

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PlanningPolicy](#)
Subject: Proposed Submission (Reg 19) West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039
Date: 01 March 2023 12:21:29

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Dear Sir / Madam

I write to object to the above Plan in relation to policy SP17 relating to North East Thatcham.

The allocation of this site was identified at the earlier Regulation 18 stage of Plan making, that proposal was for a larger scale of housing straddling the proposed new Local Plan and then continuing after into the Plan beyond. The allocation has since been reduced in scale, in what appears to be solely the Council's response to the need to set out a longer-term vision for such a scale of allocations. The Council were unwilling (or perhaps unable) to set a longer-term vision for the site (and Thatcham) which in itself is a fairly damning indictment of the Council's lack of vision, ambition and rather ineffective planning policy approach.

The Council have significantly re-thought the allocation and reduced its scale resulting in a very different Plan from the Regulation 18 stage; however the Council have completely failed to consider alternative sites or areas of growth on the back of this rethink, despite this rather major change in their approach. It is disappointing that alternative sites in Thatcham have had no serious consideration (either in combination with or in place of the allocation) and instead the Council have continued with what appears to be rather an unambitious and a flawed amendment to the same allocation.

The result of this approach is a very disappointing policy for the local population of Thatcham that lacks ambition and is without aspiration and fails to provide any certainty this will be a development that meets the needs of existing and new residents. It is not positively prepared to deliver a positive extension to the town and it does not address deficiencies in services and amenities which are required by new residents. In particular, I would suggest the following are not covered adequately by the policy as drafted and would request that these limitations are addressed through modifications to the policy wording:

1. Reference to quality of design and building beautiful - this is not adequately addressed and should be a key consideration for the significant new development;
2. Commitment to the allocation delivering and not simply 'offering' land for a new GP surgery. There is a clear need for healthcare for this growth and a lack of a solution to delivery this is a significant flaw of the policy

as drafted. The allocation should be on the basis of either the delivery of an on-site provision for healthcare, or failing that the delivery of an off-site redevelopment of the existing GP practice in Thatcham. Given the present position in Thatcham and lack of space capacity this isn't a "nice to have" item it is essential to have a workable solution to such growth and the present policy is not addressing that positively;

3. The provision of key worker housing (rather than simply affordable housing) to house our future health care, police, teachers etc should be a key requirement of policy for this site;
4. There is inadequate justification as to the scale of countryside being used for this allocation, as this seems to be the same site area for the much smaller proposals for 1,500 dwellings (Reg 19) as the previous much larger proposals. This cannot be right and is not backed up by an appropriate evidence base. Such an approach is unsound and the Council need to re-define a smaller site area, or define undeveloped area within the site area to address this point.
5. There are inadequate proposals to address healthy living and sporting provision in Thatcham. This provision is already over-subscribed and the growth needs to improve the offering substantially in the policy requirements;
6. There appears to be no understanding of how viable the policy is to deliver. The policy for net zero and the high percentage of affordable housing need to be viable or provided with flexibility to ensure the other infrastructure needs (and not "nice to haves") are not lost due to these requirements and through lack of viability;
7. The requirement for housing to be energy efficient is welcome but the Council should seek to deliver this through tried and tested policy tests such as the use of Passivhaus rather than leave elements less well defined;
8. Public open space and the availability of this from both new and existing residents should be better covered in the policy;
9. Given the Reg 18 allocation was for a much larger site and the planning authority have only moved away from that due to not wishing to engage with the changes to Central Government policy (rather than a local re-think or reconsideration of the availability or appropriateness of the site for growth) it is extremely poor planning not to consider how this allocation would not be expanded in future Plan periods, as undoubtedly it will. This should be considered and planned for now to ensure it isn't frustrated;

10. The policy appears to be protecting the central barns on the site for heritage purposes (which is supported and laudable) but does not to define their future use. Ironically, Thatcham has already suffered from similar poor planning by the Council on a barn centrally within the town that sat empty for a decade or more (now converted to a house). The policy needs to positively set out the use of these buildings to serve the new community and ideally the existing one;
11. Electric Vehicle Charging for new residents and to serve the wider town should be addressed in the policy;

If this is considered to be the right location for this scale of growth and the red line of the allocation were corrected there is a need for a much more comprehensive approach to this very significant allocation. It appears the Council are entirely out of their depth in doing so at present and the policy needs significant re-drafting to achieve what the Council perhaps aspire to and much more importantly what the people of Thatcham deserve.

Faithfully

Simon Speller

