

Questions for Hilary and Bryan Facebook Live on Local Plan review
Mon 8 March 2021

NAME	QUESTION	ANSWER
Barbara	1. What exactly has changed since the proposal to build on farmland at Seige Cross was so robustly rejected by both West Berkshire Council and the Government in 2017?	<p>That proposal was rejected by the Council because it's not in the Council's current adopted local plan. The Council works to that Plan until such time as it is superseded. The Local Plan Review is planning forward for the future in response the changes in demand and other pressures and priorities such as housing need and carbon reduction. Thus the planning system is termed as 'plan-led.</p> <p>At the planning appeal in (2017) it was accepted by all then that it is a sustainable location for development. The site (and a larger area around it) has been promoted for allocation in the local plan now.</p> <p>Thatcham is the second settlement identified as a main urban area within West Berkshire, sitting within the Newbury and Thatcham spatial area. The Core Strategy (one of the documents that forms part of the current Local Plan) identified that Thatcham needed a period of consolidation following a significant period of growth in recent years. This meant that through the plan-led system Thatcham only received a limited amount of growth during this plan period.</p> <p>In reviewing the vision for Thatcham as part of the Local Plan Review, and to best understand how to plan for growth in Thatcham within the plan period, the Council commissioned masterplanning work. The masterplanning work considered all of the Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) sites promoted in Thatcham as well as other evidence studies produced for the Local Plan Review (LPR). It identified that only growth of a strategic scale could support the service provision and regeneration that Thatcham requires.</p> <p>The site alongside the larger site area, is well related to the existing town of Thatcham. It is in close proximity to a range of services and facilities, including the train station. Thatcham is an urban area with a wide range of services and opportunities for employment, community and education. Development of a strategic nature at this site would support the service provision and regeneration that Thatcham requires.</p>

	2. What are the statistics that dictate the need for all this extra housing?	<p>The government has produced a formula which calculates how much housing each local authority area should provide.</p> <p>This is based on national household projections produced by the Office for National Statistics and also factors in housing affordability. Each local authority must plan to deliver at least this minimum amount of housing and must also take account of national policy to boost housing supply across the country. The so called 300,000 dwellings per annum nationally that was introduced in 2013.</p>
	3. Is the Newbury Showground being considered for your proposed new town? This would, so obviously, be an ideal solution on all fronts.	The Newbury Showground has not been promoted for residential development and is not being considered for this.
Ivor	4. Are you able to let us know how many new homes are allocated to the parishes that members of the PAG live in?	2,409 of the dwellings allocated in SP13, SP14 and SP15 are in the wards of PAG members.
	5. Can you comment on Brian Law's threat, in his letter to NWN published 25th February, in response to challenges over the 2500 house in Thatcham, of 'some additional 300 additional homes actually within Bucklebury / Cold Ash itself as an alternative'? This looks like 2-dimensional bullying tactics. What are the other options? I note that the allocation to Basildon is zero.	<p>No I can't.</p> <p>All the sites (270) that have been considered in the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment. https://info.westberks.gov.uk/helaa</p> <p>The HELAA is one of the supporting evidence documents to the Local Plan Review, and it makes a preliminary assessment of the suitability potential of sites.</p> <p>Following the publication of the HELAA more detailed site selection work was undertaken that took into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HELAA • Settlement hierarchy • Settlement boundaries • Flood risk • Sustainability Appraisal <p>This work is set out in the Site Selection Background Paper which can be found at: https://info.westberks.gov.uk/evidencebase.</p>



	<p>6. Does the algorithm for calculating housing take into account AONB, AWE and Flood-zone restrictions?</p>	<p>No it does not.</p> <p>The algorithm takes into account household projections and affordability ratios. It does not take account of constraints. It sets out the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for. There is a Government expectation that the standard method will be used and that any other method will be used only in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>Given that the Council has already published higher numbers than set out in the latest Regulation 18 consultation (December 2020) it does not believe that the exceptional circumstances would be invoked.</p>
<p>Rachel</p>	<p>7. I'm sure this development suits everyone in West Berkshire except those of us in Thatcham, Cold Ash and Upper Bucklebury because the answer to West Berkshire's housing problem is not in their back yard. However, it is in ours. The proposal is a monstrosity, due to destroy acres of countryside and add thousands of cars to an infrastructure that already congests on a daily basis. My question is how do I stop it from going ahead? How do I make those people in power see that you cannot add 2500 houses to this town and not add carbon to west Berkshire, you cannot place these dwellings more than half an hours walk from the town centre and expect Thatcham's businesses to benefit, you cannot</p>	<p>The council, like all other planning authorities in the country, has to plan for housing growth.</p> <p>The Council has a settlement hierarchy which is set out within policy ADPP1 of the Core Strategy (this document forms part of the current Local Plan). The settlement hierarchy has been reviewed as part of work on the Local Plan Review:</p> <p>https://info.westberks.gov.uk/evidencebase. The settlement hierarchy guides the broad location of new and sustainable development, and takes into account the function and sustainability of settlements across the District. Such an approach is in conformity with national planning policy – see paragraph 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2.</p> <p>In the top tier of the hierarchy are 'Urban Areas', and Thatcham falls within this tier. Urban Areas offer a wide range of services and are the focus for the majority of development.</p> <p>The settlement hierarchy has informed the site selection work for the Local Plan Review.</p> <p>The emerging draft Local Plan Review includes a policy that specifically covers climate change (policy SP5). This requires that all development should contribute to West Berkshire becoming and staying carbon neutral by 2030.</p> <p>Alternative approaches to meeting our housing needs, supported by appropriate evidence, will be considered by the council.</p>

	<p>have a proposal that doesn't mandate schools and doctors surgeries when the existing ones are full and you cannot take away our green space our environment and expect our children to thrive?</p>	
Miriam	<p>8. Given that West Berkshire Council have declared a climate emergency and committed to a net zero by 2030 target, what aspects of the local plan are used targeted at achieving this ambition?</p>	<p>All aspects of the local plan are targeting achieving zero carbon. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy SP1 The spatial strategy which is the approach to where development should be located, directs development to the most sustainable locations in the district. - Policy SP5 specifically addresses climate change - Policy SP6 flooding directs development to areas least at risk of flood risk - Policy SP22 transport - Policy DC3 looks at building sustainable homes and businesses,
	<p>9. Given that West Berkshire Council have declared a climate emergency and committed to a net zero by 2030 target, how will it use the proposed new development in Thatcham as a pilot scheme for zero carbon housing?</p>	<p>Any development site will have to comply with the aims and objectives of the plan. The policies relating to achieving Net Zero Carbon have been set out in the answer to question 6.</p> <p>However, SP17 contains additional requirements unique to the North East Thatcham.</p>
Helen	<p>10. Why Thatcham and not Chieveley for the 2500 homes???. Chieveley is a perfect fit with lots of land to increase the footprint of the village and provide a bigger school, GP, shops etc. Chieveley has more appropriate links and desperate for an injection of houses to use the perfect A34 and M4 links and without flood risk which</p>	<p>A whole variety of reasons: Chieveley is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Located within a lower tier of the settlement hierarchy – it is a 'Service Village'. Service Villages have a more limited range of services and therefore have limited development potential - Located in the AONB – the AONB is a nationally important and legally protected landscape. The policy is to conserve and enhance the AONB - not as sustainable for development of this size, e.g. no train station so no prospect of moving away from the car

	Thatcham clearly still suffers from.	
Barry	<p>11. The Henwick Park scheme was not put forward in the Local Plan because it would heighten the flooding risk to Thatcham without substantial mitigation. Would you agree there is also such a risk with the NE Thatcham proposal with the necessary mitigation calling into question the whole economic viability of the development?</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The Site Selection Background Paper sets out why the Henwick Park site (site ref: CA12) was not proposed for allocation, however it is set out here for information:</p> <p>The masterplanning work considered all of the HELAA sites promoted in Thatcham as well as other evidence studies produced for the LPR. It identified that only growth of a strategic scale could support the service provision and regeneration that Thatcham requires. The indicative development potential at CA12 and its adjoining sites CA16 and CA17 is 325 dwellings. Another site (THA20) could accommodate 2,500 and the promoters have indicated that they will provide infrastructure as part of any development proposals.</p> <p>One of the strategic objectives of the emerging draft Local Plan Review (LPR) is to ensure that development is planned in a way that ensures the protection and enhancement of the local distinctive character and identity of the built, historic and natural environment across the District. The LPR notes that a key feature of even the larger settlements in West Berkshire is the way in which few have coalesced in recent times and so the blurring of the physical distinction between places has largely been avoided. New development therefore needs to be appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and context. Any scheme for a particular site would therefore need to be in accordance with policies SP7 (Design Principles) and SP8 (Landscape Character) of the draft emerging LPR and the Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document. Conserving and enhancing the distinctive landscape character of the AONB is given considerable weight when assessing sites for development. The Council has therefore ensured that sites within or within the setting of the AONB have been subject to a Landscape Sensitivity/Capacity Assessment (LSA/LCA). This is a consistent assessment carried out by the Council's landscape consultant to determine whether a site could be developed without causing harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. The LCA (2015) for this site has concluded that development on the</p>

		<p>whole of this site would result in harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. Cold Ash is an AONB settlement and although it has expanded southwards out of the AONB and down the slope towards Thatcham, it retains a distinctive separate identity. The development of the whole of this site would lead to the perception of a merging of the two settlements and would therefore have an adverse impact on the AONB settlement pattern. It is the Council's preferred approach to allocate site THA20 as a strategic site. Due to the scale of development that could take place on THA20, it is considered that there should be no further allocations in Thatcham in the period to 2037 particularly as development of both north east and north Thatcham would result in the loss of the separate identifies of Cold Ash and Bucklebury, and would harm the setting of the AONB settlement pattern.</p> <p>There are areas of surface water flood risk on the North East Thatcham site. Development would be avoided in these locations, and in line with policy SP6 (Flood Risk), sustainable drainage systems must be provided in all new developments.</p>
	<p>12. A major reason for the rejection of the Henwick Park and Lower Way Farm proposals from the Local Plan was they would lead to the merger of Thatcham and Cold Ash and reduce the open countryside between Thatcham and Newbury.</p> <p>Why are you proceeding with the NE Thatcham development, breaching as it does the Thatcham Settlement Boundary, when it will merge Thatcham with Upper Bucklebury and reduce the</p>	<p>Please refer to the answer in Question 1.</p> <p>The proposed development would not lead to the merger of Thatcham with Cold Ash</p> <p>The Thatcham Strategic Growth Study considers that NE Thatcham is the most suitable location for strategic development were it to occur in Thatcham.</p>


	open countryside between them?	
David	<p>13. The Thatcham development identifies there will be a significant impact on local traffic.</p> <p>What is the real impact on the A4 in Thatcham and the surrounding villages in terms of increased traffic volume, estimated peak delays and environmental impact from these additional vehicles? Does the Council actually know?</p>	<p>The Phase 1 Transport Assessment (TA) report identified that there were not large swathes of the highway network identified as being potentially problematic by the end of the plan period.</p> <p>Having said that, the TA report also acknowledges that there would be delays at junctions and the highway network on the A4 corridor and adjoining links as a result of the THA20 development, including some displacement of A4 traffic onto wider rural routes such as Upper Bucklebury.</p> <p>For instance, without mitigation the transport models used do show significant impacts along the A4 and Floral Way resulting in potential delays per vehicle of an extra 32 – 62% when compared to the 2036 Core Forecast (without development).</p> <p>However, you would not expect a development of this nature to go ahead without mitigation measures and improvements being made to local transport networks. The impacts can be reduced with suitable mitigation and the Council is developing a package of highway mitigation measures alongside further modelling. The package should better accommodate the expected increase in traffic as a result of the development. The modelling outputs focus on the impacts for both morning and evening peaks.</p> <p>It should be noted that it is not just changes to the highway network that will form mitigation packages. Other measures to reduce vehicles journeys from the development in favour of more sustainable travel and lifestyle choices will be important elements of the overall transport plan.</p>
	<p>14. The scheme talks about various public and green transport, cycling and walking provisions yet is designed to accommodate cars for all of the housing. Does the council really believe this is a coherent approach to the development?</p>	<p>The Council is committed to a net zero carbon target by 2030 and the trajectory of development will be towards encouraging more sustainable travel through a number of policies that you mention and including electric charging points. Cars will need accommodation [incidentally, not all housing will provide car parking space] as that mode of transport is predicted to continue through to 2037.</p>

	<p>15. There is the suggestion that measures will be created to encourage traffic not to use the surrounding villages as rat runs due to the likelihood of the A4 congestion. What are they? How will they impact on the existing residents in the villages who need to use these minor roads?</p>	<p>The Council does not wish to see traffic using the A4 corridor being displaced onto less suitable routes. The mitigation measures being developed will help to alleviate congestion and improve journey time reliability by increasing the capacity of the A4 which will in turn reduce displacement on to wider routes.</p> <p>The mitigation measures are currently being modelled. The two locations producing best results are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • install a staggered traffic-light controlled junction (not a roundabout) for the junction A4/Colthrop Lane;  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open the approaches on both sides to the roundabout at A4 / Pipers Way. 
Gareth	<p>16. How does the Local Plan Review to 2037 encompass the declaration of a climate emergency by WBC.</p>	<p>Please refer to the answer in Question 8.</p>
	<p>17. Where in the plan is the opportunities for:</p>	
	<p>a. Utilising the AONB (70% of the district for renewable energy)</p>	<p>Policy for the AONB is set out in Policy SP2 but this does not mean it is unsuitable for renewable energy. Policy SP5 Climate change states “to generate and supply renewable low and zero carbon energy for its own use and/or local distribution networks in accordance with DC3 and in particular DC3 3 Renewable Energy B.</p>
	<p>b. Developing small modular nuclear reactors for</p>	<p>There is no policy on small modular nuclear reactors. The Government announced in November 2020 that it was looking for up to 16</p>

	generating low carbon energy	test locations for SMRs but the siting criteria did not match conditions in West Berkshire.
	c. The introduction of EV charging hubs to encourage EV take (100% of all new vehicles by 2030)	Policies DC3 Building Sustainable Homes and Businesses and DC35 Transport Infrastructure require the provision of electric vehicle charging points and associated infrastructure. This could easily include charging hubs
	d. The incorporation of hydrogen into the local plan	There is no policy promoting hydrogen but there is also no policy restricting hydrogen. However, hydrogen energy is regarded as a renewable fuel (even though coal oil and natural gas are required to separate it from oxygen) so it would be covered by Policy DC3 3 Renewable Energy B.
	e. Provision of waste to energy plants to treat West Berkshires domestic and commercial waste rather than unsustainably export to other areas such as Hampshire.	This would be covered off in the Minerals and Waste local plan 2036.
	18. How does the Local Plan respond to changes in demographic brought about by COVID ie more working from home, workers leaving cities and wishing to live and work more remotely/ in rural areas.	Local planning authorities are required to review Local Plans every 5 years. Local Plans must cover a period of 15 years. The local plan has to be evidence based and long term looking (+15 years). Any changes brought about by COVID will feed in to future plan reviews. The likely lasting change in travel habits is being factored in to a part of the transport assessment work to demonstrate how this may have an impact on local journeys and demand in peak periods. Work is taking place based on Government's growth predictions prior to COVID but an alternative scenario is also being modelled as a comparison and so that the probable lasting impacts of COVID on travel patterns is not ignored.
	19. Does building in the AONB need more consideration?	The AONB is a nationally important and legally protected landscape. Development in the AONB is governed by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)(2019) and until such times as that is changed development will be restricted.

John	<p>20. There are many planning policies that WBC support and cite in objection to many planning applications in protection of the North Wessex Downs AONB, yet the inclusion of the NE Thatcham development would cause significant harm to that AONB, destruction of the open land bordering the AONB, increased traffic on rural roads, increased noise and pollution, removal of boundary habitats and hunting grounds for local species, and the complete eradication of dark skies. How as a council are you able to reconcile these issues? Does the need to meet a housing number throw all the council's previously held policies in respect of the AONB out of the window?</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The policies in the Local Plan Review are evidence based so far as reasonably possible. Not all these issues are necessarily inevitable. Conservation within the natural environment does not preclude change.</p> <p>Policies pertaining to the AONB and its setting are landscape-led and policy safeguards are included not only for the protection of valuable habitats and species but through the development, to actively design in the delivery of a 10% net gain in biodiversity.</p>
Dave	<p>21. I'd like a much better explanation as to how traffic levels will be managed at the Thatcham railway crossing. It is already ridiculous, and would only get significantly worse.</p> <p>To bury your heads in the sand on this topic is naïve in the extreme, and you will see fight after fight to get this through approvals from the public. (and rightly so, I might add).</p>	<p>Your comments are noted.</p> <p>The Council has said that the issue of the railway crossing will be addressed by the Local Transport Plan which is due to be reviewed soon.</p>

	Please come with a holistic plan which addresses this point properly.	
Peter	22. Great that you are providing this Q&A, my question is in devising the Local Plan Review for 2037 why wasn't there a review of sites chosen to be strategic for housing allocation as was carried out in the 2006-2026 plan? In particular why wasn't a review carried out using the selection criteria used then to find out if they are still pertinent today given the changes since then in terms of stricter environmental protection standards and the council's own declaration of a climate emergency?	All sites put forward for the current Local Plan (ie. the Core Strategy which was adopted in 2012, and the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document, adopted in 2017, were contacted to ascertain if they wanted their site to be assessed in the Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment. As stated in question 5, 270 sites were assessed using the new selection criteria (based on still pertinent criteria and new ones given the changes since the current local plan was adopted) as set out in the accompanying tables and published on the web site.
	23. It seems extraordinary that the failure of Sandleford to deliver a single house over the initial planning period, because of the complexities of developing the site has not been taken into account in deciding strategic sites going forward. Are you not in danger of repeating past errors?	The approach to Thatcham has learned from that process – evidence commissioned to support approach, constructive discussion with landowners from the outset.
	24. Not sure my question sent in advance re whether the decision on designating Sandleford as a strategic site was revisited as part of the current Local Plan	Yes the inclusion of Sandleford as part of the emerging draft Local Plan Review (LPR) was reconsidered. If the Council did not believe it was deliverable the Council would not have included it in the LPR. This is why Policy SP16 now states 1,500 dwellings.

	Review given all the problems with developing this complex site and the fact it did not deliver 1 of the 1,000 homes promised in the current planning period to 2026?	
Brian	25. Can you provide a plan for the Sterling Estate through road that was expected and approved?	 <p>15/00319/FULEXT</p>
	26. I understood that there was a grant for that road. What happened to that is it still held by WBC	Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Homes England provided WBC with funding towards this project. Some of this has already been used on the site via the developer and the rest is held by WBC to contribute to the remainder of the work.
	27. When would you expect that to be completed?	The scheduled completion date was July 2021, but this is likely to be delayed. The route has been cleared in readiness. In February this year, the developers announced a change of main contractor and work has begun again from 29 April under the new contractor.
	<p>There was a commitment to make the road across the Boundary Road bridge two way and there was development space to accommodate it.</p> <p>28. What would be the expected date be for that completion?</p>	<p>This commitment remains and is a condition imposed on the developer, with the new railway bridge already wide enough for two-way traffic.</p> <p>Once the development works are complete, the north section of the road will open with two lanes, one in each direction and the traffic lights over the bridge will be removed.</p> <p>As per (27) above, some delay on the July completion date can be expected.</p>
	<p>29. These two improvements would have considerable impact on plans for the West Berks Local Plan.</p> <p>10. Transport <i>To make provision for transport networks that support sustainable growth in</i></p>	<p>National planning policy requires that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led.</p> <p>Without a local plan all development will be assessed with regard to the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPF) (2019) rather than the local policies contained in a local plan.</p> <p>This would mean that any planning application that Members refused would almost certainly go to appeal and be determined by a Government Appointed Planning Inspector.</p>

	<p><i>West Berkshire and to promote low emission transport choices.</i></p> <p>11. Infrastructure <i>To ensure that infrastructure needs (physical and social) arising from the growth in West Berkshire are provided to support and keep pace with development in accordance with the detail set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.</i></p> <p>Both sites listed on the local plan will need improved access to the East (Boundary Rd/Hambridge Rd/A4 East)</p> <p>RSA5: <i>Land adjoining New Road, Newbury (Site Ref: GRE6)</i></p> <p>RSA6: <i>Land off Greenham Road and New Road, South East Newbury (Site Refs: HSA 4)</i></p> <p>30. Can I ask what would happen if we just said no to having a local plan?</p>	
Richard	<p>31. Has WBC completed a traffic analysis for the Thatcham development? If so does it show the need for any changes in the road infrastructure around Thatcham, in particular a bridge over the railway?</p>	<p>Yes the Council has done a traffic analysis for Thatcham and yes it shows the need for some mitigation measures including road improvements to manage the increase in traffic.</p> <p>The Council is currently working with its modelling consultant to develop these (see answer to 15 above also).</p> <p>However, possible mitigation measures have not included a bridge over the railway. The question of a bridge will be considered through the review of the Local Transport Plan.</p>

	32. How will the design of the development in Thatcham differ from previous development designs, in the need to cater for a world of zero carbon emissions?	Any development site will have to comply with the aims and objectives of the plan. The policies relating to achieving Net Zero Carbon have been set out in the answer to question 6. However, SP17 contains additional requirements unique to the North East Thatcham.
	33. Specifically what new infrastructure will be provided for Thatcham?	Work is ongoing with service providers to fix down the actual infrastructure requirements from the nice to have infrastructure. However the Thatcham Strategic Growth Study identified the areas of infrastructure in which Thatcham was lacking.
	34. How will the development be protected from flash flooding of the type experienced in July 2007?	Policy SP6 (Flood Risk) of the emerging draft Local Plan Review requires that all development must include Sustainable Drainage Systems.
Jessie	35. I'm moving to Thatcham soon and did some research and read about the proposed new development. I actually think affordable homes close to public transport links is a great idea, especially for young people, but will the Council's policy be able to make sure that green infrastructure and the environment don't suffer as a result?	The Council is committed to delivering a sustainable and comprehensive development that is landscape led. Policy SP17 is clear that bio diversity net with habitat restoration and linkages to the network of green and blue infrastructure including a new country park.
Simon	36. What has changed since West Berkshire Council refused planning permission for housing at Siege Cross in 2015? As the Secretary of State supported that decision in 2017, won't the planning inspectorate also reject a larger	That proposal was rejected by the Council because it was not in the Council's local plan at the time and the planning system is plan-led. Furthermore, at the planning appeal in (2017) it was accepted by all that the site was a sustainable location for development. The site (and a larger area around it) has now been promoted for allocation in the local plan up to 2037. The Council has commissioned work to look at what's best for Thatcham in the future and master planning evidence shows that strategic

	development on the same site when it reviews the draft local plan?	development is the best way to support the service provision and regeneration that Thatcham requires.
John	37. Why can't the Newbury Showground be considered? it has excellent access is a Brownfield site and previous attempts have been made to sell it off.	<p>The Newbury Showground has not been promoted for residential development. The Council cannot consider any land that has not been put forward to it.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is located in the AONB and the Council's approach to development is to continue to conserve and enhance the North Wessex Downs AONB, with appropriate landscape-led development delivering wider environmental, economic and social benefits in line with national policy.</p>
	38. Why hasn't the Colthrop Village proposal been considered? This again is a brown field site unlike the North East proposal which would result in large areas of AONB being destroyed.	<p>The Colthrop Village proposal has been assessed and ruled out. On the HELAA web pages it is recorded as Rainsford Farm (THA1). https://info.westberks.gov.uk/helaa</p> <p><u>North East Thatcham is not in the AONB and will not result in large areas of it being destroyed.</u></p>
Anne	39. Why is the Sandleford development still in the draft plan when it deeply unpopular with local residents, against all WBC environmental policies and appears to be driven entirely by the developer rather than WBC planning requirements (which have been ignored - hence the appeal to Jenrick)	<p>The Sandleford development is still the Councils preferred location for strategic development in Newbury.</p> <p>The Council remains of the opinion that it must be delivered comprehensively and believes that such an approach is still achievable.</p>
	40. Why do all the large developments fall into council wards represented by opposition councillors whilst Conservative wards have very few significant	<p>Local Plans have to look over 15 years in to the future and can take up to 5 years to develop. During this time the political representation of a community will be up for re-election at least four times and may swing between parties.</p> <p>However, the local plan is defined by the evidence presented to the Independent Planning</p>

	developments planned?	Inspector showing that its proposals are in accordance with National Policy.
Dominic (questions are in bold for ease)	<p>41. Firstly; I'd seen in the housing development proposal that a biomass burner was going to be part of the initiative to meet the wider challenge of the environment and presumably carbon emissions. Are biomass burners a good means of addressing carbon emissions? From what I've read on this it looks like a better option is to focus on reducing waste. The government is not addressing reduction in waste packaging until April next year. By which time we could be landed with a biomass burner which we can't get rid of (others in England are tied into PFI initiatives) rather than addressing longer term what goes into them.</p>	<p>There is nothing in the Emerging Local Plan promoting biomass burners.</p> <p>Your more general question regarding the merits of biomass burners as a means of addressing carbon emissions is a complex one that is not part of the Local Plan Review</p>
	<p>42. Secondly; can the other options on housing development be explored in more depth? It appears from what I've seen in news articles that a large housing development at Grazely fell through now suddenly this proposal drops in without any apparent long term planning. Is this area the best place to take so many</p>	<p>Siege Cross area has been under consideration as a potential site for a long time. The Planning Inspector carrying out the inquiry into the West Berkshire District Local Plan concluded in 1999 that the Siege Cross/Colthorp Manor site (smaller area than current proposal) should be allocated for housing development. The release of the MOD Depot site was the reason this was not carried through in the adopted plan.</p> <p>The site was also considered as a potential strategic site in the preparation of the Core Strategy but the decision was made to allocate strategic sites at Newbury (in accordance with SE Plan where Newbury</p>

	<p>houses. Are they not better placed in several smaller developments to avoid such big impacts on the local area. The whole approach appears rushed and not well thought through. Whats the hurry?</p>	<p>defined as sub-regional hub and because Thatcham had already seen considerable development in recent years). The Planning Inspector at the CS Examination concluded that in any overall review to accommodate more housing, Thatcham would be a location to be considered again for additional housing, consistent with its position in the top tier of the settlement hierarchy.</p> <p>The Council's intention for this site is that it should be plan-led and planned comprehensively, delivering infrastructure benefits. The Planning Inspector at the 2017 appeal recommended approval but the SoS found that the development plan housing policies were up to date and dismissed appeal.</p> <p>Grazeley was never the solution to the housing needs of West Berkshire located on the extreme eastern edge of the District.</p> <p>270 individual and amalgamations of sites have been assessed and evaluated and the options presented in the Emerging Draft Local Plan represent the best possible sites for development.</p>
	<p>43. Thirdly; Where is this proposal at, is it over the line already? What are next steps and timescales? It appears as its been mentioned to be part of WBC longer term plan (where is this?) that it has become adopted as strategy.</p>	<p>The Local Plan looks 15 years in to the future for development and we have just completed the Regulation 18 stage.</p> <p>The next stage Regulation 19 will follow and make changes to the Plan if necessary and following a further six week consultation be submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent examination.</p>
Andrew	<p>44. Regarding local plan policy DC 14 - Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows, how is the council able to enforce the supporting text 10.104 to protect ancient woodland, in particular the area</p>	<p>Any planning application that threatens ancient woodland would be refused. In addition, the felling of trees may require a felling licence from the Forestry Commission.</p> <p>NPPF Guidance 175(c) Natural England and Forestry Commission Standing Advice guidance:</p>

	<p>known as The Plantation to the West of Floral Way Thatcham?</p>	<p><u>Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: protecting them from development - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u></p>
	<p>45. This ancient woodland has been subject to a purchase and resell by persons unknown which is now in mixed ownership, also persons unknown. A TPO was sought and apart from word of mouth to say that it has been agreed, local residents have not been notified and was still marked as 'temporary' on WB maps when I last checked.</p>	<p>The TPO 201/21/1015 was confirmed on 04/03/2021. The land owner and adjacent properties would have been notified if they were directly affected.</p> <p>A copy can be provided if required. Please email <u>trees@westberks.gov.uk</u> quoting the TPO number above</p> <p>If the property was sold the new land owners would have been notified as it appears on a land registry search.</p> <p>Tree work can be carried out under the TPO guidance:</p> <p><u>Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u></p>
	<p>46. When WBC was offered to take this over in 2005 as a public amenity it was rejected by WBC. Now local residents are subject to signs being erected indicating access is prohibited and entrances blocked when public rights of way exist and are well known, but subject to council ratification. Furthermore access rights to adjacent property owners is enshrined in the deeds for boundary maintenance.</p> <p>How is WBC proposing they protect the ancient woodland from anonymous and nocturnal land owners for the wider</p>	<p>Please see the answer to question 45.</p>

	plan if The Plantation cannot be secured by WBC?	
Neale	<p>47. People would be more positive about NE Thatcham if all the infrastructure - transport- traffic - schools -doctors- youth services - new local business encouragement - local services - community - environmental issues eg drainage are addressed realistically and are compulsory part of the development. People have no confidence in any of this and will see this at best watered down and at worst ignored altogether. Dunston Park and Kennet Heath has none of this. What will ensure NE Thatcham sees all these are compulsory part of the development?</p> <p>So will NE Thatcham replace Sandleford? Was that the plan all this time?</p>	<p>No the Sandleford development is still the Councils preferred location for strategic development in Newbury. The Council remains of the opinion that it must be delivered comprehensively and believes that such an approach is still achievable.</p> <p>The proposal for NE Thatcham is seen as an additional opportunity looking forward a further 15 years to address the issues of infrastructure provision such as the secondary school.</p> <p>The development of a large strategic site does allow for a comprehensive strategy regarding the issues raised in the question as the alternative of much smaller piecemeal development will not provide the quantum of development needed. Dunston Park and Kennet Heath where built under different planning legislation and the comprehensive details of Policy SP17 should address your concerns.</p>
	<p>48. In normal times, morning traffic backs up Floral Way from the A4. Regularly up to the The Mill House roundabout and even beyond. This is not recognised in the traffic assessment at all. Can you explain? Newbury is steadily becoming a dormitory town and Thatcham has always been a support town - a huge amount of people travel out of town.</p>	<p>Your comments are noted and thank you for highlighting a local transport issue from your experience. This will be checked within our modelling work</p> <p>Please also see the relevant response to question 13.</p>

	<p>Anyone who lives here experiences this every morning. Getting out of Thatcham, East or West is a nightmare morning and getting in a nightmare in the evening. Encouraging public transport is all very well, but roads struggle under current use in normal times, more homes WILL bring much more traffic.</p>	
Antoinette	<p>49. I have a question. In the WBC long term housing plan there were quite a few homes planned in the eastern area (Theale, Calcot, Tilehurst etc) but the CIL funding plan doesn't seem to have much in it, in the way of facilities for local residents here. Please can you give us an update on the number of homes planned for the eastern area and whether the CIL plan will be reviewed to look at the lack of amenities here? Thank you.</p>	<p>Policy SP14 of the plan carries forward the developments from the Housing Sites Allocation Plan (2017) that have yet to be built out and totals under 1,000 dwellings.</p> <p>The CIL money for these developments will be spent on the roads and schools but that will not account for all the money. The Council leisure strategy is also looking at facilities in the east of the district and money from CIL could be used to support that. It is also worth remembering that Parish and Town Councils without a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) will automatically get 15% of the CIL collected in their area. This rises to 25% when the NDP is adopted so if you have ideas of what you would like to see provided in addition to the usual please give your suggestion to you Parish or Town Council.</p>
Paula	<p>50. Will there be more Care Homes in the plan as a whole and NE Thatcham in particular?</p>	<p>There is an allocation in the Local Plan Review for an 85-bed care home – Stonehams Farm, Tilehurst (policy RSA11).</p> <p>Policy DC18 of the Local Plan Review (Specialised Housing) states that there is a presumption in favour of new housing designed to meet the needs of those with identified support or care needs.</p> <p>NE Thatcham does not currently propose a care home.</p>
Annie	<p>51. Will the old Quantel site at 31 Kiln Rd be considered for</p>	<p>The site has not been put forward for consideration in the Local Plan Review, but the site could continue in employment use or possibly be repurposed for residential.</p>

	housing now the business there is closing? Would be a good place.	
David Lister	52. Hilary - what road improvement are you proposing? There is nothing in the Local Plan. Please provide details as Floral Way and A4 are heavily congested, - even before talking about the rail-crossing.	<p>The Local Transport Plan would include details on any major road programmes if any were to be proposed.</p> <p>Detailed mitigation measures would form part of any planning application as they would need to take account of the most up to date information available.</p> <p>In addition please see answers to questions 13 and 15 which are relevant here.</p>
	53. Is it really the role of a Town Council to explain what the alternative strategy should be for the entirety of West Berkshire if we object to the existing proposal? That's the responsibility for West Berkshire Council surely?	<p>What the Town Council choses to do or not do is up to the Town Council. West Berkshire District Council has a duty to consult on its proposals which conform to national policy or provide the evidence relevant to West Berkshire which provides the justification for a different approach.</p>
	54. I have not heard anything yet regards improved infrastructure for existing residents. A Country Park is not sought by residents and new schools will be dimensioned to meet the need for the new development and increased demand it creates. This is all missing the point - which Hilary Cole herself made previously - that "Thatcham facilities are woeful". What is the benefit for the existing town?	<p>If development were to go ahead, the infrastructure provided would benefit existing and future residents. A country park would safeguard that land from future development and improve the public open space offering in the area.</p> <p>The new primary schools would be designed to meet the needs of the development. They would be built to take account of whole forms while the need from the development would not equate to exact forms so the additional places would benefit local children.</p> <p>The land being offered for an 8 forms of entry (8FE) secondary school is over and above what the development would generate in terms of places (3.5-4FE). The additional land would give the Council the opportunity to review secondary school provision across Thatcham and provide additional capacity at the North East Thatcham site.</p> <p>Any improvements to sustainable transport routes that go beyond the site will be of benefit to wider residents e.g. footpath improvements, cycle paths, bus services.</p>

		Affordable housing will also be provided on the site, which will be of benefit to local residents.
	55. The plan appears to rest on the assumption that new residents will all be using alternative modes of transport (such as walking or cycling) to avoid the elephant in the room which is the rail-crossing. EV, Hydrogen, will not reduce traffic, and the forecasts are for increased traffic flow. What do you think is an acceptable queue time at the crossing?	<p>The transport mitigation package for the THA20 site will include the highway improvement measures outlined in 15 alongside measures to encourage and support sustainable travel and lifestyle choices.</p> <p>Until it is safe to use a railway level crossing any delay is acceptable. Queue time cannot compromise safety and the risk to life.</p>
David J	56. Do you have a plan B when NE Thatcham is proven to be unsuitable?	<p>The Council has investigated the suitability of 270 sites and put forward the most sustainable option.</p> <p>The evidence used to support the Councils' plan will be subject to the independent examination during which development proposals which have been unsuccessful will be presented to the examiner for discussion.</p>
Dom	57. Any consideration being given to the empty office space at Colthrop Mill. Unlikely that office space is going to be used in future is it?	<p>West Berkshire will still need employment opportunities and office space can be repurposed to employment or residential needs.</p> <p>No one knows what the post Covid world will look like.</p>
Paula	58. What exactly will existing Thatcham residents gain? The colthrop development want to build a bridge, flood defences, sports pitches, a primary school and redevelop a partially brownfield site.	The reasons why the Colthrop development has not been taken forward are set out in the HELAA. (THA1). https://info.westberks.gov.uk/helaa
	59. Clearly your hands are tied by central government. In December the BBC said the Conservative party were	<p>Yes</p> <p>A Standard Methodology was introduced in 2018 and gave West Berkshire an annual target of 513 dwellings per annum. Unfortunately, when all the local authorities were added together the total</p>

	<p>reassessing the housing requirement in the south as there was a risk the whole south east would be concreted over. Has this been reassessed yet?</p>	<p>number of houses fell below the Governments' target of 300,000 dwellings per annum. A revised methodology was consulted on August 2020 and would have given West Berkshire a new figure of 692 dwellings per annum and brought the national supply over the 300,000 dwellings per annum. It is this figure the BBC was referring too.</p> <p>However, in face of growing opposition to the new housing requirement the Government reverted to the 2018 methodology in December 2020.</p> <p>So the figure for West Berkshire is 513 which is at the lower end of what we consulted on in the Emerging Draft Local Plan.</p>
	<p>60. Why do you not take the matter up with central government and stand up for your constituents? It's very clearly a very unpopular idea and I get the feeling you're just not listening?</p>	<p>The short answer is we are.</p> <p>We responded to government consultation and as a result of comments received the methodology for calculating the local housing need was not amended for the majority of authorities, including West Berkshire.</p> <p>The Council do though have the objective of meeting the housing needs of the area, including the need for affordable housing in an area of high house prices.</p> <p>As you can see from the response to question 60 the number proposed for West Berkshire has been reduced by 179 dwellings per annum, which over the lifetime of the plan would be 2,685 dwellings.</p>
Barry	<p>61. Sandleford has been severely delayed because the 2 developers could not agree. Isn't there a major risk the 4 developers on NE Thatcham will find it difficult to agree?</p>	<p>Yes there is a risk that the promoters of NE Thatcham might find it difficult to agree.</p> <p>But because of what has happened with regards Sandleford that Council has sought additional checks and balances with regards NE Thatcham before putting it forward in the Emerging Draft Local Plan.</p>
Susanna	<p>62. What are your thoughts on what seems is a trend for agricultural barns to be developed but there appears a need for more agricultural barns being applied for as in Hamstead Marshall.</p>	<p>Policy DC1 is concerned with development in the Countryside and Policy DC23 considers "Conversion and/or re-use of Existing Redundant and Disused Buildings in the Countryside to Residential Use".</p>

Rachel	63. Were your traffic assessments done during Covid?	The traffic models used to assess the impact of proposed development sites in the Local Plan Review are not based on surveys and information affected by COVID. The base years for these models and the data that was gathered to build and validate the models were all prior to the pandemic and its impacts.
	64. What guarantees do we get that the developer will build the bridge?	None, the development of NE Thatcham is independent of a bridge over the railway line.
John	65. Hilary, you met with the school "months ago". How long has this development been in planning for?	Thatcham has been concerned about the education provision in the Town for a considerable while. It was certainly an issue at the time of the Core Strategy in 2012.
Brian	66. Can you define Affordable housing please?	<p>Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:</p> <p>a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).</p> <p>b) Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.</p>

		<p>c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.</p> <p>d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.</p> <p>NPPF 2019 page 64</p>
Pete	<p>67. Who will pay for the cost of the bridge? (est £15 million)</p> <p>Would that be in with the cost of any housing development (if at Colthrop) Developer? Or Government grant?</p>	<p>It is very unlikely that any Government Grant would be available for a bridge over the railway line at Thatcham.</p> <p>Therefore the cost of any bridge should one be delivered in the future would have to come from the developers.</p>
Nicola	<p>68. Have the plans for 2037 taken into account the dramatically different housing needs we will need; it strikes me as anachronistic that 3-bedroom estate houses designed in the 1980s without the capability of hosting modern tech requirements are still being built.</p>	<p>The Emerging Draft Local Plan seeks to change that. Not only does Policy SP5 require developments to contribute to West Berkshire becoming and staying carbon neutral by 2030, it is supported by DC3 Building Sustainable Homes and Businesses, DC29 Residential Spaces Standards and DC38 which promoted full fibre to the premises.</p>
	<p>69. How many of the houses will be co-</p>	<p>The proposed policy on affordable housing is that 70% of affordable houses will be for rent and 30% will be for other types of affordable housing. See the response to question 67 on definitions.</p>

	owned with housing associations?	
	70. Affordable housing: will you be working with housing associations?	Yes, we currently work with 21 Housing Associations/Registered Providers across West Berkshire.
Fiona	71. How about all the vacant properties that currently exist along with the ever increasing commercial properties that are no longer in use due to COVID - redevelop those?	The Council does not have many long term vacant properties as it charges triple Council Tax for such properties. As for the properties that are shut because of Covid we have no idea how long they will remain shut and people will need some form of employment as not everybody will be able to work from home.
Ashley	72. Any plans for Kennet school with an expansion of Thatcham. The roads around are packed and hard to park in your own street in the day. And there onsite car park has barely got bigger over the years with its expansions, I have seen old plans. School car park needs to be nearly double the size. You can ask people to use public transport or walk but ultimately lots will drive.	Talks with the school are on-going.
Owen	73. Will WBC be undertaking the fairly complex legal / financial transaction required to demolish the new McCarthy & Stone development to allow the 2005 planning consent to be built?	No That permission has lapsed. However, with the prospect of new development in the town the financial algorithms that developers use to decide if they wish to invest in an area change and it is hoped changed in a way that benefits Thatcham.
John D	74. Any new Jobs.....?	Yes apart from the jobs associated with the construction trade the plan has a number of business friendly policies. In addition the plan seeks to extend 5 existing employment sites and create a new designated employment area.

Steve	75. Showground might be in AONB but is also a brownfield site and that takes precedent doesn't it?	No it doesn't it's the other way round. The NPPF provides the overall framework for how development should be directed.

From Graham Storey

1. The May 2020 Updated Housing Needs Evidence Report identified that there was a net requirement of 163 new affordable **rental** homes per annum in West Berks (130 after existing planning permissions were included). Why is there not a specific target to deliver this annual volume within the local plan?

It is the intention to include a section on Monitoring within the proposed Submission Version of the plan.

2. The current planning requirements to deliver affordable housing has actually resulted in <10% of new homes delivered being for social rent. Why does the draft plan not amend the planning requirement to deliver more homes for social rent, or commit to a new method of delivery?

We are achieving the 70% of AH as social rented on the vast majority of sites above the threshold.

I don't recognise the < 10% figure. Delivery of AH in the plan period so far has been 1,733 gross units equivalent to 22% of the total gross completions.

3. The Housing needs evidence report says that 3, 834 households in West Berks live in unsuitable housing. Will this be eliminated with the new Draft Plan ? If not, what additional measures will you introduce to ensure **“Every Resident has access to a home that meets their needs “**

The local plan review sets out how many new residential dwellings will be built. It does not look at the refurbishment of the existing stock as this is generally “permitted development” and not subject to planning permission.

However, the West Berkshire Housing Strategy 2020 – 2036 states “Councils currently have a wide range of enforcement interventions to maintain and improve private sector housing standards. These powers are applicable to all tenures. Whilst most commonly used to improve private rented accommodation they can also be utilised to improve owner occupied and Registered Provider owned homes”.

From Cllr David Lister

Process

1. If the session is for public outreach, have those people that responded to the draft consultation been contacted and made aware of this session, and have the Facebook adverts been 'promoted' towards an audience of Thatcham to increase awareness.

The session was promoted in the usual way by the communications team and the number of people watching the You Tube Live event was the most ever for a West Berkshire Council broadcast. Following the event, the level of coverage in both the Newbury Weekly News and Penny Posy in relation to the number of articles and letters demonstrates a wide level of awareness.

Infrastructure:

2. What specifically, are the new facilities that will be provided to the wider Thatcham Community as referenced by Cllr Hilary Cole that makes good the 'woefully inadequate facilities' as stated on the 25th January?

If development were to go ahead, the infrastructure provided would benefit existing and future residents. A country park would safeguard that land from future development and improve the public open space offering in the area.

The new primary schools would be designed to meet the needs of the development. They would be built to take account of whole forms while the need from the development would not equate to exact forms so the additional places would benefit local children.

The land being offered for an 8 forms of entry (8FE) secondary school is over and above what the development would generate in terms of places (3.5-4FE). The additional land would give the Council the opportunity to review secondary school provision across Thatcham and provide additional capacity at the North East Thatcham site.

Any improvements to sustainable transport routes that go beyond the site will be of benefit to wider residents e.g. footpath improvements, cycle paths, bus services.

Affordable housing will also be provided on the site, which will be of benefit to local residents.

3. The Thatcham Strategic Growth Study (TSGS) states that Thatcham Library is undersized for a town of 26,000, yet WBC have recently rejected a budget request of £30k to support refurbishment including improved access and toilet facilities. Are WBC committed to a library in Thatcham?

The Council did not reject Thatcham TC's request and are committed to improving the library to meet the needs of residents. On 18th March we confirmed this to Thatcham TC as follows:

The council's Culture and Leisure Programme Board has discussed Thatcham Town Council's proposal to review their annual contribution to the library revenue budget and instead contribute to improvements to the library building. It is noted that TTC wish to see improvements, such as a publicly accessible toilet completed within this calendar year.

The council's view is that Thatcham Library should be improved to better meet the needs of residents. With the disposal of the Walnut Close site next door there is an opportunity to be more ambitious and consider expanding the library or even building

a new library and community hub building on that site – subject to sufficient capital resources being available and agreement with TTC.

As you know, in the Review of Library Services in 2017 it was agreed that there should be a further review in 3 years or so. The review will update the assessment of community needs, consult with you and make proposals to ensure that we continue to provide an inclusive, modern, sustainable and high quality public library service – in Thatcham and across the district. This will include a capital programme for the whole service, including Thatcham Library.

4. The written response by WBC (25th January) stated that existing residents would benefit from "new green infrastructure such as public open space, contributions to the improvements of leisure facilities which can be used by all, improvements to existing rights of way, new cycleways and footpaths, contributions to existing medical facilities, etc". Can WBC explain the benefits of improved open space relative to the countryside that is being lost which already has access via rights-of-way, and can WBC explain how the capacity and car-parking will increase at the Kennet leisure centre to absorb a 25% increase in population as this does not appear in the infrastructure plan.

Public rights of way, only allow the public to walk or sometimes ride, cycle, along specific routes over land which belongs to someone else (often privately owned). In contrast, the improved open space would allow a right to roam.

Any proposal for the Kennet leisure centre will be in line with the recently adopted Council Leisure Strategy.

Roads:

5. It is stated in the TSGS that a bridge is not required because it would not help "for the destinations that new residents are likely to be accessing". Why are WBC confident that new residents, with a projected 1,000 daily new car movements, will not contribute to the traffic at the rail crossing?

Please see the answers to questions 13, 15, 21 and 31 in the main question and answer section which are of relevance, plus question 7 below.

6. It is also stated in the TSGS that a bridge is not required because "objectives for sustainable and active travel goals would be undermined" and that "it induces traffic that would otherwise not be on the road network". What is the alternative mode of transport that would be undermined for accessing locations South of Thatcham and Basingstoke?

Please see below

7. The Local Plan, Phase 1 Traffic Assessment describes acceptable Level of Service for a signalised junction of a mean delay of less than 25 seconds. What is the mitigation proposed by WBC that delivers an acceptable level of service at the rail crossing?

The above questions (5,6 and 7) all relate to a bridge crossing over the railway. This would be a significant project and would require detailed feasibility work and a business case to be developed. The Council will be using the Local Transport Plan review process to consider the options at the level crossing. The desire from the public for some relief around Thatcham level crossing has been heard.

8. The HELAA site assessment for Thatcham NE states "To accommodate such volumes of traffic, significant improvements would be required along the Northern Distribution Road (NDR) including

many of the junctions and including the junctions onto the A4. The NDR especially would need to be widened and realigned at Heath Lane. This may not be enough. There are concerns regarding the A4 into Newbury and the A4 within Thatcham. New routes across the north of Newbury may be required to link the north of Thatcham to the A339 and M4, and feasibility of these would need to be investigated." Is the £1 million of allocated CIL money in the TSGS sufficient for these works?

There are no plans for new routes from the north of Thatcham to the A339 or the M4 proposed.

9. Cllr Hilary Cole states that changes in "transport technology" must be considered, however the Department of Transport forecasts that traffic growth will continue through to 2036 in all scenarios considered (including electric vehicles and new technologies). What specifically is the transport technology referred to by Cllr Hilary Cole and would these be relevant in 2024 when it is reported that WBC would expect to see development begin.

Transport technology is changing rapidly and we do not know exactly how this will impact travel during the plan period and beyond. Whilst we may not be able to model specific impacts and changes in technology that are still emerging we do need to be aware that technology and travel habits are in a state of change which is possibly more significant than we have seen for many years. We need to be open to keeping up with these changes and willing to act to support areas where we could see benefits for West Berkshire. As an example and whilst still a way off, we have given permission for our transport models to be used to test ways in which you could model the impacts of autonomous vehicles on the network.

Leisure and Mobility

10. The TSGS states that "leisure mobility plays a strong part in the concept plan" and includes footpaths through The Plantation woodland to access the western part of NE Thatcham site. However, WBC chose not to adopt this woodland, it is now in mixed private ownership, and recently had its entrance obstructed by its new landowners. How will WBC secure this land for public access?

The Council has no plans at this stage to secure Plantation Wood for public access.

Air Quality

11. There are legal obligations on WBC not to worsen the air quality in the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The site selection process identified that there would be "Significant worsening of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter" and the most recent public disclosure of NOx shows a degradation in air quality. How will WBC demonstrate legal compliance to the requirement not to degrade air quality?

The Council has commissioned an independent Air Quality Study which will be publically available at the Regulation 19 stage in relation to the Councils preferred plan for submission to the Secretary of State.

Net Zero Carbon

12. It has been reported renewable energy would be delivered on site. Would this be sufficient to enable the site to be net zero carbon by 2030 as aligned with the WBC Environment Strategy.

No, the level of renewable energy provided on site will not enable the site to be net zero carbon by 2030 as the Local Plan has to conform to National Standards and Policies. However, the plan is seeking to reduce the level of operational regulated carbon as much as possible it does not look at whole train carbon neutrality.

13. WBC propose a bus service but that this will only be funded for 3 years. When would the service be introduced, and what would happen if the service is not profitable - would WBC underwrite its continued operation?

Detailed work on suitable bus service enhancements or new services would take place during the negotiations on a planning application and for a S106 agreement. For a development the size of the strategic site in NE Thatcham any funding towards bus services would continue for a longer period of 3 years and would be very much linked in to the travel plan measures implemented on the site. The bus services would be designed to give them every chance of becoming sustainable.

14. In a previous statement from WBC in response to net zero carbon building standards it was stated "However much we would like, local planning policies cannot .. " (deviate from national policy). The Governments statement on Building Better Homes (Jan21) is that "local authorities will retain powers to set local energy efficiency standards for new homes". Given this government clarification will WBC set energy efficiency standards aligned with net-zero carbon housing.

The Council is looking at a policy which will ensure that new residential development will be or as close to zero operational regulated carbon as possible and this will be independently assessed at the examination in public.

Recreation Space

15. The TSGS states that it would "contribute approximately an additional 1ha of sports pitches towards the NE Thatcham total" and that this forms a significant part of its off-site infrastructure contribution. Can WBC confirm this is new and additional space and is not just double counting existing facilities?

This is new space.

From parishioners of Upper Bucklebury

1. How many email/letters of objection were received by WBC on the planned development ?

We are currently processing responses and cannot provide an accurate figure. At the moment we have 1,422 representations from 477 consultees logged on the system with 353 of these reps relating to NE Thatcham.

2. WBC have, if the amount of documentation is anything to go by, spent an awful long time on the planning for this site. When was this site first identified by WBC as a location for 2500 houses ?

Siege Cross area has been under consideration as a potential site for a long time. The Planning Inspector carrying out the inquiry into the West Berkshire District Local Plan concluded in 1999 that the Siege Cross/Colthrop Manor site (smaller area than current proposal) should be allocated for housing development. The release of the MOD Depot site was the reason this was not carried through in the adopted plan.

The site was also considered as a potential strategic site in the preparation of the Core Strategy but the decision was made to allocate strategic sites at Newbury (in accordance with SE Plan where Newbury defined as sub-regional hub and because Thatcham had already seen considerable development in recent years). The Planning Inspector at the CS Examination concluded that in any overall review to accommodate more housing, Thatcham would be a location to be considered again for additional housing, consistent with its position in the top tier of the settlement hierarchy.

The Council's intention for this site is that it should be plan-led and planned comprehensively, delivering infrastructure benefits. The Planning Inspector at the 2017 appeal recommended approval but the SoS found that the development plan housing policies were up to date and dismissed appeal.

3. How much time and money have WBC spent on this so far ?

The Planning Policy Team have been working on the Emerging Draft Local Plan since 2017 as it is a statutory requirement to have an up to date local plan.

4. Why are WBC putting a line in the sand for this site when other sites (perhaps Newbury Showground as a brownfield site) will become available in the near/mid future ?

The Government requires local plans to be up to date, which it defines as being adopted within the last five years and that all plans are reviewed on a rolling five year basis. However, in order to meet these requirements work on the local plan is continuous.

The call for sites began in 2018 and at some stage the Council has to say that's it so that it can begin the detailed appraisal work that is needed and

demonstrated in the HELAA in order to conform to the Governments requirements.

Therefore, if other sites do come forward they will get assessed and if not included in the current plan they will be considered for the next plan in five years time.

5. Would that just be classed as icing on the cake allowing for even more development ?

As stated above the government requires all local plans to be up to date and reconsidered every five years. It also publishes under the standard methodology new annual housing requirements which can go up or down.

6. Why aren't WBC considering other AONB areas (such as up A34 to Chieveley where 400+ houses are already being developed with no provision of infrastructure)?

The development at North Newbury is not in the AONB. The Council always intended that development to the north of Newbury would be plan-led and strategic to enable comprehensive development with accompanying infrastructure. Further development in this location is not a preferred option at this stage but will be reviewed in any update of the plan.

7. What is the value of the developers/land owners contributors to the Conservative Party ?

I have no idea of the value of any political donations made by any individual or business to any political party.

However the Election Commission do have the following web page that may be of assistance.

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/financial-reporting/donations-and-loans/view-donations-and-loans>

8. WBC have on numerous press articles and interviews stated this is in fact a "done deal" when the draft plan has yet to be released. Are WBC presuming this is a in fact a fait accompli and despite any local objections they will persist with it ?

The Council has to produce a local plan based on evidence and all the work done to date does not say that this development cannot progress on planning grounds. It is not a "done deal" not only are we considering all the representations on the Emerging plan before we produce the submission version and even the plan still has to be examined by the independent Planning Inspector.

9. What would it take for WBC to reconsider this location ?

A viable alternative that provided the necessary housing on a site or sites that met the criteria as set out in the HELAA.

10. The MP for Newbury has committed to having a conversation with central government on housing allocation numbers considering that 85% of the area is AONB, why haven't WBC done this ?

Only 74% is in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. West Berkshire also has a significant area of functional flood plain and somewhat uniquely the protection zones for AWE.

The Council has been challenging the Government, and the annual number of dwellings required has been reduced from the proposed 693 dwellings per annum to 513 as stated in the response to Paula and question 60.

11. If 85% of West Berks is AONB isn't there an argument that says we need to build on AONB otherwise we will simply need massive high density housing (such as Mill Lane etc) on any remaining space in the area? What are WBC going to do about this ?

No 74% of West Berkshire is AONB.

West Berkshire has a unique set of circumstances which limit the amount of land available for development. However, the Government has set out its policies for future development and the Council can lobby for special consideration but it cannot stop work on the local plan until the outcome is known. As stated in response to Paula's question 60, the Council has managed to have the number reduced in the Standard Methodology which over the plan period equates to a reduction of 2,685.

12. Why has WBC refused to consider the site to the south of the station where the developers would provide a bridge over the railway which would be extremely beneficial to many more residents?

The Council has not refused to consider the site. It is Thatcham 1 and the reasons why it is not progressing are set out in the HELAA.

13. Please can WBC explain exactly what constitutes "affordable housing"?

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

b) Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

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14. Why have a percentage allocated to self build ? surely this only benefits those who are in the trade or looking to develop the plot and sell it on to make money, so why have self-build ?

The government requires all local authorities to provide plots for self builders and this policy allows for that.

15. At the next local elections, Conservatives are unlikely to get the vote if they persist with this plan, in which case will the new incoming majority be able to over-rule this planning application.

Potentially, it would depend on what the Planning Inspector said at the Examination relating to the site. It would also depend on what the developers decided to do relating to a planning application and it would also depend on how much compensation might be payable.

16. The main argument WBC seem to be putting forward is that this site provides schools, at what point exactly will the schools be built. Build before the houses and the new schools will steal pupils from existing schools impacting their budgets, build them after the houses and the existing schools will have to cope with the incremental influx. This is exactly what has happened at Highwood Copse, causing potential major impact to children's education.

The phasing of the delivery of the schools has yet to be determined. But it is envisaged that the schools will be phased and linked to housing delivery on the site.

17. Traffic is already congested along the A4 especially at Thatcham, what are the detailed plans to prevent worsening this situation ?

The mitigation measures required to increase the capacity on the A4 are being considered and developed to feed into the transport modelling. Detailed proposals would only ever accompany a planning application to ensure that the most up to date information is used.

18. What provision for local Jobs is included in the plans, otherwise this development risks becoming a dormitory site where everybody has to commute off the site to work thus increasing the traffic and pollution?

The plan contains minimum space standards, a requirement for full fibre to the premises both of which would support home working. The three schools associated with NE Thatcham will also provide jobs as will the proposed local centres. In addition the additional 20,400 sqm of employment land has been proposed on land east of Colthrop Industrial Estate.

19. The plan states that this will aid the development of Thatcham town centre. Exact details would be appreciated as both Thatcham and Newbury are seeing a massive decline in the town centres despite the large numbers of houses that have been built around them in recent years ?

The Council would dispute that there has been a massive decline in Newbury and Thatcham town centres. However, it is clear that retail in the UK is undergoing a significant change, change which has been exacerbated in recent months but it is uncertain that these changes will continue.

Shop local, has been a big success nationally in recent months and is likely to continue. The provision of additional new development in a town provides a signal to the wider development industry that Thatcham will be a town to invest in, as new houses means an increase in household expenditure in the area.