Response (17 March 2017) from Milton Keynes Council to the Examiners questions;

Dear Andrew,

To answer your questions

1.    Core Strategy reference to Sherington in Site Allocations Plan:

Sherington is mentioned in Core Strategy (CS) policy CS1 as a selected village where a limited amount of housing development will be permitted. You are correct there is nothing in the Site Allocations Plan (SAP) about Sherington. The Proposed Submission Draft of the SAP produced in October 2016 proposes the development of sites for housing within the urban area of the city and does not refer to the development of housing sites in rural settlements such as Sherington.

This is a change from what previously appeared in the Core Strategy,  e.g. footnote 23 to policy CS1 said ‘*The limited amount of development to be allocated in Sherington will be determined through work on the Site Allocation Plan’ .*  Additionally CS policy CS9 which defines the strategy for development in the Rural Area in accordance with policy CS1 referred  to site(s) for housing development in Sherington being brought forward through the Site Allocation Plan. I  note in the appeal decision on land adjacent to the High Street at paragraph 8 the Inspector was informed by the Council ‘*that it is now the intention* [of the Council ] *that such sites in the rural area are allocated through Neighbourhood Plans, subject to formal approval.*

2.    Was the Sherington issue resolved with the appeal decision on High Street?

I think the short answer to your question is no. Footnote 23 to policy CS1 indicates the scale of new housing development sought in Sherington was around 20-40 new dwellings.

Although 36 dwellings were allowed on appeal on land adjacent to the High Street to the north of the Village centre (Ref SNP para 1.21)  and this is towards the upper end of what was envisaged in the CS for Sherington.  The Parish Council have decided to go above 40 dwellings (SNP para 1.22) and take the housing land supply for Sherington beyond that envisaged in the Core Strategy.

3.    Do I need to have a quick look through the Preferred Options Plan MK to find the most up to date position?

            Yes, the plan should be available on this Council  web site from Friday

             <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/plan-mk>

4.    Is MKC satisfied that the two allocated sites in the SNP (now both with planning permission) fully address the Plan area's share of its strategic housing target?

Yes, given that the SNP is at an advanced stage and the plan proposes a total of 45 dwellings  (36 dwellings on site NP7 land adjacent to the High Street  and 9 dwellings on site NP8 land at Water Lane) and Milton Keynes Council (MKC) will shortly be consulting on the Preferred Options version of Plan:MK. The Council considers that the 1000 dwellings it is seeking on sites to be allocated in Neighbourhood Plans (Plan:MK  policy DS2) is for new Neighbourhood  Plans that are prepared from now on.   Without prejudice to any decision in front you as the Examiner of the SNP, the Council’s view is that it would be invidious to inform Sherington Parish Council at this late stage, that the SNP should be amended and allocate more sites for housing.

Was any specific target either given to Sherington or agreed with the Parish Council as part of its preparation of the emerging neighbourhood plan?

The short answer to your question is no.  What discussion there has been has focused on the amount of housing featured in the Core Strategy for Sherington.

5.    Is MKC of the view that any further residential development in the Sherington Plan area should be within or adjacent to the settlement boundary as defined in that Plan?

Again without prejudice to any decision in front you as the Examiner of the SNP,  I refer to Local Plan Policy S10,  in the open countryside planning permission will only be given for development essential to agriculture, forestry , countryside recreation or other development which is wholly appropriate to a rural area and cannot be located within a settlement.

Table 4.2 -Settlement Hierarchy accompanying Policy DS1 in the Preferred Option version of Plan:MK envisages that housing development in villages and rural settlements should be within defined settlement boundaries incompliance with adopted Neighbourhood Plans.

Response (5 April 2017) from Sherrington Parish Council to Examiners questions;

Dear Mr Moore,

**Sherington Neighbourhood Plan, clarification points for the Examiner**

Thank you for meeting with us earlier this week, it was a useful and productive discussion. We have considered the point that the Examiner wishes to have clarified and can respond as follows.

**Policy NP2**

*Site areas*

From a functional and amenity point of view, there is a single Local Green Space (LGS). It comprises two fields which carry the public footpath connecting High Street to St. Lauds churchyard, Church End, School Lane, Gun Lane and Park Road. This single LGS is shown in Figures 5 & 6 of the NP and referred to in paragraph 6.6.

The policy identifies the two component fields in bullet points, which form the single LGS referred to above. This was to enable the “sites” comprising the single LGS to be individually identified. On reflection, this may cause confusion. We are of course willing to change the wording of the policy to remove the bullet points if that would make the plan more precise.

*Assessment*

NP Paragraph 6.3 sets out the criteria which were considered in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, either by reference to specialists, previous studies, or through consultation with the community.

It is perhaps easiest to go through the 8 criteria, setting out the basis on which their suitability was assessed:

1. Both fields are small, enclosed by overgrown hedges and have not been in use for modern, intensive agriculture, which was a distinction that we wanted to protect and preserve for future generations. The western field is rough, un-grazed grassland. The eastern field has been managed as a nature reserve by the landowner (landowner/Based upon local knowledge/observation).
2. A public footpath, dating from at least the 1880s runs through the LGS, connecting High Street to the Church and Church End side of the Village (which also houses the White Hart public house). The whole of the western field has been in use informally by village dog walkers for at least 20 years. The owner of the eastern field permits walkers to use all the land and has created pathways and planted woodland to facilitate this. (Based upon local knowledge/observation/OS map/MKC).
3. The land is rural, unspoilt and fully accessible to the public for walking. The fields are small and bounded by wild hedgerows yielding views of the Church as one walks east. (Based upon local knowledge / observation / village appraisals – refer to NP paragraphs 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7 & 1.8).
4. The LGS is the southern end of the extensive wedge of traditional farmland ,between High Street and Gun Lane,that defines the medieval structure of the village. The suburbanisation of any part of this land would totally undermine the surviving 13th C open structure of Sherington. (Assessments by historians, planners and councillors in village plans and conservation area appraisals from the 1970s to the present. (Please refer to NP paragraphs 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7 & 1.8).
5. The MKC conservation officer visited the area in 2015, reaffirmed the importance of the land to the structure of the village, (as highlighted in point 4), and proposed that the conservation area be extended south to include the whole of the proposed LGS. The LGS forms part of the setting of St. Lauds Church, the listed buildings east of High Street and the adjacent conservation area. (MKC-email from R.Wilson,Development Plans Manager 25th August 2015))
6. The entire LGS is covered by an Article 4 direction.The first Direction signed 5/1/1976 and the Direction extending the area covered to incorporate the LGS (MKC)
7. Previous village appraisals have emphasised the importance of keeping the land comprised in the LGS free of development. (Please refer to NP paragraphs 1.2 to 1.8).
8. The land of the LGS is unimproved grassland which is potentially rich in biodiversity. This is particularly important when much of the land surrounding Sherington is farmed intensively. The western field is rough grassland which is habit for voles and their predators, barn owls and kestrels. The thick hedges are nest sites for small birds. The eastern field is intensively planted with trees and shrubs and grassland is mowed (by hand) by the owner. It represents good habitat for birds, bats and invertebrates. (Based upon local knowledge / observation / ecologists / BTO).

NPPF paragraph 77 sets out the criteria relating to Local Green Space assessment, which have been considered in parallel with local criteria above. These are cross referenced to the Neighbourhood Plan criteria as follows:

1. The LGS is immediately adjacent to the village and therefore complies with the requirement to be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.
2. The land is demonstrably special to the local community, satisfied by reference to items 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 & 8 above.
3. The LGS is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.It should be noted that in the local consultation draft plan the LGS was proposed to cover the entire Article 4 area,between High Street and Gun Lane.However,on advice from MKC the area of the LGS was reduced.

*Area*

The LGS covers an area of approximately 2.3 ha.

**Policy NP8**

The site selection process was as follows:

1. Surveys and public meetings to inform the definition of the objectives of the Plan.
2. Drafting headline policies based on community objectives.
3. Consultation on these high level policies (electronic and leaflet).
4. Application of approved high level policies to sites available (as part of process all landowners expressing an interest in development were invited to make a 30-minute presentation to a panel on their site in relation to high level policies).
5. Overlay of Brownfield register, flood, Highways and utility input from MKC and others.
6. Public meeting on site allocation and draft proposals map.
7. Agreement on site allocation.
8. Drafting of Plan containing final,detailed policies and site allocations.

It should be noted that the approach taken was logical. In accordance with high level policies sites in the LGS and Article 4 areas were not prioritised, nor were sites adjacent to heritage assets. During the process a large greenfield site was granted planning permission for 36 houses on appeal (it had been resisted on the basis of scale and prematurity). This absorbed much of the core strategy allocation (20-40) and exceeded the mean housing level supported by the community (25).In order to meet the need for some further housing it was decided to allocate one more site. In accordance with national planning priorities and clear community preference it was decided to allocate the only Brownfield site in preference to the greenfield sites,including the one numbered 9 in Annexe A,which is located in the LGS.

Chaldean Properties does not own Smith's Yard. It is engaged by the owners, the Smith family, to develop the site.

**Proposals Map**

A copy of the two Article 4 Directions are attached.

**Representation by Roy Mason (David Lock Associates)**

Both Mr Mason and Mr Chadwick attended at least one Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting, at which they spoke. They were free to attend and speak at these monthly, public meetings.

Mr Mason attended at least one of the public open days of which there were 3.

Mr Mason and Mr Chadwick were invited to attend the site allocation panel in March 2016. They both attended.

Three detailed letters have been received from David Lock. The response of the NPSG to the 2nd letter is set out in the Consultation Statement.

I trust that this is helpful and clarifies the questions the Examiner has raised to date. Should any further details be required, then please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely

Sherrington Parish Council