

Meeting of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

held in the Large Hall Woodford Community Centre

at 7:30 pm on Monday 2nd December 2013

Please note that these minutes reflect information available at the time which in some cases is now out of date. See WCC Newsletter for more up to date information on Harrow planning applications.

Present:

Mr Stephen Taylor (SJT), Terry Barnes (TB), Mr Roger Burton (RBU), Ms Jane Sandover (JS), Mr Robin Brammar (RB), Mr Ron Beatham (RBe), Mr Paul Goodman (PG), Mr Colin Griffin (CG), Mrs Dorothy Chesterman, Ms Evelyn Frearson (EF), Mr Paul Rodman (PR), Mrs Maxine Wood (MW)

Welcome:

SJT chaired the meeting and welcomed those present.

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Bryan Leck (BL), Mr Robin Berriman (RBB), Mr David Buszard (DB), Mrs Helen Buszard (HB), Mr Alan Bramwell (AB).

Minutes from previous meetings

Minutes from the meeting on 21st Sep approved.

Minutes from the special meeting on 28th Sep to discuss the joint Poynton/Adlington/Woodford plan had been prepared but were awaiting electronic copy of the slides presented by JK.

Matters Arising:

1. Adlington and Poynton NFs

SJT informed the group that Adlington NF no longer wished to pursue the joint plan idea. Each group will have a sub-committee with non-forum members on it.

SJT proposed that there is a reciprocal arrangement with one member of each committee sitting on the neighbouring committees. This was seconded by RBe and unanimously agreed by those present.

2. Exclusion of Aerodrome site from Neighbourhood Area

PG noted that the High Court Judge had ruled against the NF but given them leave to appeal. If the appeal is rejected, the only recourse to the NF is a JR.

SJT has informed the Daws Hill NF of the Woodford exclusion scenario.

SJT has sent an email to a contact in the DCLG (Dept Communities and Local Government) as a potential route to the Sec of State.

It was agreed that, as other forums have experienced rejection of area applications, there would be value in exchange of information.

ACTION: JS volunteered to explore this via Linked-In and maybe set up an email alert system.

3. Status of NFs as consultees

SJT reported that he had discovered that NFs are not statutory consultees in local planning matters and followed up this issue with Mark Hunter, requesting that the law should be changed in this regard.

4. Funds

No suitable home for the grant money has been identified to date. The organisation has to be a company or incorporated charity. WNF has also applied for an Indirect Support Grant. No money will be available until Feb 2014.

It was agreed that £500 of funds could be used before committee approval was needed.

ACTION: RBU to explore options for a bank account for WNF funds.

5. WNF response to CEC Local Plan consultation

A letter containing objections to the proposal North Cheshire Growth Village at Handforth had been circulated via email around the group. The points were supported by the group. PG had advised that poor justification for use of Green Belt should be the primary objection put forward by WNF. He noted that other landowners could have put forward more suitable sites. The Duty to Co-operate with neighbouring authorities was the second important reason for objection. Other objections included effects on traffic congestion, excess housing for the specific needs of Handforth and failure to take account of large new development nearby in Woodford. The letter was approved for submission by the deadline of 16th December 2013 (see appendix 1).

6. WNF response to SEMMMS PA consultation

A letter had been drafted and circulated and was discussed at the meeting. The points were agreed with adjustment to the order of presentation as follows: WNF supports the PA provided that: the "Western" and "Eastern" sections are opened simultaneously, the Poynton Bypass is built coinciding with SEMMMS, adequate measures are taken to ensure that residents experience minimum disruption, noise and air pollution are continuously monitored, consideration is given to Ancient Woodlands, it will eventually connect through to the M60, as this intermediate stage potentially moves the bottle neck to the A6, and an individual liaison officer is designated to work with each of the communities affected (see appendix 2).

7. WNF response to Harrow PA for aerodrome site

PG reported that two PAs have been presented:

a. To CEC, comprising 74 reports 68 of which are about environmental issues.

b. To SMBC, the only one currently registered is the EIA which includes traffic analysis.

PG noted that the PA from Harrow is a competent piece of work giving. Details are given for the r.a.b. and village green. The rest is vague. The phasing requires that 250 houses are built and sold per year. Harrow have challenged SMBC's calculations on affordable housing, suggesting a total of 25% with 10% off-site and 15% on-site. Thresholds had been raised to 450 houses before a primary school is built, which is likely to be in year 5. Phase 1 will include r.a.b., village green and 145 houses.

The PA for demolition and the PA for Phase 1 have to be presented simultaneously and demolition cannot begin until both have been approved.

It is likely that an interim planning committee will be set up to cover the period of purdah before the local elections and will determine the Harrow PA.

The issues for Woodford were discussed by the group.

ACTION: PR to contact Emma curl to enquire about timing of road modification application.

ACTION: SJT to send WNF response expressing surprise, as we thought demolition application could only be determined when the redevelopment application is determined.

8. WNF questionnaire

SJT reported that questionnaires for residents and businesses had been drafted based on the one for Much Wenlock NF and modified to suit Woodford.

PG volunteered to look through the draft and make necessary amendments so that questions tackled one issues each and answers would be easy to interpret.

9. WNF Consultation process

The need to plan who and how we consult was discussed.

ACTION: TB volunteered to explore ideas for methods of conducting the required consultation of schools, medical facilities, and businesses (including Harrow).

ACTION: SJT and PR to try to obtain the results of Harrow's questionnaire following their exhibition, and to obtain list of consultees from Richard Wood of SMBC.

10. New members of WNF

SJT had drafted and circulated a welcome letter for new members who signed up at the WCC AGM in November. This was approved for issuing (see appendix 3).

11. WCC update

PR reported that the Rev David Russell and Mr McWirter were now members of the WCC.

Next Meeting

Mon 6th January, 7:30 pm, Large Hall, Community Centre.

Evelyn Frearson
31st December 2013

Appendices on following pages.

Appendix 1.

The Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Response to the Cheshire East Local Plan Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document Consultation.

With regard to the Cheshire East Local Plan, as neighbours of Handforth, we address our comments in this representation to aspects relating specifically to the proposal for a North Cheshire Growth Village in Handforth East, adjacent to our Neighbourhood Area.

In 2012, Cheshire East Council estimated that Handforth would require up to 600 new homes between 2010 and 2030. The currently proposed housing development is far in excess of this and beyond any needs of the residents of Handforth itself. The purpose of such a large scale development would be to serve the needs of other communities.

Even if we accept the validity of figures produced, it is noted that in excess of 100 homes have either already been built or have received planning permission, bringing the number now required down to less than 500. This in fact is broadly in line with the original Issues and Options paper. The number required is subject to further reduction since sites adjacent to Handforth Hall have been given permissions recently, amounting to 295 additional dwellings.

The Green Belt land which would be taken up to achieve this is critical to the well-being of the existing residents of Handforth, residents in Woodford and other neighbouring parishes, and even the wider community. It comprises the first and only significant remaining open space provision along the A34 corridor preventing the Urban Sprawl of the Greater Manchester conurbation, lying as it does on extreme Northern boundary of Cheshire East.

To develop on Green Belt there must be evidence and justification that removal of such status is required to deliver core policies. There is no unique justification for this action and alternative locations for development exist. Green Belt covered by the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework does not appear to have been considered with due diligence. It would appear that neither of the conditions under section 89 or 90 are satisfied whilst section 80 part one is simply ignored. Additionally, it neither protects farmland and wild areas between Handforth, Woodford and Cheadle Hulme from urban encroachment, nor assists urban regeneration by encouraging use of existing brownfield sites.

The opportunity to consider Green Belt swap cannot be realistically considered. There are no alternative equivalent areas within Handforth from which the residents may benefit, and alternative proposals would prohibit consideration on accessibility or distance grounds. Removal of Green Belt status for development would be detrimental to local residents and may be deemed inconsistent with the Cheshire East strategy for the well-being of the community, namely the increased provision of green infrastructure as set out in their Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Paper October 2010.

It is recognised that Handforth and indeed Cheshire East have a need for affordable housing, and not least Social Rented Housing, however this should be addressed by inclusion within the overall Core Strategy. Indeed this would better integrate communities and be consistent with sound planning principles. Region specific determinations may then consider policy requirements, since options could still exist for either a higher proportion, or indeed the consideration of off-site locations, which may better suit local needs and sustainability. This would not require additional housing, merely housing which matches the requirements of local communities.

The proposed North Cheshire Growth Village at Handforth East has not been incorporated in plans for new roads. It was not subject to consideration as part of the SEMMMS (now entitled the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road) road scheme. Considerable modelling has been carried out for that road and the current planning application is commensurate with it. It is clear therefore that irrespective of any mitigation, a development as indicated cannot be sustained by the current highways proposals. Access would be onto the A34 adjacent to its junction with the A555. The A34 itself is a heavily congested and arterial route from Greater Manchester, comprising traffic lights and roundabouts adjacent to the egress of the site. It is clear that this is the only acceptable access to the site yet it could not support the traffic generated by such a large development. Furthermore, despite the statement by Cheshire East Council that their Air Quality Strategy will form one of six daughter documents of the Local Transport Plan and will be fully integrated with the Local Development Framework, inadequate provision has been made either to assess the current situation or predict levels after any development proposals.

The duty to cooperate is a legal test that requires cooperation between local planning authorities and other public bodies to maximise the effectiveness of policies for strategic matters in Local Plans. Compliance with the "duty to co-operate" contained in the Localism Act is the responsibility for local authorities and it must be met at the plan-making stage; it cannot be rectified when a local plan has been submitted for examination. A development in Handforth could be significantly affected by proposals at the Aerodrome site in neighbouring Woodford, which is for some 850 or more homes, and vice versa. Although they are cross authority developments, in view of the close proximity of that site, validation of further additional housing numbers within such a limited and common catchment area would require significant justification which does not appear to have been effected. Whilst it is recognised that there have been meetings with representatives from Greater Manchester and Stockport MBC, it is not considered that these have been meaningful, complete, or significant. Furthermore, there has been no relevant formal liaison with or inclusion of neighbouring communities, such as Woodford, Cheadle Hulme and Bramhall, who would be significantly impacted by the CEC Local Plan. On this basis it is considered that the Cheshire East fails the duty to cooperate "test".

In conclusion, we would state that, although not limited to the above reasons, the Cheshire East Local Plan as proposed is neither compliant with, nor does it address legislative requirements, and should not proceed to adoption.

Appendix 2.

Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Response to SEMMMS (A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road) Planning Application

As is likely to be the case in all matters such as this, it is fair to say that not all residents are entirely in favour of the proposals, however we have endeavoured to address a number of the concerns and would like to write broadly in support of the SEMMMS (A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road) planning application as submitted, and this representation should be considered constructively.

We consider it important to highlight some of the issues which we request are adequately addressed throughout all the stages, including the planning conditions, construction, and final operation of such a major road.

The “Western” and “Eastern” sections should be opened simultaneously. Opening one section and then another at a different time would have a serious and detrimental impact upon communities at the uncompleted end. This is of particular concern to residents of Woodford who would otherwise experience even more additional significant traffic generation along Woodford Road, and not least could endanger children travelling to Queensgate Primary School.

Adequate measures and mitigation must be taken to ensure that residents experience minimum disruption, particularly regarding pressure on existing highways and environmental impact.

Noise and air pollution should be continuously monitored both during and after construction. Appropriate safeguards should be put in place.

Consideration should be given to Ancient Woodlands, which are protected by the NPPF, during planning and construction.

Our support is additionally qualified by the statement made by Mark Hunter (MP) at the Woodford Community Council AGM that government finance for this project is based on the premise that it will eventually connect through to the M60, as this intermediate stage merely moves the bottle neck to the A6, which is an already congested road.

It would be extremely advantageous and efficient to have an individual liaison officer designated to work with each of the communities affected during construction. Regular meetings should be held with them whereby progress updates could be provided and indeed any problems incurred could also be raised.

Although not part of this consultation, a marker should be put down that the Poynton Bypass be built coinciding with SEMMMS, otherwise Poynton, and in particular Clifford Road, will become gridlocked. Additionally, without the bypass it could further exacerbate traffic seeking alternative access both to and from the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief road through Woodford.

Appendix 3.

Welcome to the Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

Welcome to all those new members who signed up at the Woodford Community Council AGM and thank you to existing members for your continued support. Hopefully, now that we have got the ball rolling, more will be encouraged to join. This is just a brief update on some of the ongoing activities.

One of the first tasks a Forum has to undertake is a questionnaire for all residents and businesses to complete in order to establish the vision and priorities for neighbourhood planning in Woodford. We are in the process of writing our questionnaire and aim to issue it early Spring in the New Year. We are avoiding asking people to complete them over Christmas, and there is still quite a lot of work to do on it to ensure compliance with legislation which may take some time. We intend to have the document “vetted” by professionals to endeavour that it is correct and covers the requirements of a subsequent independent inspector.

A sub-group is now reviewing how best to action consultation and responses from individuals, businesses, schools and other organisations.

We have now sent our response to the Cheshire East Local Plan with particular reference to the proposed development at Handforth. It was clear at the AGM that both Green Belt and highways were of considerable concern but we are addressing other issues as well. It was presented for approval to the management committee and submitted before the deadline. We are now registered as an interested party with Cheshire East and included on their consultation database, as we are on the Stockport MBC one.

We have submitted a response to the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road planning application. Those present at the AGM will concur that there was general approval for support for this, but we also recognise that not all residents are in favour of the proposals and endeavoured to address concerns in our submission. The recent attendance at a PAULA (Poynton against unnecessary link-roads to the Airport) meeting proved valuable as they raised a number of issues, such as noise and air pollution and consideration of ancient woodlands. Whilst supporting the application, it does no harm to remind the councils of these and other concerns in order that they may be mitigated both during construction and once completed.

Stockport MBC has now registered two BAE site planning applications, however they are for the demolition of the buildings and formation and construction of two accesses from Chester Road. We are reviewing these, but still await the main planning application for the development proper. Cheshire East have also received an application for partial removal of the runway, regrading, footpath and cycle links, naturalisation of the culverted watercourse, and restoration and landscaping work. Again we are considering our response.

Not least as part of the questionnaire process we will be contacting the developers and hope that a co-operative and mutually beneficial relationship can be established. We will hopefully also have the opportunity to discuss their longer term plans and the implications for Woodford.

Adlington Parish Council has set up a sub-committee to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. We have agreed to co-opt a representative from them, and Poynton should they take a similar approach, in a reciprocal arrangement, not merely to best satisfy the requirement of a “duty to co-operate” but also to share and consider the implications of one plan on another. This will mean that a cohesive approach can be taken and plans may mesh together well.

A letter has been written to Mark Hunter MP and Tom Walker, the Deputy Director for Decentralisation and Neighbourhood Planning at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) – what a title – garnering support for inclusion of the BAE site in our Neighbourhood Area and a steer into the most effective way forward.

Thanks for reading and best wishes from

The Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee.