

ITEM 4(a)(iv)

MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL

21 OCTOBER 2015

MINERALS LOCAL PLAN

SUBMISSION FROM COUNCILLOR P GEARY

Please accept my apologies, i will not be able to attend cabinet as I have a family engagement in Canada which means I will be away however I would appreciate the comments below being made known to both the cabinet and others before the decision is made to recommend the draft minerals local plan is sent to council.

The minerals local plan will have a greater effect on some communities in our ward than any other policy that this council will progress in the next decade. As ward councillor i and my colleagues understand this and are prepared to do whatever it takes to get a robust and sustainable plan in place that will protect our communities as much as is possible while still allowing Milton Keynes to meet its allocation of minerals that it has to extract. Both individually and collectively we have met with officers and with Cllr Legg to progress matters and we brought a motion to this meeting last autumn about the issue as well.

There can be no doubt that Milton Keynes council needs to have a robust minerals plan in place to protect communities from unplanned extraction however as this is done it is vital that the communities are taken along with the plan as it develops and as much consensus as possible is gained. The effects of bullying a plan through at all costs because as a council we can, will see ramifications that will last a generation. The communities affected by these proposals know only too well the issues around minerals extraction. They are intelligent and resourceful and individually and collectively know more than many experts do about the issues and their views should be listened to and understood not merely given lip-service. The way that some of their comments have been reported in the annexes to the paper could be read that just because they are objecting to extraction sites that any other comments they make are in some way not valid. While this was undoubtedly not the way it was intended if this is the way it is perceived then it will do damage to this councils cause when it comes to trying to get a plan accepted rather than imposed. The way things can be perceived is often more important than the way things are in actuality.

With regards to the overall total of aggregates that we as a council need to extract this is the overall most crucial figure in the whole proposal. The lower this figure is the less communities have to be affected. As a council we have few areas of unspoilt countryside in this borough. some of the few that are left will undoubtedly be changed when this plan comes into force however we need to make sure that these

areas are as few as possible and as far away from people as we can. Many people have in their comments mentioned this and we need to do far more to explore these issues and if necessary explain further things around them to people. We must not make the mistake of accepting the higher figures just because we know this figure will be easier to defend with developers. We need to ensure that we robustly select a figure that is defensible to all sides.

The location of sites is also vital. MKC asked for further sites to be put forward into the plan and more were received. The reasons for these being recommended not to be included seems to be on the whole that they had no industry backing and that there was little evidence of the amount of mineral on these sites. The fact that the industry does not have the agreements in place in these areas or indeed has agreements that are more favourable to them in other areas does not mean that we should grant those sites. We need a plan that is developed in the best interests of all the people in MK not in the interests of a few developers. With regards to the amount of aggregates available in these sites it is not surprising that people do not know what is under these sites. They need to be given time to develop this information with crops growing and little time to submit interest it cannot be surprising that many of the submissions were not rich on detail. While many of these sites would most likely be unsuitable either now or in the future some may be and we need to explore everything to get a robust plan in place. Some of them may just be better than those we currently have and spending the next few months exploring this would be time well spent. Especially as this could be done in conjunction with the consultation.

I am grateful that Cllr Legg has agreed to give as much time as possible for people to explore and comment of these proposals while the statutory consultation period is 6 weeks for this to have happened over the summer would have been unfair and his understanding is very much appreciated.

If this plan progresses in method of cooperation and consensus then I and I am sure my colleagues will work with it to develop it in the best interests of everyone.

Peter Geary

7/6/2015