

I object as the plan is unsound because:

1. Traffic. There will be a significant, and potentially dangerous, increase in the traffic on the rural roads through Bucklebury parish. There will be an exit from the site onto Harts Hill, but no wider traffic modelling is available. WBC assesses that there will be some displacement of traffic onto the rural roads, but this will have a positive impact on road safety. Given the nature of these roads it is hard to reconcile a vastly increased traffic flow through local villages with a positive safety impact. Traffic flows over areas such as the Thatcham level crossing, through the villages along the A4, and to the M4 and A34 will just cause gridlock and unmitigated pollution in all areas. The plan falls dramatically short in this area.
2. Healthcare. There is no detail into strategic healthcare planning included in the proposal. Given the development's proposed size, the proposal should include a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), but this does not appear to have been completed. There is little chance of a new GP practice being commissioned, so the households within the site will have to be merged into already overstretched local practices. A similar overstretch exists within dental practices in the Thatcham area. The proposal fails to address any form of primary healthcare provision requirement.
3. Environment. The proposed site will cause permanent damage to the Bucklebury Plateau Biodiversity Opportunity Area, site a major greenfield development in the setting of the North Wessex AONB, and cause detrimental impacts to legally protected wildlife. The proposal does nothing to mitigate these far reaching and irreversible effects, and the LPR's own sustainability appraisal accepts that SP17 will have a negative impact on environmental sustainability. It is shameful that WBC entertain a proposal with no concrete mitigations for the devastation that would be unleashed. The management vision for Bucklebury Common necessitates the minimising of extra human pressures upon it. By way of contrast, SP17 would necessarily cause an overspill of people to wreak havoc with the fragile ecosystems of the Common. The site would forever be a scar on the environment of the AONB, and there appears to be no strategy to meet the requirement to achieve the required biodiversity net gains.

The proposal fails in all areas of protecting the environment generally, and in legally required areas to improve biodiversity. There is no evidence of serious attempts to investigate, analyse and address the consequences of this proposal. It is unsound in this area.

4. Education. There is no end to end plan for education within the plan. The plan does not provide evidence of the education requirement, a secondary school location, the number of Form Entries at any school, timing of funding, and whether any funding is sufficient to meet the Council's obligations to provide education.

It appears that less than a 6FE school is unsustainable, so it not clear as to what the education plan is. The current plan does not provide for enough houses to justify a new secondary school, so pupils would have to be crammed into already overstretched facilities. SP17 would dramatically add to Thatcham's education problems rather than provide any form of answer. It is sadly laughable that the plan fails to detail any form of recent demographic

predictions for education demand, or predictions of the long term capacities of local schools. Obviously if the schools are not built then their associated facilities (such as sports fields) would not be available to the community.

WBC has a duty to make arrangements for suitable school provision. The LPR fails to provide evidence as to how this obligation would be met, and as such is unsound in another major area.

For me personally, the disregard of the effect of traffic on the Bucklebury area is particularly worrying. The area will be overrun with cars, not least because all other roads will become gridlocked. My ability to walk and cycle on local roads will be seriously affected, as will my ability to drive safely around the local area. However, this is nothing compared to the dramatic and irreversible catastrophe that would overtake the Common. There is no reasonable mitigation to prevent wholesale damage. WBC must take time to reconsider.

On 6th December 2022, the Secretary of State for Housing and Communities detailed that the housing number should now be an advisory starting point and not be mandatory, and that Planning Inspectors should no longer override sensible local decision making which is sensitive to and reflects local constraints and concerns.

The NPPF consultation which ran until yesterday also focussed on the need to take into account the character of an area when assessing a realistic ability to accommodate housing. Many sensible local authorities paused their plan making process accordingly. It would make sense for WBC to do the same, as this proposal might be trying to fit (badly) a need that is no longer present.

I urge WBC to reconsider this unsafe plan. It is unsound in too many areas with too many questions unanswered.