

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PlanningPolicy](#)
Subject: WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection
Date: 28 February 2023 23:13:13

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

Dear West Berkshire Planning Department

Further to my e-mail of 5 February 2021, I am writing to object to the proposed development of up to 2500 houses at NE Thatcham (SP 17). I am not satisfied with the Council's response to my objections and I am objecting to the plan as I find it unsound. My main reasons are as follows:

Removal of community boundary between Thatcham and Bucklebury

The land north of Floral Way currently provides a strategic gap between Thatcham and Bucklebury. This proposal undermines the planning principle of maintaining a strategic gap to separate communities by virtually eliminating it and would visually and socially break the natural community boundaries.

It is acknowledged that should the site be developed, there will be a reduction in the physical separation between Thatcham, Cold Ash and Upper Bucklebury. I do not believe the assurances that a landscape led development would, in reality, retain and protect the separation and identity of the individual settlements. It would be of lasting and irreversible detriment to the identity and community within which we live. We chose [REDACTED] because of its identity as a village community and the surrounding countryside.

Traffic

A development of the scale proposed would lead to a significant increase in traffic, which has not been adequately considered in the proposals. There is an assumption that the bulk of traffic would use the A4, accessed via Floral Way; the A4 is already commonly overloaded at peak times, causing significant congestion which is harmful on the environment, and new residents would look to other routes. These routes would likely be through the Parish villages, particularly for access to the A34 and M4, on rural single-carriageway roads with blind corners and many without footpaths, therefore ill-suited to coping with the additional volume of traffic:

- The increased traffic will negatively impact many surrounding villages including Upper Bucklebury, Cold Ash, Burdens Heath, Chapel Row and Bradfield
- The current roads will not be sufficient to support this increased level of traffic
- These roads already suffer with concerning levels of speeding (recent Parish Council SIPS deployment has confirmed this and the police have the figures) and the proposal would exacerbate this issue further
- The increased traffic will be a safety concern for local residents, particularly children whilst walking to and from school
- The houses located on Harts Hill Road and Burdens Heath in Upper Bucklebury, and The Ridge in Cold Ash, do not have a footpath outside. Increased traffic along these roads will make it significantly more dangerous for pedestrians in these

areas in particular

- The increased volume of traffic will impact the quality of life for the residents of the villages mentioned through increase traffic noise and disturbance

It is acknowledged that there will 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. It was also stated that without mitigation the transport models 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). It should be noted that Upper Bucklebury and Chapel Row already experience an increase in traffic flow when there is congestion on the A4.

It has since become apparent there is a plan for an exit at the north of the site onto Harts Hill road which will significantly add to the traffic flow through Cold Ash, Upper Bucklebury and Chapel Row. I do not believe the Council's Transport Assessment has properly considered the impact of increased traffic and there is not enough evidence to show proper modelling has been undertaken to consider all of the proposals, such as the exit at the north of the site onto Harts Hill road. I therefore do not have confidence the mitigation measures and improvements the Council refer to could be made to the local transport networks.

There is also not enough evidence to back up the Council's assertions that the plans will reduce accidents and improve safety, nor that it will increase the opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport.

Inadequate Supporting Infrastructure for Scale of Development

A development of the scale proposed would have significant knock-on impacts to local infrastructure, a number of which have not been adequately considered.

- The proposal does not consider the increase in healthcare services required to support +25% housing increase in the Thatcham area
- The proposal does not consider the strain of a likely increased demand on Thatcham Train Station. Parking facilities at Thatcham Train Station are already insufficient to cope with current demand and there would need to be a significant increase in the provision of parking at the station to cope with increased demand
- The road infrastructure in a number of common commuting directions from the development are not sufficient, in particular the significant bottlenecks already experienced at the rail level crossing when travelling south

The Council noted my concern regarding infrastructure and stated that a development which does not provide adequate and timely infrastructure will not be supported.

It is evident that the Council and the developers have neither arranged a relevant Health Impact Assessment, nor have they provided evidence of having appropriately liaised with local health care agencies or providers. I therefore do not have confidence the increase in healthcare services required has been properly assessed and this will place extreme pressure on our existing healthcare services.

Since raising my initial objections, it has also become clear that there is no clearly defined plan within the Local Plan Review for the provision for education from nursery, early years, though infant to secondary education, which the Council is obliged to meet. This will place extreme pressure on our existing education provision.

AONB

The proposed development is adjoining the Bucklebury Common and AONB and it would have a long-lasting negative impact on this special environment. There would also be a significant detriment in the loss of the open aspect of the local neighbourhood and loss of the existing countryside/rural views. The close proximity of the development to the Bucklebury Common and AONB will have an impact directly and indirectly through the likely increase in visitors:

- The Common is protected because of its flora, fauna and situation and its special habitats are home to rare and protected wildlife. There is no doubt that such a close, high-density development, will have a negative impact on this area and wildlife
- The plants in and bounding the AONB would suffer and the Common would be put under pressure from additional visitors
- The AONB is already suffering habitat damage from walkers, cyclists and motorised vehicles and the additional visitor numbers would exacerbate damage to this struggling environment
- The area already suffers from significant waste issues, that needs the support of local village volunteers to regularly undertake rubbish clearing days to keep under control

There is no evidence to support the claims that SP17 will have a positive effect on the environment. The Local Plan Review makes reference to a Sustainability Charter to establish how policy requirements will be achieved and that the Charter will be informed by other strategy documents, including one on ecology. It is unclear that these strategy documents exist or, if they do, they have not been made available for the Regulation 19 consultation.

SP17 has no clearly defined plan for providing adequate green space and protecting biodiversity. As stated previously, there will be additional visitor numbers to the AONB and the Common and this will exacerbate the damage to this struggling environment. Infact, the Local Plan Review states its intent for SP17 to drive additional traffic (people and cars) into the AONB. However, the management vision for Bucklebury Common is explicitly focussed on not increasing the human pressure on the habitat they are working to conserve.

There is not enough evidence to suggest the Council has made serious attempts to investigate, analyse and systematically address the environmental sustainability consequences that such a large, concentrated development site would bring. It would be of lasting and irreversible detriment to the AONB and Common with devastating effects on the flora, fauna and wildlife in these areas which is something we as a family particularly value and was one of the main reasons for choosing this area to live in.

Pollution

The proposed development would generate pollution in the form of extraneous light which would drive local wildlife out of their existing habitats. It would also affect local Bucklebury residents by spoiling their night sky. Furthermore, the scale of the proposed development would lead to increased pollution from carbon emissions and those associated with increased population density.

Whilst the Council has highlighted various policies that are intended to address concerns relating to pollution, it goes without saying that there will inevitably be a detrimental effect on residents. For example, it has been acknowledged that traffic flow and congestion will significantly increase, which will lead to increased pollution from carbon emissions at a time when the public at large is being urged to reduce its carbon footprint.

Additional Point

The Council should await the outcome of the National Planning Policy Framework consultation that closes on 2 March 2023 as there is particular emphasis in the consultation on considering the character of an area when assessing how much housing can be accommodated, which is particularly pertinent in this case. The Council should pause the current plan on the basis that a lower housing requirement could be applicable than the one currently being planned for and produce a revised plan in line with the updated planning guidance when this comes into effect later in the year.

