

**From:** [Maira Billing](#)  
**To:** [PlanningPolicy](#)  
**Subject:** West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 Proposed Submission Representation Form  
**Date:** 27 February 2023 19:33:30

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

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This representation is from:

Maira Billing, [REDACTED]. Email:  
[REDACTED]

Please find below my representation regarding the Local Plan Review. The council form is too complicated to make sense of but i have tried to follow the basic structure of the form

### **Legally Compliant**

The online form is difficult to follow with many links that make it difficult to understand the structure of the document and what is actually going on. In terms of legal compliance, under the letter of the law I am not qualified to judge, even asking this question of West Berks Residents is unreasonable and any response there were supplied would not be valid evidence because most residents including myself are not solicitors or Barristers and do not have the necessary knowledge or skills to decide.

In terms of the spirit of the law I believe the consultation is not compliant. Carrying out a consultation implies access to a two-way conversation between an expert(s) and the consultees to enable the latter to make an informed decision. The information supplied should be in a format that is readily understandable by the consultees and not in technical jargon.

This consultation fails in several areas:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->A huge amount of information has been provided, but is difficult to interpret and to make overall sense of. It's not easy to establish the overall structure of the consultation and when the council form is accessed is suddenly refers to lots of other documents to read which most people will not do. They will probably give and not submit a response. There is too much complicated information

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Mainly available online – no access for people who are computer illiterate or do not have suitable hardware to be able to read and understand the documents. If people work they cannot access the documents in the council offices is they work full time, and it would take several days to fully understand all the documents.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->The policy map is illegible on a standard computer screen. It is far too small to be of use and the legend includes planning jargon which I don't understand and couldn't readily find out what it means.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Many residents do not even know that this

consultation is taking place. Emails were sent out to people on the council mailing list, but again those without electronic devices would not be notified. It has been in the local paper but not everyone reads that either. Most information has been circulated by a number of dedicated people who have leafleted houses in their area.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->This is an important plan setting policy for the next 15 years and I believe that a genuine consultation process should have included the provision of a summary leaflet to every property in the district setting out the basic details of the plan that the public was being to consider. There should also have been a public exhibition put on during the full length of the consultation period in several locations to ensure that every one had the opportunity to view the details. Staffed by council officers it would have allowed questions and concerns to be raised and informed responses to be provided to the council. The provision of large scale map would be a critical part of the exhibition so the effect on all of the district can be established, rather than just each individual proposal.

The council may be complying with legal requirements but it clearly doesn't care a bit about genuinely consulting with its residents.

## **Soundness**

Once again, the question is written for experts to complete and expecting resident to read and understand the National Planning Policy Framework as well as the local plan, is unrealistic so I can't say that the plan is sound because I don't know.

From information from Michael Gove MP in his role as Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, I tend to believe that the plan is not sound. He has indicated his preference for Brownfield sites, which is not presently the case, and he has delayed some decisions regarding planning matters that will affect the preparation of Local Plans. If that is so then the West Berks Plan does not conform to that, and several brownfield sites that have been suggested by developers are noticeably absent from this plan. In particular the redevelopment of the Faraday Road Industrial area and the Colthrop industrial area which included a major infrastructure improvement, a bridge over the railway and rivers in Thatcham, to remove the adverse traffic issues of the level crossing.

Many local authorities have delayed their local plan preparation until this information has been released, surely this should also be the case for West Berkshire because of the potential impact on the lives of all West Berkshire residents.

## **Proposed Changes**

SP18 North East Thatcham Strategic Housing allocation

As a resident of Thatcham I have particular concerns about this policy

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->This is a proposed greenfield site

development. I believe the government is favouring brownfield sites. Why has the Colthrop village proposal not been included – surely this meets the requirements of the plan, especially when it includes a proposal for a major infrastructure improvement to remove the Thatcham level crossing and its associated traffic issues.

• Thatcham cannot cope with any more housing without major infrastructure improvements, which I cannot find being recommended anywhere. Public transport is poor. There is little parking at the railway station and no improvements indicated. People travel by car. It presently can take 20 minutes to come back into Thatcham from Woolhampton at 5.30pm, it can only get worse.

• From previous experience, proposals for consultation are never reflected in subsequent planning applications when it becomes very difficult to oppose them as happened with the proposed development to the east of Floral Way at the A4 junction. Access routes changed, proposed infrastructure improvements didn't materialise and it would have negatively affected nearby properties. What is there to stop this happening for the Thatcham NE development

• Areas of semi-ancient woodland are at risk from the development of the site. The green break between Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury will be virtually removed.

• What is the point of proposing green spaces when the development is just taking away green spaces and public footpaths.

• The present road infrastructure is poorly maintained and not being repaired by the Council – how will it cope with additional roads and additional traffic?

• There is no proposal for a second secondary school, I understand that Kennet School is at capacity

• What provision has been made for new employment opportunities in the area which could reduce the need for people to commute? Office blocks in Newbury have been converted to housing which could have been short sited – home working may not last for ever.

• How was the decision made to include Thatcham NE in the plan when it doesn't appear to meet planning requirements and other sites have been excluded which probably did. It will have a detrimental effect on the environment and the general well-being of the existing residents.

In summary I feel that this process does not provide a suitable consultation process to the residents of West Berkshire or enable them to make rational decisions regarding the Local Plan Review. The process should be delayed to wait for further guidance from the Government and to allow an inclusive consultation to be carried out.

