



August 2014

## Woodford let down by Lib-Dem Councillors

Contrary to the appeal from Mark Hunter, the local Lib-Dem MP, Lib-Dem councillors have voted to recommend approval of developer Harrow's hybrid planning application (DC053832) for the development of the Woodford Aerodrome Site.

The vote at the extraordinary meeting of the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee on 29 July 2014 was carried by an extremely narrow margin – with councillors split 6 for and 6 against after 4 hours of debate and discussion. The vote went in favour of Harrow's application when Chairman Lenny Grice used his casting vote to squeeze through the recommendation.

It was only months ago that the Lib-Dems enthusiastically and unanimously voted through the Woodford SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) with a recommendation for a maximum of 750 to 850 dwellings on this site. Harrow's application for 920 houses plus the addition of a 100-unit care home, which has now been recommended for approval, is vastly in excess of this. It appears as though Harrow has treated the SPD as a 'Pick and Mix' selection box to choose whatever suited them.

Woodford residents feel let down and bitterly disappointed by SMBC Planning officers and Lib-Dem councillors, who did not take Harrow to task on this and seemed to allow the developer to make a mockery of the SPD process – possibly one of the most extensive and expensive consultation exercises ever carried out in Stockport.

Throughout the proceedings, local Councillor Brian Bagnall made a spirited and commendable appeal on behalf of Woodford residents. He drew attention to numerous issues that needed to be clarified or resolved, arguing that he did not feel that the Committee could make a responsible decision to recommend approval of the hybrid application when so much remained unclear. His proposal to reject the application was defeated when the vote split was split 6 for and 6 against. The subsequent proposal to recommend approval of the application was passed, but only after another 6 – 6 split, when the Chairman's casting vote carried the day for Harrow.

Earlier in the meeting, the two other planning applications relating to the site, concerning demolition of the existing buildings and remediation of the site (DC053833) and road changes outside the site (DC054212) were approved, although changes were made to the conditions in order to limit contractor working hours to 8.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday and 8.00 am to 1.00 pm on Saturday mornings, with no Bank Holiday working.

The actual proceedings can be viewed on Stockport Council webcast at [http://www.stockport.public-tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/139501](http://www.stockport.public-tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/139501) .

However, the final decision on Harrow's application has not yet been made. The precise outcome of the meeting was that the Council is minded to approve the application, subject to submission to the Secretary of State for consideration, since it 'may be' a departure from current green belt policy. Woodford Neighbourhood Forum will now be taking this opportunity to make representations to the Secretary of State, who may well call for a Public Enquiry to finally determine what development may or may not be permitted.

We are especially concerned that should approval be given by the Secretary of State for the change to the green belt set out in the Harrow hybrid application, it must not be used as a precedent for development on the remainder of the

Aerodrome site in Stockport and Cheshire East, particularly since we understand that Harrow now owns the whole aerodrome site.

## **Woodford Neighbourhood Forum AGM**

### **7.30 pm 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

### **At Woodford Community Centre**

The AGM is an important meeting for Woodford residents and a leaflet providing more details and information will shortly be delivered to every household.

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