

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PlanningPolicy](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: West Berkshire Local Plan Review to 2037 - Proposal for the provision of 1500/2,500 houses to be built on land adjacent to the A4 and Floral Way - N/E Thatcham
Date: 20 February 2023 19:26:21

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP. THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.

Dear Sirs,

I am writing further with regard to the Local Plan Review as above on account of the apparent failure of the Council to take account of the updated Government (re- think) planning guidance to avoid the provision of housing development on areas of greenfield/AONB land and the number of houses required/earmarked by the Local Plan to be built over the plan period.

As a resident of Upper Bucklebury, I find it incomprehensible and deeply disturbing that a proposal such as above is being seriously considered so as to dump such a large provision of housing in this in-appropriate green-field location with the consequential and obvious adverse effect that it will have not only on the residents of Thatcham itself but also on the neighbouring villages in the near and wider surrounding rural area - an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- Over the years, Thatcham has suffered from an ongoing and exponential expansion in housing development such that it is rapidly becoming an indistinct suburb of Greater Reading with individual villages vanishing in a swamp of continuous ribbon development. When the Dunston Park and Thatcham Relief Road (Floral Way) developments were granted planning consent, it was argued and understood at the time that this relief road would become the boundary for any future Green Belt development northwards (once and for all). but this understanding (or legal planning requirement?) has been conveniently put aside.
- So much for previous promises!
- Now we are confronted with the development of 1500 houses just a few years later, thus setting a further precedent for a planned increase to 2,500 and exponentially who knows - another 1000 or more, as time moves on, as a convenient dumping ground,.
- An Overwhelming Majority of residents do not wish to see **any** housing allocated to this site, which will destroy the rural nature and quiet atmosphere of this very special AONB area, being situated right next to Bucklebury Common.
- They are concerned at the wider adverse implications likely to result from an apparent planned over provision of housing allocated in the draft Local Plan, which puts pressure on the Council to unreasonably allocate development to greenfield land (not brown land as advocated by the Government) in a very sensitive area such as this.
- An escarpment of urban housing sprawl will emerge like a fan over this quiet rural part of AONB countryside – In any terms, a massive overdevelopment in any one location, let alone this one, planned over quiet farming land which neither warrants nor should expect **any** allocation of housing development what-so-ever– pure vandalism, and which if proceeded with, on account of the steep gradient of the site, will be highly visible from the A4/Thatcham/Kennet valley area below and a permanent eye sore to perpetuity on this landscape – in any terms a visual and un-necessary desecration of this beautiful part of rural

West Berkshire.

- The Government has stated that it does not wish to see over-development in the south east, or on Green Field land. ('Levelling up')
- The requirement for additional housing numbers contained within the West Berks Plan should be based on local need within the area, not on a broad based numbers game arbitrarily mandated allocation from central government, apparently now signalled as no longer mandatory.
- The Local Authority has a duty of care to concentrate the location of housing need on brown/ semi brown field sites or in other less prominent, less controversially sensitive **non** AONB locations. It would be arrogant, undemocratic and political suicide in the current situation for the Local Authority to plough on with the current proposals, regardless, in the face of virtual 100% local opposition as currently expressed without evaluating the result of the Governments current dithering and changing/emerging policy advice on residential planning and more importantly the crazy decision to allocate housing to this site in the first place.
- In view of the above, it is reported that many other Local Authorities are staying, amending or scrapping their plans pending up-dated clarification from the Government on extending the plan period. In view of the re-think required in regard to the NE Thatcham draft plan, West Berks must do the same and establish alternative locations for the perceived NE Thatcham allocation of their draft Plan. That is – if it is required in the first place.

Apart from this, Thatcham and its surrounding areas are unable to take any further such sized development in the context of its existing road infrastructure and amenities.

The argument made for the construction of the Floral Way relief road was to take pressure off the A4 and Central Thatcham. Without further extensive up-grading of this infrastructure likely to be required to provide for the increased traffic emanating from the proposed development, the Floral Way roundabout and Harts Hill Road round-about will be constantly grid locked.

Notwithstanding, as currently planned, that provision for access directly on to Floral Way from the proposed development has been made, use of Harts Hill Road from the planned NE entrance to the development at the top of the hill will exacerbate the traffic congestion problems on this dangerous, steep and windy road.

Any traffic survey undertaken must take account of the fact that Harts Hill Road has become an overflow shortcut for traffic destined to Reading via Upper Bucklebury/Southend Bradfield as well as to the A34/M4 via Cold Ash/Hermitage in order to avoid using the congested A4.

The build up of traffic using Broad Lane and the Avenue of Oaks has increasingly become a rat run, with vehicles travelling at 50/60 mph right alongside the edge of Bucklebury Common, creating serious danger to walkers and their dogs as well as cyclists, adjacent to the designated 'Quiet Lanes'. This danger will be substantially increased by the vastly increased volume of vehicles emanating from the development seeking to use this road.

Traffic build up and lack of parking facilities within the town centre are a major concern as existing, without the addition initially of some likely 2,500 additional vehicles from the proposed development.

The A4 can hardly handle the existing traffic flow around Thatcham as now, let alone being able to cope with this increase of vehicles in such a confined location.

The main Station carpark for Commuters is usually full at normal working times without any further parking provision available or planned. With the entrance thereto squeezed alongside the Level Crossing making it almost impossible to manoeuvre around in the full flow of traffic, frequently

rendered stationary with the main road continually blocked when the gates are down to accommodate passing trains, This area around the station, can hardly cope, thus creating a no go area in peak times. That is the current position. With the addition of a further 2,500 vehicles (or so) within the area, solely from the development as planned, the added pressure will render this area simply unable to cope.

At the same time, the build up of traffic at the Level Crossing (Bridge proposal seemingly now abandoned), gets worse and worse, and is currently un-acceptable. With further trains and further traffic build up, it will be virtually impossible to cross from the north to the south side of the railway lines in a reasonably timely manner on what is a crucial route south (despite what Town Planner David Lock has previously said) in normal times. This is a time bomb, requiring serious resolution now.

All this is in addition to the adverse impact that the additional traffic generated from the proposal will have on wider local villages and country lanes as referred to above.

Regardless of the extraordinary decision to allocate housing as above to this location in the first place, neither the current congestion problems, nor their likely increase, seem to have been addressed in any comprehensible way in the proposed Plan – (? on the basis that 'that it will all come right on the day!')

Unfortunately, it won't, on account of the many obvious unsolvable difficulties requiring resolution.

Before any further abortive and wasteful work is undertaken on the current Plan, a full detailed **third party** Infrastructure Survey (covering roads, traffic movement, healthcare, schools and environment) across the relevant and outlying area affected, covering Thatcham, the proposed development, and the A4 should be undertaken to assess the practical viability of the Plan proposals within the context of the current position pertaining, and the additional pressure resulting from the Plan proposals.

The proposals for NE Thatcham as set out in the local draft Plan should be scrapped.

Please register my personal objections to these proposals as contained in the West Berkshire Plan.

Yours faithfully

Eric Lloyd

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area, obscuring the name and any handwritten notes or dates.