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27<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection**

I am writing to raise my objections against the Thatcham NE proposed housing development. There are many reasons why the proposed location is unsuitable for this large development, which I will highlight below. I moved to this area [REDACTED]-years ago as the area had so much wildlife and plenty of green spaces. But the position of this new development, which is the size of a new village will affect a lot of the wildlife in this area. The increased traffic, increased footfall and increase in the number of dogs using the greenspaces will all negatively affect the wildlife here. Please see below some of my other concerns.

Currently in rush hour the traffic along Floral Way queues in the morning to join the A4. Then queues along the A4 to Piper's Way. The traffic queueing along Pipers Way can be stuck there for 20-30 mins if 2 or 3 trains come along at the same time. An additional 1500-2500 houses in this area will only exacerbate the current traffic issues in this area. This queueing traffic will create more air pollution, with the number of cars stuck in traffic with their engines idling.

The proposed development is going to add 1000s more cars to the roads in this area. The traffic in this area can only get worse, and subsequently people will start to look at alternative routes "rat-runs" to get to their chosen location. The small country lanes that run through Bucklebury is where a lot of this traffic would divert. These roads are small and are not suitable for high volumes of traffic. The potential levels of traffic going through Upper Bucklebury would dramatically change this part of the village. The narrow country lanes through Bucklebury do not have pavements, so additional traffic will cause a risk to the walkers, cyclists, horse riders that use these lanes. Increasing the risk of serious accidents.

The plan for an exit from the development onto Harts Hill will be pushing more traffic up through Bucklebury, and Cold Ash, which do not have the roads or pavements to deal with this additional traffic. Harts Hill is a busy road, with a sharp bend on it, having junctions joining this road could cause issues.

The proposed development is on the edge of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the increased light levels from the development will impact on the dark skies of the AONB. The views from the AONB will be dramatically affected.

The plan talks about “A new community park linking Thatcham to the North Wessex Downs AONB”. These links could seriously impact the wildlife at the nationally important heathlands in the AONB, and the nationally scarce ground nesting birds that reside there. The increased footfall and subsequent dogs on the heathlands during Covid lockdown were significant. There will be a bigger increase in usage of these areas from the development, and the disturbance caused could lead to us losing the Nightjars that currently reside there.

The management vision for Bucklebury Common, which has recently been developed a part of a Countryside Stewardship arrangement, states that it’s focused on not increasing pressure on the fragile ecosystem of the Commons. It’s aim is to restore and nurture these important heathland areas. So, the proposed development so close to these heathlands is at direct odds with the management and protection of the Commons.

I have quite often seen hedgehogs crossing the road at Floral Way in the evening, going to and from the area where the development will be. These fields and hedgerows are vital to the survival of hedgehogs, whose numbers are already in decline due to habitat loss. The hedgehog is a red listed mammal at risk of extinction. The loss of this important piece of their habitat would affect their numbers locally. Also the increased traffic in the area would also increase the number of hedgehog casualties on Floral Way.

No evidence has been provided to show how this proposed development can have a positive impact on the environment. It appears it will have a damaging impact on the environment, and there appears to have been no recent ecological surveys to show the valuable biodiversity on this site. With no recent ecological surveys in place, they cannot have put in place any plans for mitigation for the species on this site. The LPR’s own sustainability appraisal accepts that SP17 will have a negative impact on the environmental sustainability of the area. The proposed development site is a greenfield site so it will result in a negative impact on the environmental sustainability, and there are no signs of the plans to mitigate for this.

There doesn’t appear to be a Health Impact Assessment included in the plans for this large development. So there is no sign of the development having been discussed with the various healthcare agencies. The 3 doctors’ surgeries that are responsible for this proposed NE Thatcham development site are already overstretched and the plans for the development do not have any detail on how additional doctor capacity will be made. There also seems to have been a lack of any communication with the local care providers to work out how the additional capacity will be catered for. The local dental practices are in a similar position of being oversubscribed locally.

In December 2022 Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities released a statement stating that the housing number should now be an advisory starting point and not mandatory. The statement also said that the Planning Inspectorate should no longer override sensible local decision making, which is sensitive to and reflects local constraints and concerns. Several local authorities have already taken the decision to pause their planning process to await the

outcome of the consultation, on the basis that a lower housing requirement could be applicable. I feel the council should pause their plans and put in place a revised plan in line with the updated planning guidance when it is made available.

I am sure there must be more suitable brown field sites locally, which would have a much less negative affect on the wildlife and surrounding countryside. Where better provision for schools, healthcare and schools can be made.

Yours faithfully

TJ