The purpose of this note is to explain procedural and administrative matters relating to the examination of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy development plan document (DPD). As part of the examination, hearing sessions will commence on **Tuesday 5 July 2011**. A schedule of hearings is being issued separately. A pre-hearings meeting is not being held. Participants are encouraged to make use of the examination website, where most documents can be located. Additional guidance, notably Examining Development Plan Documents: Procedure Guidance (The Planning Inspectorate 2009) can be found at [http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans).

**The Inspector’s Role and the Purpose and Scope of the Examination**

2. Ms Mary Travers BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI has been appointed to examine the Core Strategy. Her role is to consider whether or not the Core Strategy (the plan) is sound and whether the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated Regulations have been met. The Inspector will focus in particular on the soundness criteria set out in Government Guidance in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12 (2008), i.e. whether the plan is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The Council should rely on the evidence collected while preparing the plan to demonstrate its soundness. Those seeking changes should demonstrate why the plan is not sound and why their suggested changes would make it sound.

**The Programme Officer’s Role**

3. Mr Chris Banks has been appointed as the Programme Officer, acting as an impartial officer for the purpose of the examination. His contact details are circulated with this guidance note. His principal functions are to liaise with all parties to ensure the smooth running of the examination; to ensure that the documents are recorded and distributed; to maintain the examination library (mainly in electronic form), and to assist the Inspector with procedural matters. He is your first point of contact.

**The Examination Process**

4. The Inspector will run the examination hearings as efficiently as
possible, keeping a tight rein on the discussions and time taken. Repetition will be discouraged. The aim is to conduct a short but focused series of hearings, leading to the production of a short, focused report.

5. Those who have made representations should have already decided whether their views can be dealt with in written form or whether they need to present them orally at a hearing session. Both methods carry the same weight and the Inspector will have equal regard to views put orally or in writing.

6. Anyone who has made representations on the Core Strategy (Revised Proposed Submission Version October 2010 or the Pre-Submission Version February 2010) and who wishes to take part in a hearing session should confirm their participation with the Programme Officer as soon as possible. The Inspector will only be hearing those parties who have made such arrangements. It is open to any representor to submit a further statement in advance of the hearings. However this is not a requirement and you may rely on your original representations if you wish.

7. If a further statement is submitted it should be focused on the Matters and Issues that the Inspector has identified. Any such statements should be submitted to the Programme Officer for receipt by **5pm on Friday 3 June**. The requirements for each statement are as follows:

   - Statements should be limited to not more than 3,000 words on any one of the Matters. If more detailed material needs to be submitted it should be in the form of appendices (see below) but any such material should not duplicate the content of documents already included in the set of Examination Documents on the website.
   - Electronic submission of statements is encouraged: this should be in MS Word or PDF format. In addition, **3** paper copies of statements are required, including one unbound for further copying and the other **2** stapled in the top left corner.
   - A4 size is required, with any plans folded so as not to exceed that size.
   - Paragraph and page numbers should be included.
   - Any measurements should be in metric units.
   - Appendices should have a contents page and pages should be numbered consecutively.
   - A separate statement should be submitted for each Matter addressed.
   - Statements should include, at the top of the front page, the appropriate Matter and Issue number, representor reference number and name of representor.

8. The need for succinct submissions is emphasised. Unnecessary detail and repetition should be avoided. It is the quality of the reasoning that carries weight, not the bulk of the documents. Nonetheless, it is vital that the fundamental elements of cases are set out clearly and
succinctly – the hearings are not the place for rabbits to be drawn out of hats!

9. Statements are also required from the Council, setting out its responses to the Inspector’s Matters and Issues, explaining why it considers the Core Strategy to be sound in these respects. These statements should be submitted within the same timescale. While it is not necessary to prepare detailed responses to all of the representations, the Council may wish to respond to representations that it feels are of particular significance or concern. Further discussion between the Council and representors is strongly encouraged – ideally leading to statements of common ground. Please keep the Programme Officer informed about progress with preparation of such statements.

10. Representors who wish to proceed by written means do not need to take any further action; they can rely on what they have already submitted in writing. However, if any party wishes to submit further written evidence in support of their position, this should be focussed on the Matters and Issues that have been identified – and submitted within the same timescale.

11. Before the start of the hearing sessions the Inspector may raise questions directly with the Council on any points that are relevant to the examination. Questions about sustainability appraisal and general conformity with the South East Plan have already been raised. These exchanges of correspondence are placed on the website as examination documents.

**Hearing Arrangements and Procedure**

12. The hearing sessions will commence at **10.00 am on Tuesday 5 July 2011.** The hearings programme will be circulated separately. However, please note that:

- The sessions in **week 1** will be held in the City Discovery Centre, Cruck Barn, Alston Drive, Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes. MK13 9AP. The sessions in **week 2**, starting on Tuesday 12th July 2011, will be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Court East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ.
- A short break may be taken mid-morning and mid-afternoon, with a lunch break at about 1.00 pm. Where an afternoon session is shown, this will normally begin at 2.00 pm.
- The hearings will focus on the matters, issues and questions outlined by the Inspector. They are public hearings and interested persons are welcome to attend, even if not taking part.
- It may be necessary to alter the hearings programme from time to time. Please keep in touch with the Programme Officer and check the examination website.

13. The hearings will generally take the form of round table sessions, providing an informal setting for dealing with issues by way of a discussion led by the Inspector. Those attending may bring professional
advocates and witnesses with them, although there will be no formal presentation of evidence or cross-examination. Please keep the Programme Officer informed about who will be speaking at the sessions. Agendas setting out the order of topics for discussion will be circulated before the hearings, normally about one week in advance of the session. Generally only one seat will be available at the table for each participant but a hot-seating arrangement will be acceptable. Where a number of participants share similar viewpoints it will be helpful if a spokesperson is appointed. Hot-seating for groups of participants may be required if space around the table is limited.

**Site Visit Arrangements**

14. The Inspector will view relevant locations from public roads and footpaths before or after the hearing sessions. This will be done unaccompanied by the parties, unless it is considered that an accompanied visit is necessary – for example where the land concerned cannot be seen from the public road. In such cases, the Programme Officer will liaise with the parties to make arrangements. Accompanied site visits will not be the opportunity for discussion of the merits of the cases concerned.

**Close of the Examination and the Inspector’s Report**

15. When the Inspector has gathered all the information necessary to come to reasoned conclusions on the main issues, she will write her report. The examination itself remains open until the report is submitted to the Council. However, once the hearing sessions are completed the Inspector can receive no further information from any party, unless it is a matter on which further comments have been requested. Any unsolicited items will be returned to the sender. The Inspector will announce the likely date of the report’s submission at the end of the final hearing session.

16. Under present legislation, the Inspector’s report is binding on the Council. Assuming a finding of soundness, the Council should amend the Core Strategy in the light of the report’s recommendations and move swiftly to its formal adoption. Substantive changes will only be recommended if they are necessary to make the plan sound. It is however normal to include a list of endorsed minor changes (excluding typographical errors). If changes are recommended, it is hoped that many, if not most, will be based on proposals put forward by the Council in response to points raised and suggestions discussed during the examination. The Inspector will consider suggested changes from the Council in the same way as she will consider changes put forward by other parties.

17. Any queries regarding the examination should be addressed in the first instance to the Programme Officer.