



Comments on the draft Woodford Aerodrome Opportunity Site SPD issued by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Summary

Poynton Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft SPD for the Stockport part of the Woodford site.

- There are some good aspects to the SPD, such as the requirement for the use of traditional building designs and materials which respect the existing buildings nearby. However, we are concerned that the SPD largely fails to recognise the impact a development of this size will have on Poynton and other nearby areas of Cheshire East
- **Traffic:** The impact of traffic will be significant. The most convenient route to Macclesfield, Congleton and other areas to the south and east will be through the centre of Poynton, or along Poynton's Woodford Road (this links Chester Road in Poynton with Chester Road in Hazel Grove, so is not the Woodford Road in Bramhall). If the development commences before the A555 SEMMMS road is open, this will include traffic for Hazel Grove, Marple, southern Stockport, Tameside and eastern England.
- **Traffic Modelling:** This must be done in collaboration with Cheshire East and Poynton Town Councillors, and include the impact on roads in Poynton and elsewhere in Cheshire East.
- **A555:** The SPD appears to assume that construction of the A555 SEMMMS road (A6 to Manchester Airport) will resolve any traffic issues. This ignores the fact that the site is half a mile from the junction with the A555, along a residential street (Woodford Road).
- **Poynton Bypass:** Poynton Town Council rejects totally the assertion that construction of a Poynton Bypass is not an essential part of any redevelopment of this site. Apart from preventing traffic from the site causing gridlock in Poynton, a Bypass could also allow direct access from the site to the A555, so reducing traffic on Woodford Road.
- **Public Transport:** Current bus services in the area are minimal and of limited use for commuters. Cheshire East may withdraw subsidies soon from the existing services within Poynton. More generally, the roads and junctions in Poynton are simply incapable of carrying any extra traffic. Any assumptions that residents of this site will mostly use public transport are at best optimistic.
- **Objectives:** We are concerned that the requirement of the Stockport Core Strategy for mixed housing and employment uses has been abandoned in favour of exclusive

housing use. No real evidence has been advanced to justify this change, which also conflicts with public statements by the owners when they bought the site.

- **Contamination and Flooding:** We remain concerned at the impact on Poynton Brook, both as regards water run-off from the site and the possibility of pollution during demolition and redevelopment. The part of Poynton Brook near the eastern edge of the site is recognised as a Flood Risk area by the Environment Agency. Noise and dust are other concerns, in view of the open nature of the site and the prevailing south westerly wind.

Exclusions

The SPD simply fails to mention a number of important issues.

- No reference is made to secondary education. Poynton High School already attracts a significant number of pupils from Stockport, and there is no reason to think that Woodford will be any different. Most such pupils will travel by car (there is no bus at this time), so increasing traffic in Poynton on Chester Road, Clifford Road, London Road and Dickens Lane.
- Medical facilities are also ignored. Again, many residents will travel to Poynton to use the doctors and dentists here.
- Although development may increase usage of Poynton shops, the extra pressure on roads and car parking will be significant.

Detailed Comments

Comments below refer to the paragraph numbers in the draft SPD:

2.24 The reference to the planning permission granted in 2002 for a new hangar building and a test run area, with a new road from an access point through Adlington Industrial Estate should make clear that this planning consent has now expired.

3.11 This section should make clear that the UDP requires that redevelopment of the site should generally not occupy a larger area of the site than existing buildings within the MEDS.

3.14 Poynton Town Council supports the principle of consolidating the two MEDS areas, providing that:

- i. This is done at the northern part of the site (i.e. by retaining MEDS A in its current location), and
- ii. Any development should not occupy a greater area than existing buildings

3.23 Poynton Town Council reiterates that completion of both the A6 to Manchester Airport (SEMMMS) road and the A523 Poynton Bypass are essential preconditions for any development on the site.

3.40 and 3.41 The SPD should note that Poynton Brook, near the eastern boundary of the site, is recognised as a Flood Risk area by the Environment Agency. Any increase in water run-off caused by development of the site may aggravate this situation. The fact that the site slopes gently from west to east (see paragraph 4.3) will lead to run-off flowing into Poynton Brook.

3.42 Removal of the runways and aircraft taxi areas will generate a significant amount of waste. This should be reused on site to avoid numerous HGV trips to remove it elsewhere.

4.11 The various emergency access points to the site are no longer required and should be closed off permanently.

4.12 The statement that the site “is close to the A555” is misleading – it is about half a mile from the site gates on Chester Road, then along Woodford Road (A5102) until the junction with the A555 (SEMMMS) road. These roads are lined by houses and are unsuitable for heavy traffic. The roundabout where the A5159 meets the A5102 (by Southfield House) is often heavily congested.

4.12 The journey along the A34 to the M60 is frequently heavily congested, with traffic jams often stretching back more than a mile along the A34 (past John Lewis). The M62 and M6 are amongst the busiest motorways in Britain.

4.12 It is notable that this paragraph makes no reference to the fact that access from the site to Macclesfield, Hazel Grove, Tameside, Sheffield and other destinations to the east and south is along Chester Road (A5149) to the junction with London Road (A523) at Fountain Place, Poynton. Chester Road is a residential street (with a narrow railway bridge) that cannot cope with existing levels of traffic. Fountain Place is the busiest junction in Cheshire East and is already used far beyond capacity.

Figure 4.2 This map is seriously misleading as regards the numerous bus stops shown along Chester Road. The only service to run from Woodford via Stockport to Poynton, the 390, has just two buses to Stockport and three to Woodford. These are all in the mid morning and early afternoon, and so are useless for anyone commuting to work or school. There is no Sunday service. All subsidised bus services in Poynton and Adlington (the 108, 390, 391 and 392) are under review by Cheshire East Council and may be withdrawn in the near future. Poynton Railway Station lacks additional car parking space, and the existing car park is often at capacity.

4.13 While the Woodford Aerodrome site has historically been a major employer, when the workforce was at its highest (1940's / 1950's), few staff had private cars and most used public transport or cycled or walked to and from work. There have been relatively few employees on the site for at least ten years.

4.14 Have Stockport Council audited the traffic movement data provided by BAE Systems? Are the figures comparable with those submitted as part of the planning application submitted in 2002 for a new hangar building and a test run area?

4.16 Note comments above on paragraph 4.12. The A555 is at least half a mile from the entrance to the site. It will not divert traffic to Macclesfield and many areas to the south east from the highly congested route through Poynton.

4.17 The A555 scheme will only partially bypass Poynton. If built without the A523 Poynton Bypass, it is likely to increase traffic through the centre of Poynton.

4.18 The route from the site along Woodford Road to the A555 is unattractive to cyclists, due to narrowness, bends and frequent access points to drives.

4.19 The SPD should make clear that any redevelopment of the site is conditional on prior construction of the A555 and A523 Poynton Bypass schemes.

4.20 Poynton Town Council disagrees in the strongest terms with the statement that *“The absence of the Poynton Relief Road is not a material factor in the delivery of the redevelopment of the site.”* No evidence is advanced to support this odd assertion by Stockport Council.

4.21 The SPD should not proceed until more detailed traffic modelling has been completed to identify significant highway impacts. This should be an essential part of the SDP planning process.

Figure 4.3 The map omits Poynton Baptist Church and the Poynton Christian Fellowship, both on Park Lane. The Leisure Centre by Poynton High School is also not shown.

4.23 Traffic levels on the main roads within Poynton may deter cyclists. This will be aggravated by increased traffic levels from any development at Woodford.

4.25 Note earlier comments that the 390 bus runs in midmorning and early afternoon, so is useless for anyone seeking to commute to work or school.

4.27 It is wholly inadequate to say “consideration must be given” to extra bus services. This should be a condition of any development, to be funded by the developers.

4.28 Train services from Poynton are often poor. The fact that the GMPTE border results in higher fares from Poynton leads some local people to drive to Bramhall or Hazel Grove to catch the train.

4.29 Current parking facilities at Poynton will be inadequate to accommodate any increased usage.

4.31 This paragraph should make clear that the Woodford site is clearly visible from the western edge of the Peak District National Park.

4.36 The wildlife habitat adjacent to Poynton Brook could be adversely affected by run-off following redevelopment of the site.

4.39 Poynton Town Council supports the preservation of the heritage assets on the site.

4.44 Remedial work must be conducted in such a way as to prevent any contamination of nearby land and watercourses. The fact that the site slopes from west to east increases the risk of contamination of Poynton Brook, especially by liquid pollutants.

4.48 The flat and open nature of the site will increase the distance sound can travel, so leading to a wider area being affected by noise and vibration. Any planning consent must include strict controls on hours of construction work.

4.50 Again, the fact that the site is flat and open increases the risk that the prevailing south westerly wind may blow dust from demolition or construction work across Poynton. The impact on air quality of traffic from the site, both during and after construction, is a major concern. Poynton also suffers from elevated levels of oxides of Nitrogen (NOx) on London Road South (A523). Increased traffic levels will only worsen this.

4.51 See comments above regarding the effect of increased run-off on Poynton Brook, a recognised flood risk area.

4.53 This sentence is wholly inadequate. Adequate community facilities are essential, and the SPD must go into much greater detail on this point.

4.54 The Inspector's Report into the Stockport Core Strategy clearly favoured a mix of employment and residential development.

4.56 Is there any independent evidence to support the assertions in this section? Reuse of the existing buildings would avoid demolition and so be "sustainable". The site owners made public statements about using part of the site as film studios and for equestrian purposes – have these been followed up?

4.57 This preference for substantially residential development goes against the Inspector's report into the Core Strategy.

4.58 It is hard to see how a major residential development will "enhance the openness of the Green Belt".

Table 5.1 – SPD Objectives

Vision: It is hard to see how a development right on the edge of Stockport and the Greater Manchester conurbation can avoid the extensive use of private cars. There are no shops, medical facilities, secondary schools, railway stations or workplaces within easy walking distance of the site. How such a development can ever be classed as "sustainable"?

Development Objectives: Use of private cars is likely to be extensive. In practice, such developments usually provide speculative housing based on the standard designs that builders use across the country.

Design Principles: Again, actually ensuring these apply in practice will not be straight forward.

5.3 There may be a lack of compatibility between the "high quality aspirational housing" and the affordable housing, particularly if this is social housing for rent.

5.3 There is no real evidence that house building stimulates the economy. In countries such as Ireland and Spain, excessive house building has contributed to economic collapse.

5.6 Carbon targets should take into account that generated by residents travelling to and from the site by car.

5.8 The height of proposed buildings should be measured to their highest point.

Figure 5.1 The area zoned for housing appears to be significantly larger than the two MEDS areas combined, especially since the part of MEDS B occupied by Oxford Avionics and the Heritage Centre should be excluded from the joint area.

5.12 The target of 950 homes is considered excessive. The Planning by Design exercise in 2011 identified a total of around 450 as appropriate for the site.

5.13 The various non-residential uses (school, shops, pub, crèche etc.) must be regarded as utilising part of the MEDS areas, and so reduce the volume of housing allowed.

5.16 and 5.17 The area occupied by Oxford Avionics and Heritage Centre (including car parking) must be deducted from the MEDS area available for housing and other development.

5.18, 5.19 and 5.20: Poynton Town Council supports the broad uses that will be allowed on the undeveloped area of the site. However, we would prefer this area to be permanently transferred to a non-profit making body that will ensure it remains undeveloped and with public access. Possible uses would include a country park, woodland or a nature reserve. A lake may help drain the site.

5.23 and 5.24 The area to be redeveloped (including that occupied by Oxford Avionics and the Heritage Centre) must not exceed the combined area of the two MEDS.

- 5.26 The width of metalled road should be regarded as a developed area in the “green streets”.
- 5.29 A children’s playground is a normal part of housing estates and so should be regarded as part of the development area.
- 5.31 The primary school should be designed to accommodate parents who bring their children to school in cars. There is no point pretending that this will not happen.
- 5.41 Removal of permitted development rights would help prevent excessive extensions from removing the “soft edge” to the border with the countryside.
- 5.56 Provision of utilities and sewerage systems must be responsibility of the developers.
- 5.59 On what basis does Stockport Council consider 2001 traffic levels an appropriate baseline year? Has the evidence submitted by BAE Systems been audited by an independent expert?
- 5.61 The SPD refers to “new community facilities” to minimise travel off the site, but does not include, for example, a secondary school, medical or dental facilities, a library and requires only basic shops.
- 5.62 It is essential that traffic flow analysis is agreed and in coordination with Cheshire East and Poynton Town Councils. The impact on roads in Poynton, including Chester Road (A5149), London Road (A523) and Clifford Road, will be significant. The Fountain Place junction is already used well beyond capacity and is the busiest in Cheshire East.
- 5.74 The footway tunnel under the railway line by Lostock Road in Poynton (adjacent to the eastern extremity of the site) is particularly unwelcoming and may deter many possible users. It should be improved at the expense of any developers.
- 5.74 It should be noted that Lostock Hall Road is totally unsuitable for motor traffic. Services from Poynton railway station are significantly more expensive than from Bramhall (in the GMPTE area).
- 5.75 Cheshire East Council is currently reviewing subsidies paid to local bus services (108, 391, 392) and these may be withdrawn or substantially reduced in the near future.
- 5.79 All houses should have at least one car parking space per bedroom.
- 5.107 The formation of one or more lakes could assist with drainage of the site and provide new wildlife habitats. One such lake could be adjacent to Poynton Brook at the eastern end of the site, and help protect against flooding.
- 6.10 The housing in Poynton closest to the site (Lostock Hall Road, Lostock Avenue, Mallard Crescent, Gull Close, Heron Drive, Chester Road, Brookfield Avenue, Arlington Close, Glenfield Drive, Woolley Avenue, Lostock Road and London Road South) date mostly from the 1930’s or 1960/70’s. They are almost all brick built, with tiled pitched roofs and no more than two storeys high (with many bungalows). Developments on the site should respect the character of these areas as well as Woodford.

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