

From Peter Biggers Independent Examiner

23 January 2014

Dear Participant,

**Re Examination of Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Hearing Woburn Sands Memorial Hall 29 January 2014 9.30**

As you know the above Hearing is being held to assist me specifically on the matters of Housing and Employment Land Provision in the Neighbourhood Plan and to enable me to assess whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions in particular that it is in general conformity with the Milton Keynes Core Strategy and national planning policy objectives.

You were issued with a draft programme for the Hearing in the initial invitation which gives the broad format for the morning. I have now released a set of questions to help structure the discussion (see attached sheet). To help the discussion I have indicated in brackets which participant should probably open on each question.

I do not expect written submissions on these questions in advance of the Hearing but rather they are to indicate the questions which I would like the discussion to answer. I would suggest therefore all you need to prepare for the day is some notes for yourself to help you remember the points you want to make in response. A full note of the discussion will be taken on the day so that there is a record of participants' views after the Hearing.

The questions I have posed do not necessarily preclude a related point or question being made in respect of the topic under discussion. They are simply a framework to ensure that the issues that have occurred to me, whilst reading the Neighbourhood Plan, supporting documents and representations received are answered.

I am looking forward to meeting you on the day and to an informed discussion. The form of any Hearing in Neighbourhood Plan Examinations is very informal – it is not the place for set piece presentations nor any cross examination of participants. In that way I hope we can have a relaxed and useful discussion about the Plan and the areas where there remain concerns.

Peter D Biggers BSc Hons MRTPI
Independent Examiner

Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan Examination – Hearing 29 January 2014.

Independent Examiners Pre-Set Questions to Guide the Discussion

Opening remarks - General Procedural Questions

- What have been the governance arrangements during the preparation of the plan? - for example was a representative steering group established to prepare the plan? (WSTC to open)
- Has screening in respect of Sustainable Environmental Assessment been carried out and what was the outcome of that? (MKC to open)

Session 1 – Understanding the Core Strategy’s requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- What is the expectation of Woburn Sands as one of 3 key settlements in the rural area as identified in policy CS1 of the Core Strategy? (MKC to open)
- Is the intention of the Core Strategy that Woburn Sands and the other 2 key settlements will continue to provide the bulk of housing provision in the Rural Area? (MKC to open)
- If so is the assumption that the 3 settlements will take an equal share of development – both completed and still required? (MKC to open)
- Has Plan MK or preceding work for the Site Allocations DPD reached a point to assist in evidencing whether a ‘no further development in Woburn Sands strategy’ would jeopardise the achievement of wider Core Strategy objectives? (MKC to open)
- Is there an expectation in the Core Strategy’s spatial development strategy that there should be a strategic gap retained between Milton Keynes and Woburn Sands? (MKC to open).

Session 2 – Understanding the Vision and Development Strategy for the Neighbourhood Plan

- Is the strategy of the plan of essentially no further development other than infilling based on clear and robust evidence? (WSTC to open)
- Is the aspiration of the Neighbourhood Plan to retain Woburn Sands as a sustainable settlement without development a tenable position in the longer term? (WSTC to open)
- What would be the actual harm if some further development was to be accommodated in the plan area? (WSTC to open)
- Is such a development strategy likely to need to be reviewed in the near future with work progressing on Plan MK? (MKC to open)

Session 3 – Housing land supply and meeting requirements

- Are the implications of policy CS2 and table 5.2 of the Core Strategy that some of the housing development outstanding will be expected to be located in Woburn Sands? (MKC to open)
- The implication of the Housing Supply Figures provided as at Jan 2014 is that there is a land requirement for c 590 houses still to be found in the rural area over and above completed and committed. Is that correct? (MKC to open)
- Is it reasonable to assume that c 200 of that outstanding requirement will need to be provided for in Woburn Sands? (MKC to open)
- Table 5.2 of the Core Strategy identifies 115 units from Developable and Deliverable SHLAA sites – are any of those in the Neighbourhood Plan Area?(MKC to open)
- Is it reasonable to assume that Woburn Sands share of windfall infill sites c 150 units up to 2026 will be achieved? (Any to open).
- The Housing Supply figures at Jan 2014 state that all approved sites in Woburn Sands will be completed within 5 years ie by 2019. Are there therefore implications for maintaining a 5 Year Housing Land Supply if more land is not identified in the rural area? (MKC to open)
- In order to understand the position taken in policies WS5 and WS6 of the Neighbourhood Plan what assessments were carried out of the areas of land mentioned in paragraph 6.2 and what were the findings of these assessments in respect of potential development? (WSTC to open)
- Would a criteria based policy or policies, setting out the circumstances in which future development proposals in the plan area may be considered favourably, in place of policy WS6, offer a more acceptable alternative? (Any to open)
- Would such a policy reassure landowners and MKC that the plan would be flexible enough to respond to future circumstances? (Landowners and MKC to open)
- Would such a policy satisfy WSTC that key controls could be retained to ensure that the Vision for Woburn Sands was not jeopardised? (WSTC to open)

Session 4 – Employment land supply and meeting requirements

- Is 1.3 hectares of employment land as part of the Parklands development deemed to be enough land for the plan period? (MKC to open)

- Is policy WS8 as it is worded likely to help Woburn Sands towards retaining a sustainable employment base within the town and help to achieve policy objectives in CS9 and CS16 of the Core Strategy? (WSTC to open)

Session 5 – Understanding the consultation opportunities

- How and in what way did the Qualifying Body (Woburn Sands TC) ensure that the opportunities for engagement were maximised for all in the community including local landowners? (WSTC to open)
- What specific opportunities was there for potential development sites to be put forward, considered and debated? (WSTC to open)