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Subject: Submission on Schedule of Main Modifications to the WBC LPR
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Attachments: [REDACTED]

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West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039

As the Member of Parliament for Reading West and Mid Berkshire, I am writing to make representations with regard to the Schedule of Main Modifications to the West Berkshire Local Plan 2022-2039.

The importance of the Local Plan cannot be understated. It sets the framework for the sustainable development within West Berkshire that is so desperately needed. In particular there is no doubt that after years of missed targets, we are facing a housing crisis that can only be met by building.

I am pleased to see a strong commitment within the Local Plan for affordable housing, as in our area with such high house prices, local people struggle to get on the housing ladder. This is particularly acute in rural villages in West Berkshire. While I welcome developments such as that at the Pirbright Institute site in Compton, more needs to be done to give young people the option of living where they have grown up, with small developments of affordable housing, ensuring that our villages remain vibrant places for the future.

I note the commitment set out in MM10 and MM11 to ensure that surface water drainage with respect to new developments is managed, and that it must not be allowed to drain to foul sewers. I further note the commitment set out in MM78 around wastewater capacity, which is of great concern to residents in the Kennet Valley from whom I have received a number of representations. I look forward to these commitments being delivered.

Agreeing a plan is clearly of paramount importance to protect against speculative development, but I hope that improvements will be made following this consultation.

The NPPF 2024 states that in order to be considered sound, local plans need to take into account reasonable alternatives. The development of the West Berkshire Local Plan has been a bodged process, which reflects poorly on both the current administration and their immediate predecessors. There has been a failure to properly evaluate alternative, more suitable sites which meet the needs of current and future residents, and a missed opportunity to include more strategic sites. All that has happened is that previously disregarded sites have been added back into the plan at a late stage.

Furthermore, paragraph 16.c of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that plans should “be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan- makers and communities, local organisations,

businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees;”.

While significant consultation was carried out between 2018 and 2023, the Main Modifications, particularly in relation to the sites that have been included for housing, mean that what is currently proposed is materially different.

In particular, I am concerned about the inclusion of the Land East of Pincents Lane as a proposed site for housing and I have been contacted by a large number of constituents also sharing their concerns. There have been multiple applications to develop this site over a number of years, all of which have been refused. Highway access to the site is limited and would be shared with the existing retail park and it is a well-used and well-loved green space.

Moreover, Paragraph 11.a of the NPPF states “all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure;...”. This has historically not been the case with development on the fringe of Tilehurst, where there has been a lack of investment in infrastructure, which the inclusion of the Land East of Pincents Lane as a site for housing would further exacerbate.

West Berkshire needs more housing, in particular affordable housing, aligned with the necessary infrastructure, to support local families and help grow our economy. In order to achieve this and deliver the ambition for West Berkshire to be a driver of growth within the UK economy, we need a sound plan.

It is disappointing that West Berkshire Council, over two administrations have failed to deliver that ambition. Rather than identifying sites for new homes where they are needed, such as in our villages where families cannot afford to stay together, they have overseen a bodged process which first failed to deliver enough housing, and then rather than taking a strategic approach, sites previously deemed unsuitable have simply been added in at the last minute. Pincents Hill is the most egregious example of this.

Yours sincerely

Olivia Bailey MP

Reading West and Mid Berkshire



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