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**DS**

**Woburn Sands and District Society**

Mark Turner  
Senior Planning Officer  
Milton Keynes Council  
Civic Offices  
1 Saxon Gate East  
Central Milton Keynes  
MK9 3EJ

10<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Dear Mr Turner,

**re Application 14/00703/OUT: Residential development for up to 53 homes together with open space, strategic landscaping, supporting infrastructure (including gas, electricity, water, sewerage, telecommunications), new vehicle and pedestrian/cycle access onto Newport Road, demolition and ground remodelling (outline application);**

**at Frosts Landscape Construction, Newport Road, Wavendon, MK17 8UZ**

The Woburn Sands and District Society is a conservation and amenity society covering Woburn Sands and the neighbouring villages including Wavendon, Bow Brickhill, Aspley Heath and Aspley Guise. The Society was founded in 1965 and currently has a membership of some 300 households. It is a registered charity.

The Society urges that this application be refused. Residential development at this site is unwelcome, unnecessary and contrary to the Milton Keynes Core Strategy (2013).

**General comments**

1. The applicants appear to be aggrieved over the scope and/or outcomes of the Examination of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy that was held in 2012. The Society does not know whether the applicants made any submission to the Examination and, if they did, what their submission was. However, it would appear from their *Planning Statement* for this application that they wish (i) that the Examination had reviewed the settlement boundaries in Milton Keynes, in particular the boundary between Woburn Sands and Wavendon; (ii) that any such review would have resulted in changes to that boundary, in particular to move the site of this application from Wavendon to Woburn Sands (but see the following paragraph); and (iii) that any such changes would have led to changes in the planning status of this site and hence its possible future use.

However, the Society believes that the Examination was open and democratic, that its conclusions are valid and legal, and that this application must be judged according to the resulting Core Strategy.

2. The applicants appear to be confused or are inconsistent as to whether the site of this application is in Woburn Sands or Wavendon. In paragraph 2.02 of their *Planning Statement*, they note that ‘this site is contiguous with the Woburn Sands settlement boundary, but is located within Wavendon Parish’. However, repeatedly in their documentation, the applicants give its address as Wain Close, Woburn Sands (though not in the publicity leaflet which appears to be designed for local residents). Moreover, they emphasise that Woburn Sands is designated as a ‘Key Settlement’ in the Core Strategy and also in the Local Plan and so is considered a focus for development in the rural areas of Milton Keynes (e.g. Paragraph 3.06 of the *Planning Statement*). Overall, the applicants appear to wish to give the impression that the site is in Woburn Sands and, if it is not, that nevertheless it should be treated as if it is.

### **Specific comments**

**Planning designation of the site** The site is within an area that is designated as ‘open countryside’ in the Local Plan for Milton Keynes (2005) and thence in the Core Strategy. There is a presumption against development in the open countryside.

**Land that is reserved for housing** The Core Strategy (approved 2013) identifies sufficient land to meet the housing targets of both the urban and the rural areas of Milton Keynes for the next five years, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. These targets and Milton Keynes Council’s progress towards achieving them, in particular the targets for the rural areas (including Wavendon) and for the Key Settlements (including Woburn Sands), were checked by the Independent Examiner of the *Neighbourhood Plan for Woburn Sands* at the public Hearing on January 29th of this year. The Examiner was satisfied by the data and, in his report released in March, he recommended that the Plan should go to Referendum (and it was approved in the local referendum held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.) So Milton Keynes Council’s data concerning the area of land that has been allocated for housing and the progress that has been made to build on that land, have been subjected to authoritative independent scrutiny, twice. However, in their *Planning Statement*, the applicants question the data in the Core Strategy and the progress that has been made towards the housing targets in it (e.g. Paragraphs 2.22 and 3.30). Moreover, they suggest that the status of the site of this application should be changed to that of housing. The applicants do mention the *Neighbourhood Plan for Woburn Sands* (in Paragraph 3.44) but, perhaps surprisingly, neither the public Hearing in January nor the Examiner’s report. (The *Planning Statement* is dated 28 March 2014 and the Examiner’s report is dated simply ‘March 2014’, though possibly it was not available publicly until very early April.) The Society does not know whether the applicants contributed in any way to the Neighbourhood Plan process over the last two years or so.

**Planning policy re rural boundaries** Milton Keynes Council recognises the importance of maintaining the integrity and character of the established rural towns and villages within the Borough. Therefore the Council has a policy of maintaining green buffers around these settlements to prevent their coalescence, with each other and with the urban areas of Milton Keynes. The site of this application is roughly midway between the centre of Wavendon and that of Woburn Sands, so any development at the site would encourage coalescence, both visually and in planning terms, of the two settlements.

**The Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan** Although the Plan does not include the site of this application, certain of the Policies of the Plan are relevant because the site, although in Wavendon, is immediately adjacent to Woburn Sands. Also, Wavendon Parish Council was involved with the production of the Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan and agrees with it. For example, Policy WS5 of the Neighbourhood Plan states ‘The preservation of the countryside setting, existing woodland and footpath links into the countryside is key to the future to the future of Woburn Sands. No extension to the Woburn Sands Development Boundary will therefore be permitted other than in the following exceptional circumstances .....’ (The three sets of exceptional circumstances that follow all refer to any review of the boundary when the Core Strategy is reviewed in several years’ time.)

Policy WS6 states ‘The Parklands development is expected to meet the needs for large scale housing development in Woburn Sands during the plan period (i.e. to 2026). Additional housing in the plan area will therefore be limited to small scale infilling, opportunities between existing properties or redevelopment of previously developed sites other than in the following circumstances.....’ (There are then four sets of circumstances given.)

If the site of this application was within Woburn Sands, the development proposed would be contrary to the above two Policies. The Society believes that it would not be logical to even consider allowing the development because the site is situated only just outside Woburn Sands.

Yours sincerely



Alastair Ewing, WSDS Committee member

<http://www.woburnsandsanddistrictsociety.org/default.asp>