlikely to be restored to the site
- b) Aviation activities are likely to cease completely
- c) There will be an emphasis on "family housing" consisting of mixed housing types and tenures.
- d) The south site (area B) is likely to be returned to green belt with area A (the factory) being enlarged.

If you are interested, the slides from Paul Lawrence's presentation may be seen [here](#).

* Paul Lawrence has recently changed his name from Paul Rubinstein

BBC pictures show the demise of Nimrod



A symbol of the end of aviation at Woodford

Woodford residents' ideas for jobs.

In the Q&A session at the Jan 27th meeting, dismay was expressed at the prospect of so few jobs being brought to the Woodford site to replace the hundreds being made redundant by BAE. One speaker in particular stressed the need for improved transport facilities in the form of the SEMMMS bypass in order to attract new industries to the site, and was warmly applauded for emphasising to the assembled councillors and SMBC officials that every effort should be made to attract new jobs.

The SEMMMS bypass could attract industries to the site

Despite encouragement from this newsletter, ideas flowing in from the community as to what can be done with the airfield have been few and far between. It is in this context that Judith Craig of Chester Road should be commended, for she was the very first

Woodford resident to pop her head above the parapet. She asks “*Would this not be a golden opportunity for medical centres of excellence*”. She states that other hospitals are cramped and overcrowded, and that [after completion of the SEMMMS bypass] the new medical centres “*would be in the middle of the country right next to Manchester airport and excellent motorway links*”.

Another resident, management consultant Sue Shierson attended the Jan 27th meeting and was “*particularly drawn to the questioner who asked about the prospects of attracting industries to the site so that jobs rather than just houses can be created in this area*”. She calls for a campaign to attract jobs and is “willing to join with any others who are interested”. Yet another resident (Lawrence Hancock) wrote to say “We don't want just housing on the BAE site” and stated further that “*Getting funding to build the SEMMMS Relief Road A6 to the Airport should make the site much more attractive to light industry*”.

For the full text of the emails from Judith, Sue and Lawrence click [here](#).



Could the site be used for “medical centres of excellence”?

Do we need to mount a campaign for jobs?

400, 900, 1200 or 1600 new houses for the centre of Woodford – can we cope?

There has been much talk about the number of houses that will be coming to Woodford. Some mention a range of 400 to 900, but Paul Syms (chair of Adlington Parish Plan Implementation Group) warned recently that the actual figure might be far higher. Some 103 acres (out of a total of approximately 500 acres) are available for redevelopment and SMBC's preliminary findings have stated that the bulk of this redevelopment is likely to be residential. Planning guidelines introduced under the last Labour government initially encouraged development at densities as high as 20 per acre, although this was later reduced to a minimum of 12 per acre (or 30 per hectare). This reduced minimum would result in 1200+ extra houses for Woodford if the whole development was devoted to housing. The coalition government has since scrapped the housing density guidelines, but it is natural for a developer to aim to achieve high densities so as to maximise profits. Can Woodford cope with several thousand extra residents? This inevitably raises the question of congestion and the need for greatly improved transport facilities (see [below](#)).



New housing in Woodford could lead to congestion in the surrounding communities.

Affordable housing – the ruin of Woodford or a lifeline to young families in our community?

Affordable housing is one topic which is sure to inflame passions in the coming debate about the airfield development. To one camp, it will destroy local house prices and lead to the area being overrun by jobs. To the other camp, house prices are way beyond the reach of our young families, and “key workers” such as nurses or teachers need all the help they can get. To help the debate, here are a few facts. [Note- for the really dedicated a more complete picture is given at the SMBC website [here\(2003\)](#) or [here\(2008\)](#).]

- *affordable housing* is subsidised for those “people who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market”.
- the 2007-8 affordable price of (say) a 3 bedroom house was set at £67,032. Weekly rent was set at £90.75
- affordable housing “*remains affordable for ever*” i.e. occupants vacating a house will sell it back to the social sector at the prevailing affordable price
- affordable housing may be purchased or rented (or some combination of the two). Ownership may be shared.
- SMBC seemed (in 2003) to have a target of 25% of any major housing development being affordable. This target seems to have been raised subsequently to 35%.
- Any developer is expected to take the affordable housing provision into account when purchasing a site.
- The latest thinking is that best results are achieved if social and market housing are fully integrated i.e. mixed
- SMBC's policy “allows for the possibility of reducing or removing the affordable housing content if the provision of affordable housing would prejudice the realisation of other planning objectives that need to be given priority”.

It is perhaps this last point which highlights the difficulties of the choices ahead of us. Do we choose maximum density of social housing (with attendant problems of congestion) in order to help key workers, or do we insist that the developers make a large contribution to transport infrastructure (see below), and so have

to cut back on affordable housing?

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Congestion - is the SEMMMS bypass essential before development can take place?

A key finding of SMBC's consultation with local residents (summarised in June 2010 [here](#)) was that new housing in Woodford should be "at densities compatible with existing housing" and should not "exceed a total of 500 dwellings" with this dependent upon "infrastructure in the area being improved, with the completion of the SEMMMS relief road considered essential by some". If all new development is to be concentrated around the centre of Woodford then considerable strain will be placed upon existing roads, which many will find unacceptable. There was agreement between councillors of all parties that the SEMMMS road is needed and efforts are currently being made to reach agreement with the government as to how this road could be funded.

Congestion



Councillors of all parties agreed on the need for the SEMMMS bypass

A bypass for Poynton?

Poynton is one place which can certainly be considered a bottleneck and which would become even more congested with additional housing in the area. At meetings which took place in both Woodford and Adlington, Poynton and Cheshire East councillors such as Roger West and Howard Murray made abundantly clear just how much they support a Poynton bypass. At the Adlington meeting (on 15th Feb) Paul Syms summarised SMBC's earlier presentation at Woodford, but also went on to make a key point, namely that any planning document relating to the airfield **must be the joint responsibility of both SMBC and Cheshire East**. Approximately 40% of the airfield lies within Adlington and Poynton.



Roger West, deputy mayor of Cheshire East, is strongly in favour of a Poynton bypass

Cycle routes, footpaths.

When one looks at the map of the Handforth bypass, it seems criminal to any sensible person as to how opportunities to use cycle routes or footpaths to link communities were wasted. A similar comment can be made about the A555 (the road from nowhere to nowhere). We now live in more enlightened times and we (the public) need to ensure that similar opportunities are not wasted. .

PEOPLE POWER – MIRAGE OR REALITY?

The Localism Bill

I've lost count of the number of times I've been told that there is nothing we can do – all will be decided by the developers, by BAE, and by the council. The fact is, however, that the Coalition Government's *Localism Bill* is currently wending its way through Parliament and, if the guide to the bill turns out to be at all accurate, the final Act will give a major boost to people power. Just read a couple of examples:-

"Neighbourhood planning will allow people to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like"

"The Localism Bill will give local people the right to suggest votes on any local issue that they think is important. Local authorities and other public bodies will be required to take the outcome into account"

If the Localism Bill means anything at all, it must mean that the public can have a major say as to how **our airfield** develops.

David Cameron and Nick Clegg "the time has come to disperse power"



You may read the **Plain English guide to the Localism Bill** [here](#)

The meeting at Woodford (Jan 27th)

The preliminary findings of the planning exercise are listed at the top of this newsletter. Paul Lawrence who gave the main presentation for SMBC said that the object of the planning exercise was to maximise value – to BAE, to SMBC, to the developers, but also to the residents (both existing and future). Key objectives included maintenance or enhancement of the environment, with much of the site being returned to open countryside. He also outlined the proposed timetable for the completion of the planning exercise, key aspects of which were:-

- March 2011 – Public engagement event 1
- April to August – analysis and development of detailed options
- September 2011 – public engagement event 2
- October 2011 onwards – production of planning document, consultation and adoption of the planning

document. (Note:- the WCC committee has since been informed that the timetable has already slipped by at least 2 months!)

The meeting at Adlington (Feb 15th)

The meeting was chaired by Alan Young, Chair of Adlington Parish Council, and included a presentation by Paul Syms, who recapped that given at Woodford, but went on to cover 3 key points, namely:-

- a) "Enquiry by design" - the planning process involving the public should start from a completely clean sheet with the general public being asked to contribute to the design process. If the design process is restricted to the planners then there is a danger that the public may accept the proposed design as a fait accompli, without fully approving it.
- b) The planning document (SPD) for the airfield must be the joint responsibility of both Stockport and Cheshire East. Paul stated "**any SPD should relate to the entire Woodford site and not just the part within Stockport**"
- c) A major objective of Cheshire East is the provision of a Poynton bypass. One possibility put forward was that of straightening the original proposed route, so that it directly crosses the redundant runway. This straighter route could produce significant savings. In addition, if site B were to be moved so as to occupy the space between the railway line at Poynton and the new bypass, then this commercial or residential development could help to pay for the Poynton bypass.

The coming 6 to 12 months will perhaps help to show whether the government's plans to give greater power to parish councils and to neighbourhood groups are a reality – or just a mirage.



The Adlington meeting called for significant changes in the planning process

Howard Murray, Poynton councillor,



Strongly supported the 3 key points made by Paul Syms.

WHAT'S ON IN WOODFORD?

The village diary may be accessed [here](#)

Woodford Cricket Club enjoy success!

One of the 10 outstanding clubs in the county!



Contact club sec Mark Walker on 07540 014957 or visit <http://woodfordcricketclub.co.uk>

Tony Grimes, a member of the local cricket club contacted the community newsletter to report that "Over the last 7 years we have seen an incredible turn around at the club, most of which comes through the Junior set up we have in place now, where we have seen 10 of our juniors players being selected for Cheshire at the various age levels. In addition to this our 2 senior Saturday teams have both won back to back promotions in 2009 and 2010.

This has obviously raised our profile within the Cheshire cricketing community and we are now seen by the Cheshire Cricket Board as one of the 10 outstanding clubs in the county."

Spring clean up for Woodford.

Woodford is a clean, attractive village on the outskirts of Manchester and on the boundary between the Cheshire plain and the Pennine hills. However, that is not to say that we do not have some problems with litter. Periodically, the WCC committee organise a "clean up Woodford" session. Able bodied volunteers are asked to turn up at the Community Centre Saturday 2nd April at 9.45am and will be given the necessary kit. On the last occasion approx 20 volunteers tackled the job



Let's keep Woodford tidy !



Spring Photo Competition

The WCC committee have decided to hold a photography competition. *Oliver's Restaurant* have very kindly agreed to donate a meal for two as the prize. The theme of your photograph should be that of "spring" and you need to submit your photo no later than 31st May this year. Details of the competition are given at www.woodfordcommunity.co.uk/competition . Selected photographs will be added to the community website. Existing photos may be seen [here](#)

Editor Frank Brown may be contacted on 0161 439 3602 or at newsletter@woodfordcommunity.co.uk

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