Milton Keynes Core Strategy
Examination

Statement of Common Ground prepared by
Gallagher Estates and Milton Keynes Council

The SLA and Secondary School Provision

July 2012
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0.0 INTRODUCTION

0.1 This Statement has been prepared by Milton Keynes Council (MKC) and Barton Willmore LLP on behalf of Gallagher Estates. The statement has been prepared at the request of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy Inspector in response to evidence submitted on behalf of Gallagher Estates and issues raised during the examination hearing sessions held between 10th and 12th July 2012.

0.2 This statement deals with the need for and provision of a new secondary school within the proposed Strategic Land Allocation (SLA), as currently proposed by MKC, or immediately adjoining the SLA on land to the west of Newport Road, which has been put forward by Gallagher Estates.

0.3 Issues which are agreed between MKC and Gallagher Estates are set out below. This statement also identifies and defines specific points which are in dispute.

0.4 This statement addresses the land use planning considerations in assessing the suitability of land west of Newport Road for the provision of new secondary school development, if required, to meet the needs of the SLA and any existing and worsening shortfall in smaller settlements to the south of the SLA which MKC have advised exist (MKC Strategic Site Selection Report; paras 7.19-2.22).

0.5 It is agreed that it is not appropriate for this Core Strategy to arbitrate on the detailed education issues i.e. pupil yield calculations. MKC and Gallagher Estates both consider that the purpose of this statement is to assist the Core Strategy Inspector in considering potential modification(s) to Policy CS5, Table 5.7 and other relevant text within the Core Strategy relating to the SLA.
1.0 ISSUE IN DISPUTE

1.1 The fundamental dispute between MKC and Gallagher Estates is the number of new secondary school places which will result from the development of the SLA (pupil yield). The position of both parties on this disputed issue is summarised below:

- MKC’s position on the need for a secondary school to serve the SLA is set out in paragraphs 6.7.9-6.7.11 of its statement for the Core Strategy examination MKC11. In summary, MKC’s standards of provision are set out in the 2011-2012 School Organisation Framework (Doc. B149). This document states that the pupil yield from new housing will be 5.8 pupils per 100 homes per year group. On that basis, the development of 2,500 homes would directly generate a need for a 5 form of entry secondary school to serve the SLA.

- Barton Willmore of behalf of Gallagher Estates include an assessment (prepared by EFM Limited) of new secondary school places generated by the SLA (Matter 6; Appendix 4). In summary, this assessment states that the need for new secondary school places arising from the SLA development of around 2,500 dwellings would be approximately 2.5 forms of entry. This equates to approximately 3.4ha of land or 50% of the new provision currently sought by MKC within the SLA. This is based on a net pupil yield of 3.0 pupils per 100 homes per year group.

1.2 It is agreed that any detailed dispute on this principal issue would need to be resolved at a more detailed stage in the planning process (the SLA Development Framework; planning applications and any planning appeals) and/or through valuation arbitration.

1.3 Should it be proven that a new secondary school is not fully justified by the development of 2,500 dwellings within the SLA, Gallagher Estates consider that the alternative use value for acquiring that part of the land not required to meet needs generated by the SLA would be residential value and the cost of this land acquisition would be borne by MKC.
2.0 COMMON GROUND

Primary School Provision

2.1 It is agreed that the SLA would generate a need for two new primary schools to serve the land to the south of the A421. The development at Church Farm (SR4) is likely to be served either by expansion of existing school facilities within the wider area, funded by S106 contributions, or via the two sites on the other parts of the development, or via a change to school defined areas.

The Principle of New Secondary School Provision

2.2 Gallagher Estates do not object to the principle of new secondary school provision being made as part of the SLA (within the proposed allocation), or the alternative location to the west of Newport Road promoted for this facility (as illustrated in Matter 6; Appendix 3).

Construction Cost

2.3 There is no issue regarding the construction cost for the provision of new secondary school development. It is agreed that this is to be met through the Council's use of Basic Need funding from the Department for Education and/or existing Milton Keynes Tariff arrangements which will apply to the development of the Strategic Reserve Areas (SRAs) identified in the adopted Milton Keynes Local Plan which form the majority of the SLA. This includes Glebe Farm, Eagle Farm South and Eagle Farm North.

Short Term Need and Deliverability

2.4 MKC have stated that there is an urgent need for a new secondary school within the SLA and are seeking to deliver this facility as part of the first phase of the SLA development.

2.5 It is agreed that the land west of Newport Road is capable of being made available and serviced for secondary school development earlier than land within the SLA.

Alternative Locations for Secondary School Provision
2.6 MKC have shown a site for a new secondary school within the draft SLA Development Framework (Doc. MKC/22). On the basis that the school is directly required by the development, MKC consider it is appropriate for the school to be located within the community generating that need.

2.7 Barton Willmore on behalf of Gallagher Estates is promoting land west of Newport Road for the provision of a new secondary school to serve this area of Milton Keynes, if required. It is agreed that there are potential benefits of a new secondary school being delivered on land west of Newport Road:

i. Land west of Newport Road is a single parcel of land entirely within the control of Gallagher Estates. The land could be transferred by Gallagher Estates to the local education authority at the commencement of the development of the SLA and thus made available for secondary school development at an early stage.

ii. Land west of Newport Road could be served by an independent access with Newport Road and/or Stockwells Lane, subject to further technical assessment.

iii. The provision of school playing fields on land west of Newport Road would maintain open land to the north of Wavendon village (as shown in “Illustrative Layout Plan Extract – Option 2”: drawing ref: 20268/69). Other than school buildings to the northern end of this site, no built development is proposed. It is agreed that this proposal would help achieve the objective in Policy CS5 for maintaining the character and integrity of existing settlements.

iv. Gallagher Estates have promoted the land west of Newport Road as an appropriate location for new secondary school development, as this facility would serve the needs of the new (SLA) community and of existing surrounding settlements.

v. The land west of Newport Road comprises approximately 8.45 hectares. This land could therefore provide a further 1.65 hectares, in addition to the 6.8ha site sought by MKC for a 5FE school. It is agreed that this additional land would be available for any expanded provision which could be pursued by the local education authority or some alternative use to meet local needs.

2.8 MKC has considered the feasibility of siting a secondary school on this site and is of the opinion that notwithstanding the shape and topography of the site, these do not present
 unacceptable conditions to the delivery of a 5 form entry secondary school with sixth form. The site is large enough to provide enough design flexibility to overcome the existing site conditions and to develop a proposal that would be fit for purpose.

Residential Development Capacity

2.9 MKC has recently published a draft SLA Development Framework (Doc. MKC/22) for public consultation. This includes a land use budget which shows a residential capacity of 2,500 dwellings including the provision 2 primary schools plus a 5FE secondary school within the SLA.

2.10 Barton Willmore on behalf of Gallagher Estates have assessed the total residential development capacity of the SLA as around 2,700 dwellings. This assumes that no secondary school is provided or that it is provided on land west of Newport Road, if required. Barton Willmore state that the provision of a 5FE secondary school (comprising 6.8 hectares) within the SLA would reduce the residential capacity of the SLA to around 2,450 dwellings, representing a reduction of approximately 250 dwellings (Matter 6 statement for Gallagher Estates; para 6.7.9).

2.11 Whilst there are differences in the design approach presented by the parties, it is agreed that there is a reasonable prospect of the SLA delivering approximately 2,500 dwellings with a 5 form of entry (5FE) secondary school provided within the allocation. Gallagher Estates have submitted that approximately 2,700 homes could be delivered within the SLA if a new secondary school is not required or if this development is delivered in an alternative location i.e. land west of Newport Road (Matter 6 statement; para 6.4.5).

Way Forward

2.12 The alternative proposal from Gallagher Estates to deliver a new secondary school and its associated playing fields on the land west of Newport Road was raised by MKC with Wavendon Parish Council (WPC) on Monday 16 July. A further alternative was also discussed, which would locate the school playing fields and a more substantial landscape buffer/area of open space on the land to the west of Newport Road and retain the secondary school buildings with the proposed SLA (to the east of Newport Road).
2.13 WPC raised questions about the highways and access implications of a school to the west of the Newport Road, particularly how safe access for children coming from the SLA would be achieved. There are additionally concerns about noise and disturbance to residents from the use of the playing fields at weekends and into the evenings, including possible floodlighting. Further detailed work is required to fully consider these implications. Gallagher Estates is committed to provide further evidence as part of their formal response to the SLA Development Framework consultation to demonstrate that these detailed concerns are capable of being addressed.

2.14 WPC is, however, of the opinion that both of the alternative proposals for accommodating playing fields and/or a secondary school on land to the west of Newport Road should be included in MKC’s consultation on the draft SLA Development Framework. WPC and MKC acknowledge that whilst there was likely to be local resistance to any development on the land to the west of Newport Road, the use of this site for a school and associated playing fields together with a landscape buffer could give the existing community some certainty and help to maintain a landscaped setting for the village in this location for the long term.

2.15 In order to progress this and to raise awareness of this possible change in the use of the site, An additional drop-in session is to be arranged for early September (a provisional date is set for 6 September), to which residents from the Wavendon parish area will be invited and which will be attended by MKC officers and representatives of the SLA landowners. The focus of this drop-in session will be the alternative proposal for the location of the secondary school. Following this session, details of the alternative site for the secondary school will be publicised through MKC’s website and with local stakeholders as an update to the SLA Development Framework consultation.

2.16 To support this formal consideration of the alternative approaches, Gallagher Estates are seeking the proposed modification to Policy CS5 (and associated change to the proposals map proposed in Barton Willmore’s statement for Matter 6 (Appendix 5). This specifically refers to this land west of Newport Road being included within the SLA for consideration as a potential location for new secondary school, if required. MKC accept this proposed modification.

2.17 MKC and Gallagher Estates will continue to work positively to find a mutually acceptable approach for secondary school provision in this location matter of the secondary school. Both
parties consider that the approach set out above represents a positive step forward in this regard.