


From:   
To: [PlanningPolicy](#)  
Subject: WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection  
Date: 23 February 2023 17:03:12

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Dear Sirs

## **WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection Thatcham NE Development**

I wish to object in the strongest terms to the proposed plan above as I find it unsound. Some of my objections are detailed below.

1. The proposed development is situated on the side of a valley in the broader landscape setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB, outside of any settlement boundary in an area of greenbelt land consisting of rolling hills and farmland. The development would be extremely visible from a number of viewpoints, most notably from the southern side of the valley and would change the overall vision of the area to an urban one as opposed to that of a small town contained within a wider countryside context. Contrary to claims within SP17 that this will have a positive effect on the environment I believe that it will have a significant and irreversible negative impact.

2. If the proposed development were to proceed the gap between it and the village of Upper Bucklebury and the boundary of the AONB would be negligible and insufficient. Upper Bucklebury would effectively join Thatcham thereby losing its identity and seriously compromising the rural aspect of the area.

At the time of the AONB boundary being set it had to meet several criteria set by Government. Several of these, including those relating to tranquility and wildness would be completely compromised if the existing 'buffer zone' was eroded.

3. It is of particular concern that SP17 has no proven plans for providing adequate green space and protecting biodiversity. Indeed, the LPR states its intent for SP17 to drive additional traffic (people and cars) into the AONB. This is the absolute opposite of the management vision for Bucklebury Common which is explicitly focused on not increasing human pressure on the fragile ecosystems they are working to restore and nurture. The LPR's own sustainability appraisal accepts that SP17 will have a negative impact on environmental sustainability but gives no detail of any mitigation measures which would be taken.

Ironically the same sustainability appraisal suggests that the SP 17 policy is likely to have an overall positive impact on sustainability but only by ignoring all the environmental consequences in favour of some highly questionable social and economic benefits. Given the ill thought out nature of the sustainability appraisal one has to question whether it has any credibility whatsoever and ask whether the whole appraisal should be repeated by a more competent body.

4. Bucklebury Vision and the Bucklebury Plan are documents approved and agreed with West Berks Council. Despite their being accepted as constituting 'supplementary planning consideration' they do not appear to have been taken into consideration. The section within Bucklebury Vision, Highways, Communication and Traffic is particularly relevant.

*The parish roads have been established over the years for access, service and communication between the numerous hamlets, farms and dwellings. They consist entirely of unclassified roads (rural roads), mostly without pavements or kerbstones, upgraded from gravel tracks with only a limited top surface structure. The 14 miles of tarmac lanes - all single carriageway or single track, with few passing places, are generally narrow winding country lanes with hedgerows or soft verge edges, many subject to flooding and only really suitable for local traffic.*

1500 - 2500 extra properties would result in a large volume of extra traffic not just on all of the main roads but also the country lanes in and around the surrounding villages. WBC documentation does not address this. Country lanes are known to be the most dangerous roads to drive on and it is inevitable that any increase in traffic is going to make them even more hazardous for motorists and non-motorists alike. This is at odds with the WBC Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2026 'Active Travel Strategy' and more especially with the Bucklebury Quiet Lane Scheme which was initiated by WBC and supported by local residents.

The issue of the inevitable increase of traffic on the wider network of country roads and the need to look at road safety within that environment is not addressed in SP17.

5. I have a particular concern with the traffic that will travel up Harts Hill and into Upper Bucklebury.

Since the introduction of the chicanes in Broad Lane, Upper Bucklebury there has been a significant increase in traffic using Byles Green, a largely single carriageway country lane with no pavement and with a dangerous 90 degree bend, as a means of avoiding the said chicanes and the tailbacks in Broad Lane at busy times of the day. Residents have tried to protect verges from being driven over by using markers - wooden blocks, boulders etc in an attempt to keep vehicles on the actual road. Any further increase in road movements in the area would have a significant negative effect on safety both for motorists and for pedestrians. Ironically Byles Green is part of the WBC Quiet Lane Scheme.

SP17 does not address this nor am I aware of any assessment having been carried out.

6. The proposed site for Thatcham NE Development and Bucklebury Common is home to many species of wildlife and flora and fauna, much of them increasingly rare. I find it abhorrent that there is no plan to protect our rapidly decreasing and increasingly precious wildlife, rather a vague reference to mitigation measures that would be taken after the development has been completed. It is environmentally irresponsible and also disingenuous. As far as I am aware there have been no strategy documents relating to the ecology of the site published by WBC. If this is the level of importance WBC attach to ecology I can take no reassurance from promises of mitigation!

In addition there is already a problem with off-roading, litter and fly tipping and any increase in motor vehicles on the roads, or use of the Common as a 'playground' rather than a place for quiet enjoyment and appreciation will be to the detriment of its fragile ecosystem.

7. I have limited my comments to some of the impacts of the proposed development on Upper Bucklebury where I live but the implications for Thatcham are also huge and damaging for that community. The proposal is over development of Thatcham which currently struggles to serve its existing residents. There is insufficient parking for the town and schools and doctors surgeries are over stretched. The railway station and level crossing is a bottle neck with limited parking and almost full train services at peak times. Flooding is an on-going issue and building on the slope to the north of the town would massively increase the risk of heavy rain overwhelming the drainage system to an even greater degree than occurred in July 2007. Indeed, the 'Flooding in Thatcham' report written by Sue Everett, an independent consultant ecologist, said that it would be "utter madness to build on that slope". Sadly, climate change means that once 1 in 100 years events are happening

far more frequently and it would be irresponsible to put property in an area of known risk.

Please take the above comments into account when coming to a decision on the proposed development.

Yours faithfully

Mrs V E Coulson

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of Mrs V E Coulson.

Sent from my iPad