

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED] [PlanningPolicy](#)
Subject: RE: WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection
Date: 18 February 2023 13:14:09

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 February 2023 13:09
To: planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk
Subject: WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection

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From: Lorna Harrower - [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Please find following my objections to the Thatcham NE Development. I am willing to attend any public enquiry if invited.

In summary, I find the plan unsound.

Traffic Problems

Without the council stating the potential locations of any additional primary healthcare and dental Care facilities or pre-school or secondary schools, it is impossible for them to evidence the likely flow of additional traffic from this development in any direction. This must be modelled, and improvements to the existing road infrastructure assessed as necessary to accommodate it before this development is considered for approval.

I live in [REDACTED] Midgham, which is accessed either end from via Cox's Lane or Church Hill. Both roads are barely adequate for local traffic because the former is single track for most of its length, and the latter single track at certain points with passing places. These roads are used as rat runs when traffic is congested on the A4: Last year due to an accident on the A4 the entire length of Cox's Lane, Birds Lane and Church Hill was grid locked as traffic tried to find alternatives routes around the road blockage. I was stuck in the middle of this for over an hour on my way to a GP appointment (which I missed as a result).

These roads are already experiencing more traffic from new builds along the A4 and more locals new to the area exploring the country side in their cars, on their bikes and walking dogs. Being one of the last houses at the end of Birds Lane, it's more efficient for me fuel-wise (& to avoid risk – turning right across the A4 is dangerous) to use Coxs Lane when travelling to Thatcham and Newbury but it's becoming increasingly dangerous to do so as more vehicles are now using these single track lanes. Last week, I barely avoided a collision as a vehicle rounded a blind bend at speed here [51.406291, -1.210429](#). Had I not been driving a 4x4 and been able to drive off the track,

we would have collided! This was a new driver to the area. It's almost impossible to make any journey now along Coxs Lane without encountering two or three vehicles and one driver or another having to reverse back to one of the few limited passing places. This makes every journey take longer, raises the risk of a collision for every journey, and increases the risk of driver confrontation as drivers unfamiliar with these roads don't know the passing places, and get aggressive when you try to point out that the nearest passing point is much closer to them than for you!

These roads are heavily used by cyclists, horse riders, people and dog walkers accessing public byways and footpaths. There are no footpaths along these roads. It is unconscionable for any increase in traffic along Coxs Lane, Birds Lane or Church Hill without an unacceptable increase in the likelihood of injury to me, other humans and animals. I'd like to see modelling that shows there will be no increase in traffic along these narrow local roads without impacting on their current use for recreation, leisure and sustainable commuting by bike by the local community.

I also use the A4 to commute to Bracknell for work, travelling through Theale and onto the M4 to do so. The load of traffic on the A4 is already too heavy, particularly between 7am – 9am and 4.30pm – 6pm. As commuters, we come to a standstill in Woolhampton which is a bottle neck, and when locals use the pedestrian crossing to cross the road, and we are regularly stuck in stationary traffic at Pips Way and Theale roundabouts. This idling traffic pumps out exhaust fumes making it hazardous for me as a driver sitting in it, not to mention local residents, pedestrians trying to walk to the Midgham train station or along the footpaths along the Bath Road. The commute now takes me 20 minutes longer than it used to due to the increase in traffic over the past 10 years since I've moved to the area. More traffic using the Bath Road will only increase travel time and further pollute the local area with emissions.

When I try to exit either Coxs Lane, or Church Hill to turn right to travel towards Thatcham, I have to wait for up to 5 minutes and sometimes longer to find a safe gap in the traffic. And the risk of a collision is high because there is a constant stream of drivers using the Bath Road to travel between M4, Newbury and beyond. The speed limit has been reduced from 60 mph to 50 mph for safety reasons. But unexpected congestion and drivers speeding up make up time makes traffic speed irregular & unpredictable on this road. This makes it very dangerous for anyone pulling out against the grain of traffic! This road simply can't safely accommodate any increase in traffic.

Broad Lane, The Common and The Avenue are already being used as rat runs for people as an alternative to using the congested Bath Road. I feel unsafe driving along these roads as impatient drivers overtake at speed during rush hour. These roads are also regularly used by me and my friends with our dogs, horses and bikes. We criss cross these roads to find different tracks through the common for walks. Inevitable traffic (5,000 extra cars potentially?) will bleed from this NE Development onto these roads making it unsafe for us to use for recreation and polluting this exceptionally beautiful wooded environment with fuel emissions. This AONB is so revered that it regularly attracts people from outside of the area to enjoy it. Increasing the flow of traffic in the middle of this rare and beautiful place will make it less friendly and safe for everyone wanting to enjoy fresh air and nature.

When travelling to Thatcham, I use Hart Hill and Floral Way. Harts Hill has several dangerous blind bends and a steep descent into floral way: treacherous in icy conditions. Floral Way is

heavily congested during rush hour traffic. May I see the traffic modelling for any junctions on these roads, and in particular any safety assessment done on the risk to other road users of having junctions on these roads? I can't see how increased traffic is going to encourage safe and sustainable commuting: riding a bike down Harts Hills will be even more perilous?

How will this development have a positive impact on walking, cycling and public transport?

I note the proposal for a car park on Harts Hill. For what purpose?

I'd like to see the council's traffic modelling at the various bottle necks in the area during peak traffic to see what the likely impact will be on commuting time (all modes), safety & emissions from this development?

Environment

There are adders where the proposed development is. We know this because our dog ran off on a walk from Coxs Lane to Colthrop Manor. We found him eventually on private land where the development is intended to be sited. He disturbed an adder and our prompt intervention prevented him being bitten (he was poised to bite it as it reared up at him).

Our friend, a reptile expert, was unwilling to visit the location because this is private land and we didn't want to be found trespassing, nor for the land owner to know what we'd found. In her experience, landowners of development sites have been known to make the environment hostile to adders so we have kept this a secret. We will reveal the location for an independent assessment to take place once we are sure this habitat won't be destroyed before that happens.

I note the plan makes reference to providing green space and playing fields for the new households, but again no detail is provided. The idea that schools will open their playing fields to the general public is not feasible due to H&S, safeguarding, maintenance issues etc. I am concerned that if these are not provided, new households will gravitate to other green spaces in the area, increasing traffic in areas around the Common, and disturbing the flora and fauna. There are already a high number of deer, badger and kites struck by traffic on the roads around our wooded areas and fields. I fear this will increase with more traffic flowing through our local roads.

I am also a mushroom hunter. Many mushrooms in the Common and surrounding woods only grow in undisturbed soil. These woods are already heavily trafficked by locals and daytime visitors. Last autumn we noticed a near total absence of mushrooms during October and November in our local woods, yet in other woods in the Chilterns and New Forest, they were plenty. It might be because the Common is now a favourite for foragers who've depleted everything, or because the woods are so heavily used for recreation since covid, that the soil is too widely disturbed? If even more people come to visit these woods, the soil will be even more disturbed and the fungi won't have enough time for their hyphae to develop and to fruit. I fear our woods will become devoid of mushrooms & other edibles.

We need a thorough impact assessment to be done on the impact the NE Development plan will have on local flora and fauna.

I and other walkers will also lose access to the popular footpaths from Coxs Lane leading to Colthrop and Upper Bucklebury. How are we expected to be able to access these areas safely on foot with our animals without these footpaths? This development will limit my access on foot to areas of the countryside I currently enjoy and will impair my ability to enjoy it as a local citizen. I'd like to better understand how the council is proposing to compensate the local community for what it will lose in footpath access to areas we currently enjoy?

Flood defence & pollution of river Kennet

Can the council also show local residents how the recent flood alleviation plan will accommodate such a vast paved area (the housing estate & associated roads), and evidence how the consequential run off of water will not pollute the Kennet river any further.

Primary & dental care

I am registered at Chapel Row surgery. The medical facility is stretched to capacity with long waits to see GPs in particular. The dispensary regularly operates reduced hours due to demand and recruitment problems. The hours of opening are so limited that I sometimes struggle to find appointments I can make as a fulltime working person. If more households try to access this facility, it's will impact on the care these professionals are able to give to the current local population. I fear getting a face-to-face appointment will become increasingly unfeasible and will put my wellbeing at risk.

I am also registered with a dental practice in Tilehurst, some 13 miles away!

As a local resident, I'd like to understand what plans have been created for additional primary and dental care to meet the needs of these additional households? Not a generic statement that the needs will be met, but something more substantive showing where these facilities will be, the size, feasibility of resourcing them and so on. For example, if local facilities struggle to resource their practices, how will this problem be overcome with any new practices?

House price devaluation/other options

Many home owners here have paid a premium to live on the doorstep of an AONB: to benefit from the peace & quiet, less congested roads and access to open countryside. What consideration has the council given to changing the character of this local area and the impact this will have on the value of our properties?

There are thousands of individual building plots sites which could spread the load of this proposed housing development, and potentially meet the need for new housing development within the country without degrading the rural landscape.

The council must surely have access to a register of potential individual building plot sites within the county that it reviews before proposing impactful developments in greenbelt areas as part of its due diligence?

Will the council share this due diligence work and all rejected planning applications for new builds for the past 5 years so we may better understand the imperative to use this greenbelt

land as opposed to developing other options?

This should form part of the consultation documentation.

Consultation

I am an intelligent, educated and interested local resident, yet I have found accessing documentation for this proposed plan very difficult. I work long hours full time and cannot get to the offices to view documents in person. When the council's website goes down for an entire weekend, that hardly helps us review documentation when we're not at work either.

I am [REDACTED] and struggle to read the documents on line which are not written with the needs of people like me in mind. My partner is [REDACTED], and equally intelligent and interested. He wants to object but will struggle putting anything into writing. Many residents in my street are elderly and computer illiterate. They cannot get to your offices nor access online content.

I find this entire "consultation" to have been discriminatory. I'd like the council to evidence that fact that they have done everything practically possible to get local residents like us informed, engaged and able to contribute before this plan goes any further. I thank the hard work of other local residents who've gone over and beyond to explain things to us in a way we can understand as best they can. Something our local council should have done, but has not.

May I also ask why the exit onto Hart Road at the proposed North of the site was only revealed to the local community on the 6th January 2023. This late disclosure is disingenuous. This fact, and the impact this will have displacing traffic through Cold Ash, Bucklebury & Chapel Road (rural roads) would have encouraged more local residents to get involved.... had they known.

I believe the council has paid lip service to policies it must comply with, and to an extent, outsourced its responsibilities to third parties who have a vested and commercial interest in this proposed development - to the detriment of the local community.

This fact, the inaccessibility of the planning documents and the late disclosure of key facts makes this application unsound.

Lorna Harrower

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