

WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection

- David Fittall

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I am writing to WBC to object to *WBC LPR Regulation 19* which proposes a development of 1500-2500 houses NE of Thatcham.

- The size of the development has been spun by WBC as a reduction from 2500 to 1500 whereas it is in fact an increase in the plan period from 1250 in the Reg 18 Consultation to 1500 in this Reg 19 Consultation. Reg 19 is now silent on the number of houses expected beyond the current plan period whilst it is very clear the area referred to is the same geographical size as that in Reg 18 which stated a final target of 2500. This seems to be deliberately misleading messaging from WBC from Reg 18 to Reg 19.
- The overall impression is that the WBC is, no matter what, committed to this large scale development NE of Thatcham and is intent on spinning its case to fit a pre-determined conclusion. This is reinforced by the seeming lack of proper assessments, consultation and cooperation highlighted in each of the thorough responses from Thatcham Town Council, Cold Ash Parish Council and Bucklebury Parish Council
- There has to be concerns that much of WBC's case is based upon the Thatcham Strategic Growth Study that was funded by developers that stand to profit from the allocation of this specific site. The study did not consider alternative sites, has not been through formal consultation and nor has it been adopted by WBC.
- Also WBC is stubbornly proceeding with the Reg 19 Consultation even though national policy is changing after statements on 6th Dec 2022 by Michael Gove, and with an ongoing consultation on amendments to the NPPF – other local authorities have paused planning processes until these changes are clear. WBC has not, which does not make sense.
- WBC has also overdelivered on required houses in the past few years. So this and the NPPF consultation at national level means that the continued requirement for such a large development has to be questioned.
- There are also numerous additional concerns about this development:
 - WBC itself objected to the much smaller Siege Cross development in 2015/16 raising concerns about visual impact, impact on the landscape and proximity to the AONB. Why then given Siege Cross is a subset of this now much larger proposal are these no longer concerns?
 - Lack of detailed and concrete plans for infrastructure for such a large development:
 - Provision for medical facilities lack detail, and no Health Impact Analysis has been undertaken.
 - Nothing in the plans for Nursery education provision, Primary provision is vague, and Secondary school provision is also unclear and no location identified. Funding is unclear and out of date data is used to assess pupil numbers.
 - The obvious environment impact of so many houses in one area are skated over, with vague and unsubstantiated mitigation measures promised in the hope of deflecting from the very real impact this will have on the wildlife, green spaces,

buffer between Thatcham and the surrounding villages, and the increased traffic and footfall and hence impact on the AONB/Bucklebury Common.

- The road traffic analysis is optimistic and the case of the Cold Ash and Upper Bucklebury non-existent. Again, such a large development will have major impact on traffic across Thatcham, particularly the A4 and will greatly increase traffic on the what are increasingly busy rat-runs into Reading via Upper Bucklebury, Cold Ash, Chapel Row and Bradfield. The village routes experience consistent speeding and increasing traffic today, and a 1500-2500 housing development will make this worse. This will severely impact the quality of life in these villages (and Thatcham) and create safety concerns via increasing traffic volumes on unsuitable village/country roads.

I have read the responses to Reg 19 from Thatcham Town Council, Bucklebury Parish Council, and Cold Ash Parish Council. These are comprehensive responses and highlight the flaws in WBC's proposal, particularly that WBC has not made the proper and required assessments before pressing ahead.

As a resident of Upper Bucklebury the impact on local infrastructure (esp schooling and medical provision), to the countryside, to the AONB, to Bucklebury Common are of great concern. In addition, the increased traffic through the village would be terrible and would change the whole feel and quality of life in the village and in the other villages on the route in Reading.

David Fittall