

Extraordinary Council – 2 March 2023

Proposal for consideration by Council as detailed in the requisition signed by Members dated 1 February 2023.

The information available to support the current consultation being undertaken on the Local Plan has several major flaws.

These include:

The housing numbers for northeast Thatcham – explained to the Council as a reduction from 2500 dwellings to 1500 - is not correct. The Regulation 18 Consultation envisaged that only 1250 dwellings would be built in the plan period, and this has increased to 1500. The 1500 number is stated as both a minimum and an approximate number and the supporting studies are still based on an eventual size of 2500 dwellings. The number of homes proposed for this site could therefore be increased to the original 2,500 when the Plan is reviewed after 5 years or in the next plan period.

The update of the HELAA, which was published only on 20th January 2023, includes a large number of sites that have been added since the last update, and which have been rejected. Therefore, Councillors could not have been aware of this when they approved the Reg 19 document with its list of sites.

The Air Quality Assessment that is part of the consultation documents is based on the LPR running to 2037, not 2039 which it now should do. This affects the traffic levels forecast for the end of the LPR period and the resultant traffic pollution. The Council has not complied with its legal duty to cooperate with Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group concerning the size of the GP surgery promised for north east Thatcham.

The Council has not consulted properly with Thames Water over the time needed for provision of water and foul drainage, and therefore does not know if the houses for north east Thatcham are deliverable in SP17 in the plan period.

The Settlement Boundary background paper shows the Thatcham settlement boundary already extended to the line needed for the original 2500 houses, yet the plan now refers to a minimum of 1500 houses – this could be read that 2500 dwellings is still suitable and can be developed within the extended boundary.

The new provision for secondary schools in north east Thatcham is not consistent with Council guidelines for the minimum viable size of a secondary school. If the primary provision is 2.5 Forms of Entry, then so presumably is the secondary provision to meet the impact of the development. A Council policy 2013 states that the minimum viable size for a secondary school is 4 Forms of Entry.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has omitted any costs for a new secondary school in north east Thatcham over the plan period. Whilst there was a provisional cost of building a new secondary school in north east Thatcham in the TSGS (Thatcham Strategic Growth Study) of £27m, and in the next draft of the IDP in October

2021 it was increased to £38m, the published IDP of January 2023 reduced this to £5m for all Secondary School provision in the plan period.

Furthermore, the Secretary of State's Written Statement of 6th December 2022, which removed the need to maintain a 5-year housing supply for Local Authorities with up-to-date Local Plans, removed top-down housing targets (particularly for Local Authorities with constraints like AONBs etc.) and gave a two-year transition period for LAs in the final stages of preparing Local Plans and this statement should be taken into account by Council.

Given the seriousness of these omissions and ambiguities outlined above and as it is currently being consulted on, Council resolves to:

1) abandon the consultation on the Local Plan which commenced on the 20th of January 2023, so that all relevant issues can be rectified and/or clarified and thereby avoid the risk of the Local Plan Review submission being dismissed as unsound by the Inspector on the basis of a defective Regulation 19 Consultation: and

2) undertake a new Regulation 19 Consultation in the future once these omissions and errors have been rectified.