

Written representation from Central Milton Keynes Town Council

We have read the brief for the bid documents for the site which is generally in line with what we have discussed with you over the development of the brief to bidders.

We wish to make a couple of comments. Firstly, the existence of the ransom strip, we were made aware of this prior to the start of the stakeholder consultation by the adjacent landowner, we are therefore surprised that officers did not appear to know of its existence. This clearly makes the tender process more complicated and could indeed mean that it becomes a closed, not open tender situation.

Our other concern is that you are only allowing bidders a six week period to submit initial proposals, this compares with three months for Saxon Court. For bidders to come forward with a mixed use scheme, as we have been encouraging, more time is required to come forward with a credible bid with named operators. We therefore urge you to extend the tender period to at least twelve weeks.

As ever we are happy to continue to discuss how we believe that this site should be developed for the maximum benefit to Milton Keynes and will continue to promote the opportunity with potential bidders and operators, but we request that you seek an extension to the tender period.

Written representation from Tim Skelton, Chair of Milton Keynes Forum

1. Given the challenges around achieving a positive land value, I do not understand why the Council is even spending time and effort preparing a brief and a marketing exercise. If the agents have got it wrong and there is a demand, then it must raise a question about the quality of their advice.
2. The Council is committed to a highly Green agenda and yet there is no mention in the Brief about retaining the building and the matter does not appear in your Assessment Criteria - when I raised this on Saxon Court you may recall that a rating was added (I seem to think that it was 10%). Either the Council is committed to the environment or it is not, but it should not say one thing and practice another.
3. I have made the point previously about the importance of the site within the cultural area of Central Milton Keynes and that we feel that it should be "protected" by remaining in public ownership to give flexibility for the future of this sector as the city grows towards 500,000. As a consequence we feel that the MSCP should be retained by the Council and that you should market it "as is" to see what uses you can attract - with a view to seeking to cover your holding cost of £60,000 pa. If the market is completely dead, then you can look at an alternative strategy.

4. You need to ensure that the Council is fully protected from an unscrupulous developer who might buy the site on the basis of building an eight storey block of flats (and get planning permission for same; and purchase the freehold) and then seek consent for a thirty storey block - leaving the Council looking like fools. Hopefully you will have thought of this already, but I raise it in case you have not.
5. The true value from this site will not emerge from some time - probably ten years at least, if not longer - and it might be social value rather than financial. However, given that it will not generate a significant sum for the Council at present it seems strange to seek to dispose of it now - it makes no sense.