



*Email:* 

12<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Regulation 19 Public Consultation

I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed North East Thatcham development. This is on the grounds that the local infrastructure, in particular in secondary education, is inadequate to cope with such a large concentrated increase in housing, and also in relation to the adverse effect it would have on the adjacent Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The infrastructure in Thatcham cannot support the increase in population this development would cause, I am going to focus on education, but this is similarly the case for medical support, transport, etc. The provision for education from Early Years through to Secondary education is not clearly defined within the Local Plan Review (LPR). The fact that there is no coherent end-to-end plan breaches the Council's obligations to provide education facilities for children. As the parent of a child at Kennet School, I have seen the overcrowding that has already occurred since the increase in cohort numbers in 2019, it would further deteriorate education provision to increase numbers, meaning that any additional pupils would have to be sent to other schools. Where schools are oversubscribed those children who live nearer to the school are given precedence, this means that children from the proposed NE Thatcham development would be able to opt for Kennet and those from Bucklebury would have to travel further distances for their education.

Furthermore, the LPR plans to address the number increase with an additional secondary school in Thatcham are inconsistent, incomplete and contradictory. The latest LPR proposes that a sum of £15 million be contributed by the developers to Secondary Education. There are no details of the location of the land to be provided and hence no possibility of assessing its suitability. The Thatcham NE development plan 2020, produced by David Locke Associates and Stantec on behalf of WBC, proposes funding for a 6-8FE (Form Entry) secondary school, half-funded by developer contribution. Government guidelines are that Secondary Schools with less than a 6FE are not sustainable. However, the Development Plan states that the NE Thatcham development (which proposed 2,500 houses), is not sufficient to fill a 6-8 FE school. With an apparent 40% reduction in the housing allocation in the 2023 LPR (2022 to 2039) to 1500 houses, an additional secondary school simply cannot be sustainable in this location. Earlier in this same Thatcham NE Development Plan it was noted that the education provision exercise was based on WBDC data on pupil yield from an out of date 11 year old study. The LPR Review to 2039, Policy SP17, now states that land (but not the Secondary school itself) will be provided for the development. How long would it be until the actual school is built and how would it be paid for?

My second area of objection is in relation to the location's proximity to an AONB. Recently a bid to build 26 homes in Highclere failed after the planning appeal was dismissed. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council turned down the proposed development in October 2021. However, this was appealed by development company JPP Land. The council refused the development on the grounds

that they would have a significant impact on the surrounding North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This opinion was shared by the Planning Inspectorate, which dismissed the appeal on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023. In the decision it stated “The appeal scheme would suburbanise an important green gap which makes a significant contribution to the rural setting of Highclere and in doing so would cause irreversible harm to the intrinsic rural character and appearance of the surrounding area...Furthermore, it would fail to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB”. The has highlighted the importance of considering AONB when making planning decisions; if Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council can have the foresight to realise this with 26 houses, why can't West Berkshire Council recognise the impact of 1500 that would boarder onto the same AONB?

I hope that you will consider these arguments when making any decisions about the proposed development.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.