

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

North East Thatcham Strategic Site Allocation

Policy SP14

North East Thatcham Strategic Site Allocation

Land as shown on the Policies Map is allocated for the delivery of a comprehensive, sustainable, low carbon, urban extension comprising of distinct neighbourhoods defined by their landscape and connected and contributing to Thatcham, and woven through with natural habitats and links. Proposals must demonstrate how the provision of all infrastructure, services, open space and facilities will meet the needs of the development and be delivered in a timely and co-ordinated way across the whole site alongside the phased delivery of residential development.

Homes

The site is allocated for the phased delivery of up to approximately 2,500 dwellings, with the final number of dwellings to be determined by the adopted Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) required by this policy. These dwellings will comprise an appropriate mix of housing types, tenures and sizes having regard to policy SP15. In addition at least:

- 40% of dwellings will be affordable housing in accordance with policy SP16; and
- 3% of dwellings will be delivered via serviced custom/self-build plots.

Community

The site will provide a range of community facilities including:

- Local centres providing local retail facilities and small-scale business-use, including for community use;
- Primary healthcare provision and associated infrastructure, which is operationally and financially viable, the details of which should be agreed with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB-ICB) or other such appropriate body, taking into account the feasibility study carried out by BOB-ICB. Further detailed feasibility work should be carried out at the applicant's expense in collaboration with BOB-ICB;
- Early years and primary school provision on site with land to be provided and build costs to be met by the applicant;
- Secondary school and SEND provision, including the provision of land and a financial contribution. The nature and cost of the required provision will be informed by a feasibility study, undertaken at the applicants expense and prepared in collaboration with the Council and local stakeholders;
- Community indoor facility to be used for sport and community uses with a variety of room sizes.

Green Infrastructure

The site will provide a comprehensive network of green infrastructure and public open space across the whole site in accordance with policy SP10 which will respond positively to the sensitivities of the landscape, protect and enhance landscape and biodiversity features of value within and around the site and make provision for biodiversity net gain. This provision will include:

- Conservation of the areas of ancient woodland by providing appropriate buffers between the development and the ancient woodland;
- Enhancements for biodiversity;
- A band of green infrastructure/new community park across the higher land on the northern part of the allocation (as shown on the indicative map) to be retained outside the settlement boundary. This is to create a buffer between the built development of the allocation and the adjoining countryside and the village of Upper Bucklebury to the north. The precise nature of the band of GI is to be informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and the masterplanning process, having regard to the location of the site within the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape;
- Green infrastructure and public open space within the developed parts of the site in addition to the community park, taking into account the requirements set out in policy DM40;
- Greenways which connect through the site and facilitate connectivity to the wider landscape and the existing Public Rights of Way network;

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- A Public Rights of Way Strategy to demonstrate how existing Public Rights of Way will be protected and enhanced and how new ones will be established, including bridleway links and safe crossing points;
- Provision of allotments;
- Outdoor formal and informal sports pitches and areas; and
- A Green Infrastructure Strategy to show how the network of multifunctional green infrastructure will be delivered across the site to include a strategy for the protection of existing and provision of new trees, hedgerows and other appropriate native planting.

Transport

Measures will be included to improve accessibility by, and encourage use of, sustainable transport modes.

Development proposals for the site will be supported by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan to provide detail on how this will be achieved, including:

- Active travel improvements on routes between the site, Thatcham town centre and the railway station;
- Multiple access points and a vehicular through route;
- Sustainable transport through routes;
- Mitigation of the development's impacts on the highways network with improvements to existing junctions where they are needed and delivery of new access points for all forms of movement and transport to the site at locations to be agreed with the planning authority;
- How adverse impacts on air quality will be minimised; and
- Promotion and encouragement of sustainable modes of travel, in accordance with policy DM45.

Sustainability

Development proposals for the site will be supported by an Energy Statement or a detailed energy section with the Sustainability Statement which will set out measures in accordance with policies SP5 and DM4.

A Construction and Operations Management Plan (COMP) to accompany any planning application on the site. The COMP shall safeguard any below ground infrastructure on the site from operational works, including the provision of an appropriate buffer.

Flooding and Water Environment

Development proposals for the site will be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment, in accordance with policy SP6, which will take into account the Thatcham Surface Water Management Plan and set out:

- Adequate flood mitigation measures to ensure there is no detrimental impact on flood risk in Thatcham;
- Surface water drainage management approaches that could deliver net gain for Thatcham town, including use of on-site sustainable drainage systems (SuDS); and
- Flood alleviation measures already present on the site and how they will be retained, protected and enhanced.

Development proposals also need to consider water resources and waste water in accordance with policy DM7.

Biodiversity

Development proposals for the site will be supported by a Biodiversity Strategy in accordance with policy SP11 which will set out:

- How biodiversity net gain will be achieved including through habitat restoration and linkages;
- How priority habitats and ecological features will be protected and enhanced;
- The creation of new ecological features; and
- A site-wide Biodiversity Management Plan.

Landscape

The site lies in the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and will be developed in accordance with policy SP2 and the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (2021) for the site.

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Development proposals for the site will be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in accordance with the Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd ed. 2013. This will inform the Masterplan SPD which will determine the final capacity, design and layout of the site and requirements for green infrastructure and the provision of public open space.

Heritage

Development proposals for the site will be supported by a Historic Environment Strategy in accordance with policy SP9 to demonstrate how the site's historical development, archaeological remains and historic buildings and parkland will inform the scheme and help to create a sense of place.

Lighting

Development proposals for the site will be supported by a Lighting Strategy which will include consideration of dark skies, particularly in relation to the nearby North Wessex Downs National Landscape, and measures to mitigate the impact on biodiversity.

Mineral Resources

Development proposals for the site will be supported by a Mineral Resource Assessment (MRA) which identifies any potential viable mineral resources on the site and considers firstly prior extraction, and then incidental extraction as part of the development.

Masterplanning and Design Code

The site will be masterplanned and a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) prepared by the Council. The SPD will be funded by the applicant and prepared in collaboration with the applicant, relevant town and parish councils, the community and other stakeholders. The SPD will be adopted by the Council prior to the submission of a planning application. The Masterplan SPD will provide the framework to guide the development and should be based on the evidence base underpinning the Local Plan and outcome of further technical work prepared in line with requirements of this policy. The Masterplan SPD will determine the location and extent of built development, land uses, green infrastructure including the extent of the green buffer, key access arrangements, community and other infrastructure. Proposals must have regard to, and demonstrate how, they have been guided positively by the adopted Masterplan SPD.

A design code, prepared by the developer and agreed with the local planning authority, should be secured by a planning condition as part of any outline planning permission.

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