

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** WBC - Local Plan Main Modifications MM25 & MM26 - 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:** 29 January 2025 20:12:21  
**Attachments:** [REDACTED]

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Dear Sirs,

I am writing further with regard to the above subject.

As stated in previous representations and as a long standing resident of Upper Bucklebury, I have to repeat once again that I find it incomprehensible and deeply disturbing that the planning proposal such as above is still being seriously pursued for this location so as to dump such a large provision of housing in this in-appropriate green-field location with the consequential and obvious adverse environmental 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.

No-one locally wants this development to proceed and taking account of the manner in which it has been formulated, handled and pursued, the whole process has been questionably undemocratic.

On 28<sup>th</sup> November, the West Berkshire Council (WBC) published its main Modifications to the West Berks Local Plan Review as scheduled by the Inspector, for public consultation.

On behalf of residents, Bucklebury Parish Council (BPC) responded with its comments on the Modifications, a summarised version of which is attached.

So many un-clarified points are raised that clearly question the validity of the whole process; points, which have clearly not been properly addressed for such a controversial and large development.

- Over the years, Thatcham has suffered from an ongoing and exponential expansion in housing development such that it has rapidly become 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 clearly understood at the time that this relief road would become the boundary for any future Green Belt development northwards (once and for all time).
- Now we are confronted with the development of 1500 houses just a few years later, and again suddenly a further planned increase to 2,500 at the stroke of a pen and exponentially who knows - another 1000 or more, as may be convenient, indiscriminately allocated to meet government or WBC targets.
- An Overwhelming Majority of residents do not wish to see **any** housing allocated to this site, thus for all time destroying 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. On account of the steep gradient of the site, it will be highly visible from the A4/Thatcham/Kennet valley area below and a permanent eye sore to perpetuity over this landscape

\* The requirement for additional housing numbers contained within the West Berks Plan should be based on local need within each area, not on a broad based numbers game, an arbitrarily mandated allocation from central government.

- 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.

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 needed to provide for the increased traffic (some 4,000 vehicles) 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 direct access on to Floral Way from the proposed development has been made, use of Harts Hill Road from the planned secondary NE entrance to the development at the top of the hill will exacerbate the traffic congestion problems on this highly 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 4,000 additional vehicles emanating from the proposed development.

The A4 can hardly handle the existing traffic flow around Thatcham as now, let alone to being able to cope with this massive 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 and dangerous 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 4,000 vehicles (or so) within the area, solely from the development as planned, the added pressure will render this area simply impossible to circumvent.

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 the consequential increase in traffic as a result of the development would seem to have been addressed in any comprehensible way in the proposed Plan and Modifications. One doubts if they can.

Before any further abortive and wasteful work is undertaken on the current Plan, a full detailed **third party and independent** Infrastructure Survey (covering roads, traffic movement, healthcare, schools and environment) across from the Plan proposals should be commissioned.

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

Please register my concerns as related to the proposed Modifications to the West Berkshire Plan.

Yours faithfully

Eric Lloyd



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**APPENDIX 1**  
**SP17 – North East Thatcham – Sustainability Appraisal Extract**  
**Main Modifications Consultation**

**SA Objective 1: To enable provision of housing to meet identified need in sustainable locations**

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective Submission Version	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
1(a) To maximise the provision of affordable housing to meet identified need	++	++	None	+	+	Whilst AH delivery important it must be in right location. No evidence of mix to meet all sectors. No evidence that 2,500 homes can be accommodated on site
1(b):To enable provision of housing to meet all sectors of the community, including those with specialist requirements	++	++	None	+	+	No evidence of accommodating self build or specialist housing on the site.



SA Objective 2: To improve health, safety and wellbeing and reduce inequalities

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective Submission Version	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
2(a) To support health active lifestyles	++	++	None	?	?	No evidence on viability or delivery of sports facilities. Location will not give rise to sustainable travel. Main Modifications suggest this could be provided off-site which would not give rise to a significantly positive outcome as predicted.
2(b) To reduce levels and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour	+	+	None	?	?	No evidence to support this conclusion
2(c):To enable the protection and enhancement of high quality multi-functional GI across the District	++	++	None	?	?	The Green Infrastructure SPD that the Council promised in the Core Strategy Policy CS18 (2012) <sup>1</sup> was never delivered <sup>2</sup> . Thus, there is no GI evidence base to inform the draft LPR so no proper assessment can have been made in relation to sustainability.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/36372/Core-Strategy-CS18-Green-Infrastructure/pdf/Core\\_Strategy\\_-\\_CS18\\_-\\_Green\\_Infrastructure.pdf?m=638047964231600000](https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/36372/Core-Strategy-CS18-Green-Infrastructure/pdf/Core_Strategy_-_CS18_-_Green_Infrastructure.pdf?m=638047964231600000)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/41087/Supplementary-Planning-Documents-SPD-and-Guidance-SPG>



**SA Objective 3: To improve accessibility to community infrastructure**

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective Submission Version	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
3(a): To improve access to education, health and other services	++	++	None	?	?	Further ambiguity created at examination on deliverability of education and healthcare facilities and no firm evidence to support the conclusion that it would have a significantly positive effect until such work is carried out.
3(b): To support the development of access to IT facilities including Broadband particularly in rural locations	?	?	None	?	?	No evidence of this provided in advance of the examination and still no evidence relating to this provided.



**SA Objective 4: To promote and maximise opportunities for all forms of safe and sustainable travel**

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective Submission Version	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
4(a): To reduce accidents and improve safety	+	+	None	?		Evidence relating to highway movements and safety remains seriously flawed. Introduction of access point onto Harts Hill would add to serious concerns around highway safety and impact.
4(b): To increase opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport	++	++	None	?	?	Lack of any coherent strategy within wording of policy to support conclusion that development would bring about increase in walking, cycling or use of public transport.



**SA Objective 5: Ensure that the character and distinctiveness of the natural, built and historic environment is conserved and enhanced**

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective Submission Version	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
5(a): To conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity of West Berkshire	++	++	None	-	---	Previous concerns raised on significant errors and lack of up to date reports in evidence base on biodiversity. No justification for previous scoring against 1,500 dwellings and inconceivable that an increase to 2,500 dwellings would not have a significant impact against the SA objective.
5(b): To conserve and enhance the character of the landscape	+	+	None	-	---	Significant concerns raised in comments against SA scoring at regulation 19 stages. No justification that an increase to 2,500 dwellings would not lead to significant impact on setting of AONB.
5(c): To protect or, conserve and enhance the built and historic environment to include sustaining the significant interest of heritage assets	+	+	None	-	---	No evidence of any consideration to listed buildings within site or mitigation required. No justification that an increase to 2,500 dwellings would not lead to significant impact on heritage assets within red line boundary.





**SA Objective 6: To protect and improve air, water and soil quality, and minimise noise levels throughout West Berkshire**

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
6(a): To reduce air pollution	0	0	None			Additional highway movements from increase to 2,500 dwelling movements will have significant impact
6(b): To manage noise levels	0	0	None			Additional highway movements from increase to 2,500 dwelling movements will have significant impact
6(c): To maintain and improve soil quality	0	0	None			No further evidence to suggest that soil quality would be maintained or improved
6(d): To maintain and improve water quality	0	+	The modified policy is unlikely to impact on water quality. Requires consideration of waste water			No justification for suggestion that there would be a beneficial impact on water quality despite modifications to policy.



### SA Objective 7: To promote and improve the efficiency of land use

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
7(a): To maximise the use of previously developed land and buildings where appropriate	-	-	None	-	-	No PDL on site. Reasonable alternatives not properly considered.
7(b): To apply sustainable densities of land use appropriate to location and setting	+	+	None	?	-	No evidence that increase in density is appropriate for setting of the AONB and other characteristics of site



**SA Objective 8: To reduce consumption and waste resources and manage their use efficiently**

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
8(a): To reduce energy use and promote the development and use of sustainable /renewable energy technologies, generation and storage	++	++	n/a	?	?	Requirements relating to energy have been removed from policy so conclusion cannot be reached.
8(b): To reduce waste generation and disposal in line with the waste hierarchy and reuse of materials	0	0	n/a	-	-	Additional waste requirements from increase to 2,500 homes – no mention of mitigation
8(c): To reduce water consumption and promote reuse	+	+	n/a	-	--	No evidence of additional infrastructure required for water in relation to increase to 2,500 homes
8(d): To reduce the consumption of minerals and promote reuse of secondary materials	+	+	n/a	?	?	No evidence to reach this conclusion



**SA Objective 9: To reduce emissions contributing to climate change and ensure adaption measures are in place to respond to climate change**

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
9(a): To reduce West Berkshire’s contribution to greenhouse gas emissions	+	+	None	?	?	No evidence presented on how units would come forward at lower carbon than agreed building regs. Wording relating to energy requirements now removed.
9(b): To sustainably manage flood risk to people, property and the environment	?/+	+	A modification to the policy requires the existing flood attenuation ponds to be retained, protected and enhanced.	?	?	No evidence presented on how flood risk or surface water would be managed. Suggested modifications do not provide justification for scoring.



**SA Objective 10: To support a strong, diverse and sustainable economic base which meets identified needs**

SA Sub Objective	Effects of Policy on SA Objective	Revised Policy on SA Objective – Main Modifications	Main Modifications Text	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Reg 19	Bucklebury Parish Assessment of Effect – Main Modifications	Bucklebury Parish Comment – Main Modifications
10(a): To encourage a range of employment opportunities that meet the needs of the District	+	+	none	?	?	No evidence of delivery of retail or small scale employments for larger number of dwellings
10(b): To support key sectors and utilise employment land effectively and efficiently	0	0	none	0	0	Agreed
10(c): To support the viability and vitality of town and village centres	++	++	none	?	?	Unclear how allocation of this site would have any positive impact on vitality of Thatcham even with increase in dwellings to 2,500