

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PlanningPolicy](#)
Subject: Response to North East Thatcham Plan
Date: 02 March 2023 22:42:27

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

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I wish to exercise my right as a parishioner to object to this proposal and understand that my comments will contribute to the Regulation 19 consultation which seeks to determine whether West Berkshire's LPR is sound and legally compliant.

The proposed development of 1500 homes in NE Thatcham has "been identified as the best location in West Berkshire for this type of development".

It is difficult to accept, on the basis of what has been presented, why this is the case. Its primary purpose appears to be to resolve West Berkshire's strategic housing needs not to address Thatcham's housing and infrastructure needs. The availability of land promoted by four landowners appears to have been the significant factor in the choice of this site. Collateral damage to the environment and landscape has been minimised, somehow to be mitigated but without sufficient evidence.

There seems to have been a reluctance to pursue other potential development sites, Brownfield sites when these are more sustainable, ensure the re generation of land and utilise existing traffic access points.

It seems to be a flawed plan determined to utilise a Greenfield site with a severe negative impact on the local environment and landscape.

Overall it does not appear to meet the tests of soundness.

Infrastructure

The new development does not have to make good existing deficiencies, no additional funding is secured to enable the plan to be sound.

Resident's lives will not be improved. All services will be under more strain.

Education

There is already pressure on Secondary schools, the Kennet is already oversubscribed. The current site cannot contain further buildings.

Provision for a new Secondary school within the site will not meet WB's 2013 policy for minimum viable size.

Health

There is pressure on all services, GP surgeries and accompanying health care resources, dental practices and pharmacies are all overstretched.

The new Primary Care facility is not accompanied with a Health Impact Assessment and there is little evidence that one has been used to inform the proposal.

It lacks evidence that local general practices have been engaged in considering its size and scale or that the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group has been involved. It does

not seem that WB has complied with its legal duty to engage.
It is questionable as to whether a new practice could be established at all.

Transport

Clearly the proposed development will lead to increased traffic and further congestion.
.Floral Way ,with its feeder roads from the estate leading into it ,was agreed in the 1990s by the estate's developer to manage the increase of traffic when the new estate was agreed. There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Floral Way can cope with additional traffic from the SP 17 proposal.Can Harts Hill Road can manage the inevitable increase in traffic directed towards it ? No evidence that it can. Traffic modelling is not good enough. New access points on Floral Way and Harts Hill will only compound the problem . The results of modelling have not been made clear.
The creation of a new car park north of Floral Way on Harts Hill Road can only add to the problem.

It is difficult to equate the proposal with a reduction in traffic ,particularly towards the villages .The predicted displacement of A4 traffic onto rural routes is difficult to equate with the policy to “promote and maximise opportunities for all forms of safe and sustainable transport””.

Harts Hill Road is narrow with difficult contours for motorists, cyclists and the few pedestrians who use it .It has variable speed limits to address the bends and attempt to restrict the speeding down its lower slope. This road will see an increase in traffic and pose additional risk and danger.

Information about Transport has been difficult to access with new priority junctions only apparent in January.

The LPR states it wishes to “reduce accidents and improve safety “ .This seems contradictory.

It is impossible to see how the proposal will have a positive impact.

There is no provision for increased car parking at the station . The proposal may seek to endorse WB policy of reducing car travel and promoting other forms of transport there will inevitably be increased demand resulting from the development.

Landscape ,Ecology re Policy SP17

The scale of the proposed development will have a negative impact on the landscape and effectively urbanise the area regardless of any mitigating measures.

The siting of this major greenfield development will destroy the landscape, the sense of space and countryside.It will have a negative impact on the skyline.
The Landscape Character Assessment identified key characteristics as valued qualities. Including the varied landcover mosaic and important habitats and It's very rural character. It recognised that the development so close to the ANOB boundary on upper valley slopes would be difficult to mitigate .

Siting it so close to an ANOB with no up to date evidence nor a strategy for positive impact and overall diversity gain will cause long term harm.WBC is required to protect the ANOB and will fail to do so.It conflicts with National Policy in relation to landscape character and impact on an adjacent ANOB.

There will be inevitable collateral damage to the Common, ancient woodlands and Heath.The damage is irreversible.Ancient woodlands and long established hedgerows are not protected.

There is no evidence to support the claim that it will have a positive effect on the

environment.

The Sustainability Charter requirements are not met,

There is no evidence that strategy documents including one on ecology have been made available publicly.

There is no evidence that the site provides enough green space or that the proposed Community Parks will enhance general well-being or have any meaningful environmental value or that leisure routes won't harm the ecology,

It enables damage and harm to the Bucklebury Plateau Biodiversity Area . It poses risk to legally protected wildlife.

The Landscape Sensibility and Capacity study raised awareness of the adverse effects on landscape character and the proposal's potential for long term obstruction of views .

Ecology

The plan has been made with insufficient work on the ecology of the site. There has been no adequate ecological survey to inform the proposal. Data based on old surveys has been used.

Local work has identified the rich and varied wildlife present on the site but this has been minimised. Loss of habitats ;vegetation,hedgerows,water sources No feasibility study to inform proposal.

There has been insufficient reference to wildlife corridors between the ANOB and other areas.

There is insufficient work on how much damage promoting visitors to these areas will bring. The Increased footfall on the Common will increase damage to the ecosystems. This is in conflict with WB's Vision .

Insufficient evidence on effects of increase on air, noise, and light pollution.

No studies presented which deal with implications of site disturbance.

Lack of strategic gapSP 17

Loss of current strategic gap between Thatcham and Bucklebury.

WB planning policy was once to preserve the gap and maintain separation between communities.

The value of maintaining a strategic gap seems to have been underplayed to justify this development. The urbanisation of the site would see a merger of Thatcham and

Bucklebury. WB values the mix of rural villages, this would be put at risk

WB policy recognises the importance of maintaining community identity as a significant factor in community well being .

Well being is an element of WB policy that should be taken into account.

Climate changes flood risks

No evidence that a net zero carbon development would be viable or has been costed. Not in keeping with WB policy.

Impact on flood alleviation scheme not properly considered.

Loss of greenland on the slopes and its effect on surface water run off underplayed.

No evidence that the proposers have sought to ensure WB's policy that there should be no adverse impact on the water and wastewater network.

The proposed development

Why Thatcham?

Thatcham has already had more than its fair share of large scale developments.

A last minute decision to find an alternative site for a strategic development.

Demonstrated by much of the evidence and supporting information being out of date or missing.

The government 's position changed in December 2022 and housing requirement numbers are now advisory not mandatory

HELAA identified brownfield sites suitable for housing ,a more equitable and sustainable solution.WB need not continue with this damaging proposal.

P.Orfanos

02.01.23