MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL’S CORE STRATEGY
DPD EXAMINATION

July 2012

Matter 3 – Housing Provision

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May 2012
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Places for People own the 160 hectares of land known as Brooklands on the Eastern Expansion Area as defined by the existing Milton Keynes Local Plan, which was granted consent in August 2007 for up to 2501 dwellings, a commercial centre, hotel, school sites, public open space and associated infrastructure. The remainder of the Eastern Expansion is made up from Broughton Gate (formerly owned by JJ Gallagher) and Magna Park now solely owned by Gazeley UK Limited.

1.2 The master plan for this area was jointly prepared by Milton Keynes Council and Milton Keynes Partnerships in 2005. The adopted master plan in the form of the Milton Keynes Eastern Area Development Framework was formally adopted as document M62018 in October 2005. As defined by section 3.8 of the Framework document a legally binding equalisation agreement which was then subsumed within the overarching MK Tariff allowed for equalisation between the land owners of the entire Eastern Expansion Area. This meant the entire area could be planned comprehensively and all of its commercial, community and educational needs could be satisfied. Figure 3.8 on page 32 of this adopted document indicates where the new facilities were to be sited which included how the area was to meet its residents own educational needs by providing two new primary schools and one new 1,500 place secondary school.
2.0 THE EXISTING HOUSING AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 By mid 2012 the 1,500 home Broughton Gate development is some 90% complete and some 150 homes of the 2,501 permitted at Brooklands are occupied. To satisfy the educational demands in 2009 Brooklands Farm Primary School was opened and in 2012 permission was granted for its extension to a 420 pupil facility.

2.2 Discussions are now underway with between Milton Keynes Council and Places for People on the advanced release of the remaining allocated site for the last primary school and the secondary school (with its artificial playing pitches) for the Eastern Expansion Area. Whilst dates have yet to be finalised it is likely that both of these facilities will be opened by 2015 – which is likely to be significantly earlier than was initially envisaged by the Council or was provided for in the Section 106 Agreement. Once these educational facilities are complete then no further sites are available or are allocated to satisfy the schooling of children from the Eastern Expansion Area. Indeed, if additional capacity is required then this can only be accommodated in one of two ways, by providing temporary class rooms or bussing children out of the catchment area.

2.3 As is evidenced in Milton Keynes Council’s School Organizational Plan, the planned level of primary and secondary school provision in the eastern side of the New Town has already been planned and delivered. Indeed, both Oakgrove Secondary School and Walton High have been repeatedly extended, in order to meet parental demands so much so that with the commencement of the 1,500 additional residential units at Oakgrove this
year educational capacity for this side of the new town will be significantly exceeded by the child yield in this area.

2.4 In this context we consider that it is inappropriate to allocate further land for housing which is not capable of satisfying the educational demands it will generate. Such growth is unsustainable.
3.0 MATERIAL ISSUES

3.1 As required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) growth should be encouraged in a sustainable manner. This is welcomed and accepted as a pattern of growth by Places for People. However, in its current form the proposed allocation of SR1, SR2, SR3, SR4 and potentially the nine hole golf course between SR2 and 3 is being undertaken without due regard being given for these areas to be self sufficient in primary and secondary school educational provision. Indeed, the most recently published master plan for these combined areas implied that the only educational provision planned for these expansion areas was a single 2ha site allocated for a single primary school. This is clearly substandard as it is inappropriate to consider that the educational shortfall in provision should be provided for in the schools which have been designed to accommodate children living in the previously planned homes.

3.2 Traditionally in Milton Keynes, where the birth rate has been one of the highest in Europe, homes built at an average density of between 25 and 35 dwellings per hectare resulted in a new primary school being required for each 1,500 new homes and a new secondary school for each 5,000 new homes. A further significant factor in this assessment of educational requirement is that until recently the tenure split of housing in Milton Keynes was largely 75% private, 20% shared equity and 5% rental.
3.3 The Council’s published pre-submission Core Strategy of February 2010 which was then followed up by the Strategic Site Selection Report of September 2011 acknowledges in para 7.19 – 7.21 that south east Milton Keynes already suffers from a shortfall in the provision of secondary school provision. It equally refers to the fact that the partial development of the former Nampak site in Woburn Sands has provided the Council with funds to deliver more educational facilities. As the planning permissions for Nampak only relate to part of the site, is it reasonable to assume that in the fullness of time additional residential accommodation may be deliverable on this site? If this is the case then it appears to be illogical to assume that children in the south east of Milton Keynes will continue to be schooled by the adjacent local authority – Central Bedfordshire or in other instances Aylesbury Vale when grammar school education is sought.

3.4 The recent work undertaken by Milton Keynes Council into the relative affordability of housing in Milton Keynes and the Housing Needs of the Area have demonstrated a huge shortfall in the provision of affordable housing and lengthening housing waiting lists. To address this the Council has sought to allocate additional land for housing and has also taken the view that the affordable housing quota should be revised so 25% should be for rent, 5% should be for shared equity and 70% should be open market housing. However, what the Council appear not to have taken into a consideration is that by changing the tenure split of new housing areas there – if national and previous birth rates for rental housing census data are fulfilled – there will be a material increase in the number of children born in the area.
4.0 Summary

4.1 Places for People acknowledge the need to address the acute housing crisis identified in the most recent housing needs assessments.

4.2 Allocated housing land should therefore not now be allocated for primary and more particularly in this instance secondary school provision. Instead, where new housing is proposed this, particularly in the south east of the new town where the Council already acknowledges a shortfall in educational provision, must be accompanied by an appropriate level of nursery, primary school and secondary school education.

4.2 As there is already an acute shortage of educational facilities in the vicinity of the Nampak site in Woburn Sands and the proposed allocation of SR4 has no educational provision planned for it at all and SR1, 2 and 3 have a substantial level of provision it is suggested that the location of the new secondary school remains local to the new development, is deliverable within the timescales of the proposed developments at SR1, 2, 3 and 4, and critically does not assume that places are available within schools which have been specifically provided for within other thoughtfully planned strategic developments such as Brooklands or on land outside of development boundaries without an allocation at this time.

4.3 It is vital that a coherent strategy for the provision of new homes and educational facilities is created to guide effectively the further expansion of Milton Keynes. This way the Strategic Allocation identified in Appendix 3 of
the Core Strategy Site Selection document of September 2011 would fulfil
the requirements of the NPPF for developments to be sustainable and would
lead to this element of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy being sound.