Fox Land and Property

Written Submissions to the Hearing of the Independent Examinations of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy DPD

Matter 6: Strategic Land Allocation (Policies CS5 Proposed post-submission changes September 2011 Table 5.7)
Introduction

These submissions have been prepared by Fox Land and Property on behalf of the Bow Brickhill Consortium. They do not seek to replicate previous written submission provided post Core Strategy Submission DPD Consultations\(^1\) except responding to the Inspectors Questions.

Matters 6: Strategic Land Allocation (Policies CS5, Proposed post-submission changes September 2011)

6.1 i) Is the proposed allocation of the Strategic Land Allocation (SLA) consistent with the sustainable development of the Borough and adjoining areas?

6.1.1 One of the fundamental objections to the Soundness of the CS Consultation was in respect to the Strategic Reserve Areas (SRA) where there was no justification to suggest that they could be regarded as a single sustainable urban extension. It failed the test on the basis of the Council’s own criteria albeit unequivocal support was maintained within the Reasonable Alternative Sites Consultation. Our submission critiqued the Councils sites\(^2\) (Appendix 1 attached for reference) providing a subjective analysis but using a more expansive scoring matrix to demonstrate comparative differences.

6.1.2 FLP’s overriding conclusion was that out of the ten alternatives tested, the SRA was the least sustainable.

6.1.3 The revised SRA proposals now described as the SLA, still does not address many of the sustainability issues by virtue of its inherent locational disadvantages, and that part of this allocation remains separate\(^3\) despite the later inclusion of the golf course between SR2 & SR3.

6.1.4 The proposed replacement Figure 2\(^4\) for the CS of the Revised SLA does not demonstrate its true impact on the adjoining rural area and indeed within our Master Plan Document, Section 2:Context (Appendix 2) articulates how, in particular the

\(^{1}\)MKC Post Submission Response Alternative Sites July 2011
MKC Post Submission Response Strategic Land Allocation November 2011
\(^{2}\)MKC Post Submission Response Alternative Sites July 2011
\(^{3}\)SR4 (Church Farm Proposal)
\(^{4}\)Attached to Proposed Changes to the CS SLA Consultation November 2011
combination of SR2 and SR3 protrudes eastwards into the countryside. The configuration does not meet two of the Councils overriding tests namely:

- ‘sites need to be adjacent to existing or planned urban area’ – This criteria is not met to the West or South and only to the North by the major distribution warehousing set in the countryside.
- ‘Must have capacity for approximately 2,500’ – Although the reasoning as to this quantum has uncertain reasoning, no evidence has been provided as to whether with the inclusion of the golf course this quantum can be achieved?

6.1.5 In our continued assessment of land to the South of MK urban area (MKSA8 revised) master plan work has been undertaken to show a superior sustainable alternative for housing growth than the SLA which is adjacent to the existing or planned urban area.

6.1.6 If the Council looked afresh at more sustainable alternatives rather than the SRA former Local Plan Allocation they may have came to a different conclusion and from our assessments Bow Brickhill would score more highly. Furthermore our Plan 1 demonstrates how in association with Church Farm, part of the SLA (albeit still developed separately) provides a more logical urban extension alongside Bow Brickhill.

ii) Has ‘future proofing’ been appropriately considered?

6.1.7 By this we have taken to mean ‘a well connected Milton Keynes including

- improved accessibility across the Borough
- reduction in the Boroughs carbon footprint
- The City’s grid network extending into new development areas (whilst safe guarding corridors for mass transport systems.)

6.1.8 The SE Development Area was put forward at the time of the RS as the sustainable growth option to provide 10,400 homes. This is no longer the case and therefore the development now proposed does not meet the criteria stated above.

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5 Appendix 2: Master Plan Document: Plan 1(p8)
6 Core Strategy Policy CS11
6.1.9 The reduced scope of development also critically impacts on the infrastructure, community provision requirement and the ability to ensure growth remains sustainable.

6.1.10 Transport provision was previously assessed as being necessary prior to the current, supported housing growth. This is no longer the case with the withdrawal of the funding required for the further duelling of the A421. As highlighted in Matter 5 there is now no financial justification for a development of 2,500 homes carrying the aspiration for major infrastructure which also related to the SLA as previously perceived in Policy CS5. This reduced level of growth could therefore seriously impact on the longer term planning.

6.2 Have reasonable alternatives to the allocation to the SLA been properly evaluated at an appropriate stage in the plan making process?

6.2.1 No. The CS is unsound in this respect as discussed within our response on the Sustainability Appraisal and as highlighted by the summary. (Appendix 1) There are more sustainable options which are able to deliver the required housing growth either at the current CS option for 28,000 homes or as discussed in matters 1-3, far greater in line with the evidence as presented in the RS or the SHMA.

6.2.2 Alternative sites were only considered after the CS Consultation had been completed. Paragraph 1.1 confirms that with the removal of the South East Development Area (SE SDA) the SLA allocation was merely as stated ‘represented a scaling back of the SE SDA to sites previously identified through the local plan process’ (2005) It is difficult to see how this approach could be viewed as sound.

6.2.3 The Council has now commenced an informal consultation on their Development Framework prior to the Examination which appears inappropriate. This process is also inconsistent with Policy CS 5 in that this exercise has primarily focused on the Church Farm Development and not comprehensively on the SLA.

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8 Strategic Review of Proposed MK SDA’s Feb 2008: Paragraphs 8.9 -810 (p53)
9 East of Kingston section to the M1 Junction 13
10 Items 18 -20 Policy CS5 – Duelling A421, New multi-model hub, realignment of Bedford to MK waterway, future bridge or junction (13A)
11 ‘Sustainability Appraisal of Reasonable Alternative Sites July 2011.’
12 Strategic Land Allocation Development Framework Consultation: MKC Jan 12
6.2.4 Alternative sites should have been considered far earlier as is evident by reading the summary of the October 2010 SA (Paragraph 4.10), which states in respect of the SRA’s

*the dispersed nature of the SRA’s significantly restricts the benefits and overall, the sustainability of the SRA’s are undermined by their dispersed nature. The lack of connection between the sites has particular implications in terms of achieving a modal shift in transport, the provision of services and facilities and the efficient use of land.*

6.2.5 In our consultation response MKSA8 (Revised and as Appendix 3) or a derivative of this broad location for growth (to include Church Farm SLA), would undoubtedly score more highly than the original SRA and now the Council’s proposed SLA.

6.3 With the post-submission changes to provide for the SLA does the Core Strategy represent the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives?

6.3.1 No it does not. Underlying the CS was the October 2010 SA which did not test reasonable alternatives. The consultation on the SA of Reasonable Alternative Sites and then carried through to the CS Strategic Site Report September 2011 did not materially alter the facts that the SLA had major limitations in respect of:

- The site close to the M1 may contribute to congestion
- The A421 may act as a barrier to access
- SR4 remains separate from the remainder of the SLA and will need careful thought so as to avoid isolation
- A risk of coalescence with Wavendon and Woburn Sands
- The split nature of the site could make creating strategic landscape buffers around these settlements and Wavendon difficult
- Two separate sites could also make creating ‘walkable’ neighbourhoods and the provision of services more difficult.

6.3.2 These issues are not materially capable of being resolved where, as pointed out in our responses to all the consultations, most of the other areas which were subject to the same SA had less fundamental issues. In respect to MKSA8 for example, the

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13 January 2011
14 Core Strategy Sustainability Addendum, September 2011: MKSA11 (p12 & p16)
opportunity also existed to adjust the boundary so as to mitigate perceived weaknesses.

6.3.3 By comparison, and based on the revised boundary of search (Appendix 3) the weaknesses of MKSA8 are much less in sustainability terms:

- With a rail crossing (which is deliverable as part of scheme costs) the rail line is no barrier to the rest of the city (and arguably provides greater connectivity than either side of grid roads)
- There is now no material impact on the Brickhills Area of Attractive Landscape to the South of Woburn Sands Road
- With the revised suggested area of MKSA8 there would be no coalescence with Woburn Sands and the most sensitive area in ecological terms remains untouched.

6.3.4 The geographical and connectivity issues relating to the SLA would all but disappear with consideration of MKSA8, and also be far superior in making sure the Church Farm Framework area is not isolated.

6.3.5 It is difficult to contemplate why the Council believe this direction of growth remains the most appropriate. This has not changed with the ‘superficial’ addition of the golf course to co-join two of the SRA parcels.

6.3.6 As the delivery of the CS is fundamental in the achievement of economic prosperity for the City the issues of providing choice across all tenures and market demand is further hindered by the most of the SLA being in close proximity to the Eastern Expansion Area. Reasonable alternative locations exist around the Borough that are more able to deliver this strategy such as MKSA 8 and the separate Church Farm SRA site to the South of the City.

6.4 i) What is the justification for the maximum of 2,500 dwellings?

6.4.1 No comprehensive explanation has been provided by the Council. It appears to be an arbitrary figure to justify the selection of the CS SRA to meet the extant requirement of the Councils much reduced housing target in the CS, and potentially a way of excluding other reasonable alternative sites.

6.4.2 So long as other reasonable alternatives are contiguous to the urban area and wholly contained within the Borough, there appears no overwhelming reason why other
major sites cannot assessed as sustainable developments even if they are not individually of 2,500 dwelling size

6.4.3 There are more appropriate combinations of development than the SLA as reasonable alternatives such as we have shown by taking Church Farm and Bow Brickhill in combination whatever the contributing numbers. On our Plan 1\(^{15}\) we have included how both would relate. In this exercise an assessment of the Church Farm area gives up to 370 dwellings. As such taking both the current Bow Brickhill Consortium area more than 2,500 dwellings can be provided.

**ii) Is there sufficient capacity within the SLA for the quantity of development required?**

6.4.4 No, This issue was raised in the Consultation submission \(^{16}\) where an estimate of the combined area was made. (94.8 Ha) Using comparable schemes (in particular our ‘Vision Document’\(^{17}\) appended to the CS representation provided 2,100 dwellings on 115 Ha) assessing what non-residential land uses were possibly required and with a realistic density of 35 dph, it was more likely that less than 2,076 could be provided from the SLA. This would mean there could be a shortfall in the region of 500

6.4.5 The only reference FLP have found to ‘qualify’ the size of the SLA and assumptions is within the SA addendum \(^{18}\) Doubt as to whether this level of development remains without any masterplan testing, rather than applying an arbitrary 50% of the gross area as developable for housing. Clearly there may well be more recreational area required due to the loss of the golf course, and areas of land considered necessary for employment and for other technical reasons to address any noise from the A421/M1 or drainage.

**iii) Are there reasonable prospects for delivery of the required number of dwellings within the plan period?**

6.4.6 By reference to the Councils latest housing trajectory for the SRA’s the first 200 dwellings remain\(^{19}\) as being completed in 2016-17 providing a readily available supply by 2023.

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\(^{15}\) Master Plan document (p8)
\(^{16}\) Bow Brickhill Consultation CS Submission: Response to policy CS1 p13
\(^{17}\) Bellow Hill Farm, South of Milton Keynes Master Plan Vision Document November 2010:
\(^{18}\) Core Strategy SA addendum, September 2011: Paragraph 3.3/3.4 (p8)
\(^{19}\) Estimate by the Joint Housing Delivery Team with reference remaining as SRA and not SLA.
6.4.7 As has been discussed in Matter 3 Housing, it is unrealistic to contemplate 200 homes being constructed on the first year and then peaking at over 400 dwelling for a period of five years even on a single controlled development. It is highly unlikely that such high rates can be sustained in a location that has other large sites still in production such as Broughton Gate and Brooklands.

6.4.8 To assess a more likely delivery programme (as has been included in the Bow Brickhill Masterplan Document an assessment has been undertaken in respect of the process that is likely to occur. (Appendix 4)

6.4.9 Owing to the complexities caused by the separation issues identified between the SLA’s and the servicing requirements, there is unlikely to be more than a small number of homes provided within the 5 year supply or greater than 300 dwellings in any one year. Any additional delay due to indeterminate infrastructure issues could easily see the loss of 300 homes per annum from the plan period housing supply.

6.4.10 In the revised masterplan proposals for the Bow Brickhill development area the delivery requirements and proposed phasing is set out as an important issue to demonstrate that these proposals are reasonably deliverable. As the land is self contained it does not have the same timing issues as the SLA’s and by contrast could therefore be delivered much earlier in the design process\textsuperscript{20}.

iv) Is the SLA economically viable?

6.4.11 This fundamental question remains unanswered. There are two cost elements of the SLA which are unique

- Major connectivity to regional infrastructure in association with the M1
- Dealing with provision of services between the various unconnected allocated parcels of land.

These costs are not applicable to the other alternatives sites although it is recognised that there will be other cost issues. The secondary school would not be fully funded by this development alone and FLP assume that, as with other alternatives, would be dealt with by a CIL arrangement. There are issues however in respect to providing a SuDS scheme on a comprehensive basis which will add to the cost ordinarily anticipated.

\textsuperscript{20} Masterplan document: Delivery Section 9.
6.4.12 The importance of promoting sustainable development has led Bow Brickhill Consortium to fully consider abnormal requirements and ensure the development remain deliverable\textsuperscript{21} including the rail crossing which was subject to a separate report previously submitted.\textsuperscript{22}

6.4.13 Such an approach should also have been taken by the Council as there are clear viability issues. This has not been explained or justified which gives rise to, at best, an unsound approach and at worst an undeliverable allocation.

6.5 Are the other principles of development set out in Policy CS5 clearly justified and deliverable? In particular:

i) How would opportunities for sustainable travel patterns be maximised?

6.5.1 This is a similar question to that raised in Matter 5: Transport Question 5.1 and FLP do not propose to repeat them here. There is a much reduced opportunity to maximise sustainable travel pattern for the SLA which has not been adequately tested against other alternative sites which offer very clear advantages such as MKSA8.\textsuperscript{23}

6.5.2 The Bow Brickhill Consortium SLA Submission assessed the MKSA8 reasonable alternative, which concluded that by contrast to the SLA this site could\textsuperscript{24}

- Encourage people to walk and cycle more in that it is in close proximity to two rail stations and a major mixed use employment area
- Provides direct support for East West Rail project with greater patronage, whilst simultaneously improving the operational efficiency on this part of the line, and delivering inherent safety benefits with the removal of the at grade footpath/bridleway crossings\textsuperscript{25}.
- The rail crossing would enable an extension to the road grid system rather than just a connection.

\textsuperscript{21} Masterplan document: Delivery Section 9
\textsuperscript{22} Bow Brickhill Submission Proposed Amended SLA September 2011 Consultation: Transportation Overview Oct 11 Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{23} Masterplan document: Section 5: Facilities; Section 6: Access
\textsuperscript{24} FLP CS Post Submission Response: Sept 11: Objective 9(p5) Paragraph 3: Rail Crossing (p9/10) Paragraphs 8.4 (p14/15)
\textsuperscript{25} Masterplan document: Section 4 Opportunities
• A primary school, Local centre and Health facilities can all be located within the one development area to enable reasonable access by walking not just for the new residents but for the existing communities.

ii) Is the safeguarding of land for a multi-modal transport hub justified and is the scheme deliverable?

6.5.3 This requirement appears to be an approach to cover all situations without any clear understanding of what the future transport strategy is or will be. The CS should be clear and consistent with the supporting evidence underpinning the plan. In this case there is no reference to such an aspiration in the LTP for this site as there is no mention of the SRA’s performing this function within the transport strategy. (LTP3)

6.5.4 The other issue surrounds the capacity of the combined SRA’s. If a substantial area of land within the confines of development is required for this use then the achievement of 2,500 dwellings is further compromised.

iii) Are the requirements/aims for zero carbon and water efficient development and a community energy network sufficiently clear, and are they justified and deliverable?

6.5.5 The comments made are aspirational and part of a wider policy issue. It is uncertain as to why they are needed specifically for the SLA. The noted requirements could be in conflict with a standard approach/SPD on the matter, notwithstanding any national policy to standardise the attainment levels on sustainable initiatives working towards a zero carbon society.

6.5.6 Community energy networks will be extraordinarily difficult to make viable on such a fragmented development as is the SLA, where Church farm is divorced from the main allocation. For any Community combined heat & power to run pipes back & forth between the four areas would not be a commercially attractive proposition.

iv) Are the requirements for strategic landscaping, integration with the city, and protection of the character and integrity of existing settlements mutually consistent and achievable?

6.5.7 It would seem nonsensical that each parcel delivers their required quantum of open space without considering as a whole thus lead to a fragmented and inefficient resource. How would changing facilities be dealt with for the requisite number of
pitches? Providing a building for each area if planned separately is a poor use of financial resource. (both build and annual maintenance) There should be one playing field, one Multi Use Games area, changing etc. If each part of the allocation is treated separately with a single development brief, these issues are extremely likely.

6.5.8 Taking the Bow Brickhill Proposals as an example the Playing fields can not only be provided in an appropriate manner within the development but have the potential to add to the existing facility providing a much greater quality of asset for the community.\(^{26}\)

6.5.9 The setting of Wavendon Village and surrounding small settlements will be compromised by the SLA sites between the A421 and the proposed southern extant of Lower End Road. An inspection will clearly show the impact on the very rural wedge that still remains and the urbanisation that would result in the preferred configuration of the SLA.

6.5.10 Within Policy CS5, item 11\(^{27}\) is a vein attempt to address this difficulty at the same time recognising this is a shortcoming of identifying the SLA as the preferred allocation.

6.5.11 There are alternative sites such as the Bow Brickhill Proposal where a comprehensive landscape strategy and the ability to provide a well defined landscape edge is far more likely to be successful.

6.6 Having regard to all of the above is the site boundary appropriately and sufficiently defined?

6.6.1 The comments in paragraphs 6.5.11 are relevant in that there are alternatives sites where the boundaries are better defined to ensure a clear and defensible buffer once the required growth has been achieved

6.6.2 The fragmented arrangement of the SLA sites will always give the opportunity for infilling at a later date and not offer a lasting edge to growth in this area.

6.7 Taking account of the reference to retail and other facilities in Policy CS5, is there sufficient guidance in the Core Strategy about how the needs of the SLA will be met?

\(^{26}\) Masterplan document: Plan 1
\(^{27}\) Creating strategic landscape boundaries to the outer edge.
6.7.1 There is aspirational guidance in respect to retail local centres within the Policy. For other community facilities this is very much left to future development frameworks as prescribed in the Policy.

6.7.2 The SLA has been supported since 2005 and a comprehensive facilities strategy should have been provided but has been deferred for reasons unknown.

6.7.3 Within the CS18 there are clear issues in respect to both the existing need and how new facilities can be delivered. As such more details should have been provided.

6.7.4 The Bow Brickhill Consortium has always maintained the importance of a well served community; not just the new but meeting those needs of the existing residents and this has been addressed in our masterplan document which shows what and where facilities can be delivered to provide a sustainable alternative.\textsuperscript{28} The SLA proposals fail to provide such analysis.

6.8 Overall, does the Core Strategy provide sufficient guidance to bring forward the SLA through a single Development Framework?

6.8.1 No. This is highlighted by the non specific nature of Policy CS5. Detail is left to future policies in the LDF and the preparation of a single (my emphasis) Development Framework although this is qualified in that this still leads up to four separate documents which appear at odds with the councils latter insistence that the now two unconnected parcels are one of the same. (By the inclusion of the golf course)

6.8.1 Is it realistic to mould these separate identified parcels into one homogenous development brief? Clearly No. The complexities of bringing forward a brief on unconnected parcels has been critically underestimated. This is even more relevant where the Council are relying on a site start in 2016 when in the first year the Council are anticipating 200 dwellings will be completed.

\textsuperscript{28} Masterplan Document: Section 4: Opportunities; Section 5: Facilities
**Matter 6: SLA Appendices**


2. Bow Brickhill Consortium Masterplan document

3. Revised Area MKSA8 as submitted with the MKC Consultation on the SLA November 2011