Please confirm receipt

West Berkshire Planning department
Council Offices
WBC
Market Street
Newbury
RG145DL

02.03.2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

Ref: WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection

I would like to formally register my OBJECTION to WBC LPR Regulation 19, the proposed development of 1500 to 2500 houses at North East Thatcham, as I find it completely unsound for the following reasons:

1) It will dramatically reduce the greenbelt between Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury.

2) The rural nature of this area would be completely lost with Upper Bucklebury becoming part of Thatcham.

3) It would be a massive over development of our beautiful countryside in an area which consists of rolling hills and farmland. If developments of this scale are approved there will not be any open rural areas left for future generations to enjoy.

4) The proposed land is not particularly suitable for development as it is very hilly land and has had issues as a flood plain area.

5) The view that Thatcham is best placed to take a development of this size in this location is misplaced, un-proven and ill-conceived.

6) According to the Transport Assessment paragraph 3.26, 'The access arrangements for the Northern end of the NET site proposes new priority junctions on both Floral Way and Harts Hill Road. Results from the modelling suggest that these will not cause problems'. I cannot find any modelling results for this so I am unsure as to why this has been stated. Please can you share these with me? How can increased speeding traffic and pollution on an already dangerous and busy road (without the development), be seen as not causing a problem?

7) I have been made aware that there are drawings showing a new car park on Harts Hill. This again will increase traffic to an already very dangerous road and is highly likely to promote anti-social behaviour, illegal activities, fly tipping and littering which we see regularly on Bucklebury common.

8) In terms of 'reducing accidents and improving safety' your assessment has concluded that 'the policy is likely to have a positive impact on road safety as safe travel will be critical to the design of the site'. Also regarding 'increasing opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport' your assessment concluded 'the policy is likely to have a significant

positive impact on walking, cycling and public transport as the development should be designed with these in mind'. I wholeheartedly disagree with both of these assessments and I have concerns with the language used such as 'likely'. Please can you provide me with the evidence and conclusions for both these assessments? Also, it's not just about the site, it's more importantly about the surrounding areas, villages and community which exist today and have done for years. What assessment has been done to assure road safety for these with the increased traffic?

9) Further to the above, this development will have a significant impact on traffic levels and the associated pollution throughout the area, especially increasing:
    - Traffic from Thatcham through Upper Bucklebury to Chapel Row on roads which are not designed for large traffic volumes.
    - Traffic on the route from Thatcham and Newbury. These roads approaching the station are already heavily congested at busy times and in the event of any minor traffic disruption
    - Increased traffic through ALL the surrounding villages in general, especially as there is a plan for an exit at the North of the site onto Hart Hill. This will significantly increase traffic towards Upper Bucklebury, Chapel Row, Bradfield, Cold Ash and Hermitage. WBC has predicted '*some displacement of A4 traffic onto wider rural routes such as Upper Bucklebury*'. This is a total understatement and completely neglects any concern for road safety, especially as the roads are already inadequate, have no pavements and are extremely dangerous with speeding traffic. The potential for serious/fatal accidents is already high and this proposed housing development and exit will mean this is inevitable.
    - Traffic and speeding up to and through Upper Bucklebury

10) This level additional of housing will inevitably have an adverse impact on local facilities, schooling, medical and welfare services which are already overstretched.

11) Regarding healthcare, there is a significant lack of detail around strategic healthcare planning and the NE Thatcham development. As far as I am aware, neither WBC or the developers have arranged or published a prospective Health Impact Assessment for this development. There has also been no engagement between the North-East Thatcham Development Consortium and local general practises. Why hasn't this taken place? The unlikelihood of a new GP site being available will result in the three existing practises in the area being overstretched even further. WBC and the developers have not provided evidence for the provision of a viable primary care medical facility. To add to this Thatcham Dental Practises are already unable to provide dental care for the local population, this will also get worse with the proposed development.

12) Regarding the environment, there will be damage to the Bucklebury Plateau Biodiversity Opportunity Area and the historic woodlands, especially the common. This development will also destroy the enjoyment of the local countryside by local communities in terms of the broader North Wessex Downs AONB and will cause negative impact to legally protected wildlife. There is no evidence to support claims that the NE housing development will have a positive impact on the environment but instead it will have a significant and serious negative impact on the overall environment, protected wildlife, natural vegetation and sustainability. Environmental sustainability is defined as: 'the ability to maintain an ecological balance in our planet's natural environment and conserve natural resources to support the wellbeing of current and future generations'. I am honestly quite shocked and disappointed that WBC is not protecting the sustainability of our precious environment. In addition, as far as I am

aware there is no significant attempt to investigate, analyse and address the negative environmental consequences. Why not?

13) Regarding education, within the Local Plan Review the provision for Nursery, Early Years, Infant and Secondary education and funding has not been clearly defined. The provision for Primary and Secondary school education is unclear and contradictory. WBC, as an education authority, has a duty to make arrangements for suitable school provision. How this obligation will be met across all school years has not been defined or evidenced in the LPR. The plan for the schools needs to take priority and should be confirmed before any housing development is agreed. Unless this is done it is likely that houses will be built and no additional school provision will provided, leading to oversubscribed schools and crowded, ineffective education for our children. The LPR talks of provision of school fields however no evidence for funding or a suitable location (a sports field near the busy, congested and air polluted A4 does not suffice as suitable) has been identified by the WBC or NE Thatcham Development Consortium.

14) There is no evidence that this development will enhance Thatcham town centre (or the area in general).

15) It is not likely to attract new businesses to the area or create or significantly increase employment.

16) The local shop and pub are unlikely to benefit. The local shop is under significant threat as the new development includes retail.

17) There is now particular focus within the Consultation National Planning Policy Framework on taking into account the character of an area when assessing how much housing can be accommodated. As a result of this, several local authorities have paused their plan making process whilst they await the outcome of the consultation on the basis that a lower housing requirement could be applicable to the plans than the one currently being planned for. Although I am completely against the NE Thatcham housing development, I would ask that WBC should take the opportunity (as others have), to hold on the plan and present a revised plan in line with the updated planning guidance when this comes in later in 2023.

To conclude, this development is unnecessary, inappropriate, and ill-conceived and should be rejected.

Please do not take the opportunity to live and play in our beautiful countryside away from those that currently cherish what we have within this area and the feeling of community that this area offered to all.

We as a community should not have what was inflected on Shinshield near Reading happen to us here. As anyone that knows Berkshire can see that more was lost by the masses of houses being erected than gained by the local community.

Observations

- Why is WBC not writing to **all** residents to make them aware of this development and obtain /seek comments on the proposal from as wider audience as this development will effect?

- Up to now I was under the impression that WBC was committed to keep a substantial greenbelt between Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury. The consideration of this approval now certainly seems to totally contradict this stated commitment.

- Why is WBC are now considering this development when a previous application was rejected by the secretary of state in **2017**?

I am prepared to appear at the public enquiry, if invited.

Yours faithfully

Elizabeth Bailey