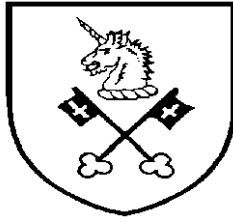


Prestbury Parish Council



**Mrs Georgina Ryder
41 Kenilworth Road
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 8PE
Tel: 01625 260362**

**Email: parish.clerk@ntlworld.com
www.prestburyparish.com**

Mr. Ian Harrison,
Regeneration Manager,
Place Directorate,
Stockport Borough Council,
Stopford House,
Stockport,
SK1 3XE.

Mr. Adrian Fisher,
Planning & Housing Director,
Places Directorate,
Cheshire East Council,
Westfields,
Sandbach,
Cheshire, CW11 1HZ.

Wednesday, June 13th, 2012

Dear Mr. Harrison and Mr. Fisher,

Initial comments by Prestbury P.C. on ‘Woodford Garden Village’ SPD consultation

At their June meeting last evening, Prestbury Parish Council discussed the ‘Woodford Garden Village’ proposals for the former British Aerospace site which were displayed at exhibitions at the end of May and which also subsequently became viewable on-line.

Prestbury Parish abuts the site and has an acute interest in its future. We made a response to the consultation that was conducted in May and early June of last year, (appended to this submission), and we had representation at the workshops that were subsequently staged at Woodford Village Hall. In addition we were obliged to issue a statement on June 15th 2011 disassociating ourselves from the stance taken by a sub group of Poynton Local Area Partnership in relation to the site. That is also appended.

In our response to the last consultation we said we favoured a mixed use development on the site (part housing, part employment and part leisure/ community uses). We felt then, and we still do, that a windfall site of this magnitude presents an ideal opportunity to create a very sustainable, holistically-designed village which could represent best practice. This is not what is currently being promoted.

The plan being canvassed is for a ‘Garden Suburb’ type housing estate and the only apparent on-site employment would be at the proposed primary school and in any shops that may be provided. A wonderful opportunity would be missed to keep out-commuting to a minimum and to create something that resembled a real community and which would integrate better with the existing community of Woodford. If the developer’s aspirations, as appear to be the case, are to fill the site almost entirely with market housing, the surrounding communities would have little reason to ever venture onto it. It would merely become yet another sprawling housing development in Green Belt with little or no connection to established communities. Even the chance of providing significant affordable housing is likely to be side-stepped if at all possible. At the recent exhibition, answers to direct questions about the percentage of affordable housing envisaged were met

with references to 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levies. Clearly the developer has in mind providing as few affordable homes as it is possible to get away with.

Planning Policy

Prestbury Parish Council are aware that the Stockport MBC LDF Core Strategy was adopted in April 2011, a year prior to the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework on March 27th this year, and Cheshire East Council are still working towards their Local Plan.

The joint Stockport/Cheshire East Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) proposed for the former BAe site at Woodford will have to comply with the NPPF as well as with the extant Stockport Local Plan and the saved policies from the Macclesfield Local Plan.

The 'Planning Policy' paper published as part of this consultation makes the following claim:

“The Framework [ie. the NPPF] supports the redevelopment of previously developed sites within the Green Belt such as Woodford Aerodrome. It does not now restrict the redevelopment to defined Major Existing Developed Area boundaries and introduces a more flexible policy position. The MEDS approach in relation to Woodford Aerodrome is to be reviewed by SMBC as part of the preparation of the Allocations DPD with a new boundary based on the SPD masterplan.

The current MEDS [Major Existing Development Sites] boundaries for Woodford Aerodrome were established through the development plan process. The evidence base for the SPD will test the impact on openness of a specific development form based on robust landscape assessment which goes beyond the work undertaken for the UDP and Core Strategy”.

The developer appears to be remarkably confident about what will happen through the SPD process and the priority that will be given to 'openness'. However, important as 'openness' can be, it is not a priority in the NPPF. The key over-arching NPPF requirement is: 'Achieving sustainable development'. And there are three dimensions to sustainable development:

- *“**an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation and by identifying and co-ordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure*
- ***a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and by creating a high quality built environment with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well being and*
- ***an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy”.* (Para. 7, our underlining)

The ‘development requirements’ of those who attended last year’s workshops was for a mixed use development with health, social and cultural needs provided on site both for the occupants of any new housing and for the existing community. As for ‘moving to a low carbon economy’, how would the development currently being canvassed achieve this?

The NPPF goes on:

“Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life, including (but not limited to):

- *making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages*
- *moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature*
- *replacing poor design with better design*
- *improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure and*
- *widening the choice of high quality homes”*. (Para. 9)

Apart from the temporary construction jobs that would be created, where is there an opportunity for long term jobs - other than a tiny handful in education and retail sales? How does the proposed development produce a ‘net gain for nature’? Where is the imaginative design? The visualisation of the developed site shows remarkable standardisation and lack of imagination in design in terms of the properties delivered. Where does the design cater for the extant residents of Woodford and adjoining communities? (There appears to be one playing field on this massive site). How much real choice is offered in the range of homes envisaged? Would they create a balanced and normal community - or an enclave all of its own? Based on the exhibition and the website, we have major concerns about the likelihood of the developer meeting these NPPF requirements.

As far as Stockport and Cheshire East Unitary Authorities are concerned, the NPPF says:

“local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area” (Para. 14) and

“always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings” (Para. 17, our underlining) and

“promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship” (Para. 28, our underlining) and

“Planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities” (Para. 37, our underling)

This massive site has the potential to provide so much for both authorities – notably a wide variety of homes plus some employment, open space, leisure and cultural facilities for the entire area, as well as some well-managed ‘natural’ areas. We are well aware that Woodford is fortunate in already having a vibrant multi-use community centre, but it is frequently booked up. Even if the new development could not stretch to another dedicated facility, perhaps the primary school could be designed in such a way as to offer meeting and social facilities outside school hours? We do not accept the developer’s assertion that a medical centre is not required on the site and we would question why the primary school is located away from the playing field area (?)

Landscape, Design & Vistas

Much is made in the promotional material of sight lines from distant points and the need to keep the new development low-lying in its entirety. We would make the point that communities which have evolved over time usually comprise buildings of varying heights. In traditional villages, a church is often the highest building and/or a clock tower. A large development such as this needs some special feature buildings and varying densities as is the norm in surrounding communities. The visualisation provided is notable for its sameness not only in style and height but in density.

One feature which could be considered is the provision of a duck pond on the flood plain part of the site. This would serve the dual purpose of helping to drain the site and providing a wildlife feature.

Above all, however, we must emphasise that the ‘garden-style’ development proposed bears little or no relationship to adjoining areas of Stockport or Cheshire East.

Transport and Travel

We note the frequent references in the promotional material to the SEMMMS roads (which this Parish Council has never endorsed) but none to ensuring that at least some of the roads within the site would be designed to a sufficient width to accommodate a bus service. This should be a requirement of the SPD if the site is to be sustainable. The impression given is that access into and out of and around the site would be by car and the site itself is seen as a commuter development. This is not how it should be thought of or planned.

Conclusion

Prestbury Parish Council urge the two principal authorities to set high layout, design and environmental standards for the former British Aerospace site and to ensure that it delivers much more than market housing with few variations in design and density. There should be a requirement for an adequate number of affordable homes and for the inclusion of an employment area, more playing fields and community facilities. Also for the settlement pattern and building designs to blend much better with surrounding communities than would appear to be the case from the visualisation. The two planning authorities should demand features that would help ensure the development is as self-sustaining as possible and more likely to deliver compliance with the Climate Change Act. It would be entirely inappropriate to permit the creation of something which resembled a sprawling new town and which did not allow for public transport to circumnavigate it. The present design would be entirely out of keeping with this part of South East Stockport/ North East of EastCheshire.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR DICKEN
Chairman