

Comment

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Event Name	Proposed Submission (Reg 19) West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039
Comment by	Ed Ridley-Day (1334732)
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Consultation Point	Policy SP 17 North East Thatcham Strategic Site Allocation (View)
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1. Do you consider the Local Plan Review is legally compliant?

Please see the guidance note for an explanation of what 'legally compliant' means

Yes

2. Do you consider the Local Plan Review is sound?

Please see the guidance notes for an explanation of what 'soundness' means.

The soundness of the LPR should be assessed against the following criteria from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Please tick all that apply:

Positively Prepared: The plan provides a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed need and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development. . No

Justified: the plan is an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence. . No

Effective: the plan is deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground. . No

Consistent with national policy: the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies of the NPPF. . No

Please give reasons for your answer

It is my view that the planned development of >1500 new homes as part of the NE Thatcham development is not sound and I object to the development, particularly for the reasons below. I also highlight that many of these objections were raised by the council itself when West Berkshire Council successfully blocked the building of 500 homes in 2015...

Traffic and access: there is already a high volume of traffic along the A4 between Reading and Newbury, including HGVs. The planned development does not adequately address access/ traffic volumes. It would still rely on access from the A4 or Harts Hill Rd. In addition, it is likely that pressure on the A4 access routes will lead to a material increase in traffic through the villages in the adjacent AONB, inc. Upper Bucklebury and Chapel Row.

Healthcare facilities: there is already substantial pressure on healthcare provision in West Berkshire, as there is also nationwide. The plans highlight one new GP surgery but given the number of new residents and the extent to which existing services are oversubscribed, this is not adequate.

Access to education: Similarly the planned expansion will put substantial pressure on secondary schools in the area. The Kennet school is already over-subscribed.

Environmental damage: in addition to the removal of fields and hedgerows there will be consequential damage to Bucklebury Common, which will likely result in increasing damage to an ecosystem of national importance

The planned 'green spaces' for the new development are small within the scheme's size, and will provide no meaningful ecological value.

Lack of a gap between Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury – Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury will effectively merge together increasing the risk of further encroachment of Thatcham towards the AONB border and the village.

I highlight that many similar objections were raised by West Berkshire Council itself in blocking the development of 500 homes - a much smaller development - in 2015.

At that time *the Council argued* that the proposed 2015 development would:

- . Urbanise the key areas of sensitivity [...] including: the lower slopes of an important ridge line; Big Gully, a local landmark; good views across the area and long views across the Kennet Valley; the lack of development with scattered farmsteads and minor roads; and the rural setting of the historic settlement at Siege Cross Farm.
- . Detract from the enjoyment of the character and appearance of the AONB in views from the escarpment south of the River Kennet.
- . Erode the identity of Thatcham as being separate to that of the surrounding rural settlements.
- . Fail to conserve the historic landscape setting and rural context of Siege Cross Farm.

3. Do you consider the Local Plan Review complies with the Duty to Co-operate?

Please see the guidance note for an explanation of what 'Duty to Cooperate' means.

Yes

5. Independent Examination

If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate at the examination hearing session(s)? No

6. Notification of Progress of the Local Plan Review

Do you wish to be notified of any of the following?

Please tick all that apply

The submission of the Local Plan Review for Independent Examination . Yes

The publication of the report of the Inspector appointed to carry out the examination . Yes

The adoption of the Local Plan Review . Yes