

Bedford Borough Council
Planning Policy Team
Borough Hall,
Cauldwell Street,
Bedford, MK42 9AP

Dear Sir or Madam

Re: Review of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 – Call for Sites Submission for Station Road, Oakley (Lovell Road Playing Fields)

On behalf of client, the Sharnbrook Academy Federation (SAF), a leading provider of education in the Borough, we are pleased to submit details of the above site for consideration as part of the Review of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 – Call for Sites submissions.

Sharnbrook Academy Federation's (SAF's) interest within the site comprises the existing Lovell Road Playing Fields (within the southern portion of the submitted site area), which form part of the existing facilities of the Lincroft Academy. The location plan corresponding to the Call for Sites submission relates to the wider area of land East of Station Road, with the remainder in the ownership of the Bedfordshire Charitable Trust.

The submitted details reflect a Joint Venture agreement with the Bedfordshire Charitable Trust to provide for a 'land swap'. The objective of the comprehensive proposals for development enabled by this agreement, in relation to SAF's interests, reflect the opportunity to, principally, provide for the relocation and enhancement of the Playing Field facilities and other operational improvements to the school including a new school access and parking/circulation space, and also new teaching facilities.

The Trust's interests are subject to a separate submission on its behalf by Bedfordia Developments Ltd. and should be read alongside details provided by SAF. The details within this submission have been provided with the agreement of the Bedfordshire Charitable Trust and Bedfordia Developments Ltd.

SAF was grateful for recognition of the current and future land use and operational requirements of Lincroft Academy during the Examination of the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan, with the proposed designation of the Lovell Road Playing Fields as a Local Green Space having been rejected by the Examiner. The Examiner's Report records that imposing an additional layer of protection would have unduly limited Lincroft Academy in terms of future uses of the site. In relation to SAF's future objectives the Examiner's Report further notes:

"The playing fields are separated from the main part of the school buildings and Lincroft Academy wishes to reorganise its land parcels to enable the growth and efficient functioning of the school. In addition, Oakley Football Club has indicated that it is looking for flexibility in case a better site should come forward for the Club's use. The designation of the site as LGS would limit the future options for the school in that reorganisation."

The Oakley Neighbourhood Plan further notes that the requirements of existing organisations should be considered when assessing future proposals for development.

In commencing its immediate Review of the Local Plan 2030, in accordance with Policy 1 of the adopted Plan, SAF would welcome further engagement with the Council regarding the strategic priorities for education associated with the current requirements of Lincroft Academy and future levels of growth in Oakley and surrounding settlements. It is considered essential that delivery of these requirements is supported through the policies and allocations of the Plan.

The details submitted would contribute towards an appropriate spatial strategy and satisfy key elements of the Council's proposed objectives for sustainable development.

The proposal would deliver in effect a new, self-contained Lincroft Academy campus. Alongside the replacement and enhancement of the existing school sports facilities (including opportunities for use by the wider community), a new traffic managed, through-route would be created on the eastern periphery of the site, which would also provide for the creation of a new dedicated school entrance drive. The proposed highways improvements would also serve as a development access road and serve the new housing area. The proposed scheme could provide up to 250 residential dwellings (incorporating the area covered by existing allocations under the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan), including the provision of affordable housing. Suitable landscaping, together with noise mitigation and the physical boundary of the Midland Mainline would maintain separation with Clapham to the east.

In light of the extensive scope for the Review of the Local Plan 2030 we consider that an appropriate strategy will require a combination of multiple spatial options over the plan period. In the case of our client's land at Station Road, Oakley this option would contribute to a 'Dispersed' strategy for the rural area. The submitted details would achieve a logical and comprehensive development option for Oakley that will respond to the Village's development needs over the plan period on a single site.

The submitted details support the review of the housing requirement for Oakley and the reconsideration of its role as a Rural Service Centre, particularly given the importance of Lincroft Academy to the surrounding area.

We look forward to future updates regarding preparation of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review. We would be happy to answer any questions or requirements for clarification as part of the Council's assessment of the site within the next version of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment and ahead of future stages of consultation regarding the Local Plan Review.

Yours Sincerely


Managing Director