

From: [REDACTED]
To: [PlanningPolicy](#)
Subject: FW: WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection - SP17
Date: 01 March 2023 16:16:06

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP. THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.

Further to my submission below I have just been informed that Bucklebury Parish Council commissioned a Traffic Study and this was undertaken by Yes Engineering. The conclusions are

- The trips rates used by WBC are unreliable and not robust.
- The trip distribution is unrealistic (all evidence suggests traffic will be diverted from the A4).
- The mitigation measures are improbable at best.
- The location of site means car-borne travel will dominate.
- Highway network in the vicinity of Thatcham Northeast is already over capacity.
- No assessment has been made of the routes most likely to be affected by an increase in traffic.
- Increase in traffic through Bucklebury will pose highway safety issues.

These conclusions are further evidence that WBCs plans are flawed and unsound

Robert Jolley

ROBERT JOLLEY

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Robert Jolley [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 3:23 PM
To: 'planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk' <planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection – SP17

I wish to register my strong objections to these proposals.

The plan to build between 1500 and 2500 houses on farmland below my property here will have a seriously detrimental effect for myself and my neighbours here. There will a huge impact on the wildlife and quiet darkness which is currently enjoyed here. Further the impact of a perhaps a further 2500 cars on the local area will be huge resulting in significantly increased congestion with a very negative environmental impact as well as unsustainable extra burden on local schools, GP surgeries and all services.

It makes no sense that West Berkshire Council (WBC) are still pushing forward with these plans when the Government has recently announced major changes to the national planning system whereby central government will no longer set mandatory targets for housebuilding. On 6th December, Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) released a Written Ministerial Statement setting out forthcoming amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework

(NPPF)

It will be up to local authorities, working with their communities, to determine how many homes can actually be built, taking into account what should be protected in each area - be that our precious Green Belt or national parks, the character of an area, or heritage assets.

As the new proposed Local Plan, which includes the North East Thatcham new town (that is in effect what it is) has been formulated to satisfy the old rules, it is now fundamentally unsound. Several Local Authorities have paused their plans whilst they await the outcome of the consultation on the new national planning policy on the basis that a lower housing requirement could be applicable to the plans than the one currently being planned for. We feel that WBC should take the opportunity, as others have, to pause the plan making and to bring forward a revised plan in line with updated planning guidance when this comes in later in 2023. Instead, WBC have sought to push through the new Local Plan quickly, without giving any proper explanation. This failure to respond to a very significant change in national policy renders the current plans fundamentally unsound.

WBC have further made the irrational decision to continue to use the government housebuilding estimates from 2014 whereas there have been significant revisions to those projections, specifically in 2016, which lowered the requirement. Yet WBC has chosen to ignore which renders the figures used in the LPR unsound.

There are serious questions about why WBC has been pushing plans for the NE Thatcham site using just one developer especially as that developer funded a report for WBC on the plans which, to no surprise, gave full support. It is at best irregular and poor practice for a report for a local authority to be funded by a developer with a vested interest. The report should not play any part in the consideration of the plans. Before any plans are put in place there should be a further and truly independent report.

There are further serious questions why WBC refused to engage with other developers, namely Croudace, who have put forward an alternative site in Colthrop which is much better suited to development and has the added advantage that Croudace would fund and build a bridge over the railway which would be highly beneficial in easing the delays and congestion at the level crossing at Thatcham. Yet WBC have dismissed the alternative proposals out of hand. That suggests unsound practice.

The farmland around our properties here at Lincoln View are owned by Wasing Estate and they have been shown to be highly productive in recent years with a variety of crops. With the increased focus on UK food security, it makes no sense to build on productive farmland and indeed the Government has recently reiterated that future developments must be prioritised on brownfield sites.

If the farmland is built on there will be a significant detrimental environmental impact as it is current home to a great variety of animals, birds and other animals. WBC have been woefully inadequate in their consideration of this impact.

On the broader issue of development, the Newbury/Thatcham area has already been impacted by a huge increase in household numbers, with the very large and continuing development at Newbury racecourse, the Donnington Heights development, the new retirement home development in Thatcham, the development on Bowling Green Road. There are many other examples. This part of West Berkshire has reached a point of saturation and the proposal to just place 1500/2500 on farmland is totally lacking in merit.

There are serious questions about why WBC think the NE Thatcham site is suitable. In recent years they rejected an application for development at Siege Cross, which forms part of the current NE Thatcham plans, with thorough and substantive reasons for their planning refusal. Yet now we find them forcefully supporting development on the site they rejected. WBC need to explain how they have come to do such a volte face.

WBC have failed to undertake an adequate flood assessment for the NE Thatcham site, which is just as much at risk, if not more, than the sites in other parts of Thatcham where substantial works have been undertaken. The plans put forward by the developer are woefully inadequate and WBC should have rejected them outright. The highly flawed report for WBC, as I have pointed out funded by the developer, is casually dismissive of any risk.

If the NE Thatcham plan is approved, it will create unsustainable pressures on health services in the area which are already overstretched. WBC and the developers appear to have neither arranged a relevant HIA nor provided evidence of having appropriately liaised with local health care agencies or providers. They are proposing a healthcare site that is unsuitable for NHS primary care and so have not made provision to mitigate the burden that 1,500 or more new houses will make on a local NHS struggling to cope. The objective of WBC and the North-East Thatcham Development Consortium to improve access to the health service component of community infrastructure has not been met as they have not provided evidence for the provision of a viable primary care medical facility. WBC failures in this aspect represent a fundamental flaw and any plans could be rejected until such time as comprehensive review is undertaken.

Schools in the local area are already at capacity yet there are no substantive proposals in the current plan for how the greatly increased demand for school places is met. There is an unspecific mention of a new secondary school but no indication of where it would be built. There is no obligation on the developer to fund such a school, the flawed report merely suggests a 50% contribution. WBC, as an education authority, has a duty to make arrangements for suitable school provision. How this obligation will be met across all school years is not defined or evidenced in the LPR. This renders the LPR unsound.

I have mentioned previously the issue of traffic and the NE Thatcham plans currently proposed include a new access point on Harts Hill Road, which is already coping with a far higher traffic flow than it can reasonably do so. The road is narrow and twisting and already a significant "rat run". Any new access on Harts Hill Road would create a significant accident risk.

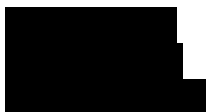
The plans for NE Thatcham also include a vague mention of a "country park", with no indication of what that actually means. As the site is currently open countryside, with relevant footpaths, there is no logical argument for a country park. This seems to have come out of the urban thinking of the lead developer A2Dominion, who show no understanding of the value and importance of unspoilt countryside.

WBC have also failed in their basic duty to check on the integrity of any developer. A brief look at the Facebook page Residents Redemption Unites, which gives voice to owners and renters of A2Dominion properties, will quickly make anyone aware of the serious failures of A2Dominion to behave responsibly and it is clear that they cannot be trusted to fulfil any commitments they promise.

The loss of such a large greenfield site, which is currently a significant amenity for local people cannot be overstated. The environmental impact will be immense, not only on the wildlife and loss of habitat but also putting pressure on a wide surrounding area. If the NE Thatcham plans are allowed to proceed, they would mean perhaps 5000 people, 2500 cars being on developed land which is currently farmland and countryside. The LPR's own Sustainability Appraisal accepts that SP17 will have a negative impact on environmental sustainability: 'The site is a greenfield site and therefore, would result in a negative impact on environmental sustainability which would need to be mitigated.' But there is no detail whatsoever on any such mitigation measures: the assumption is simply that they will somehow be found during the planning application process. This lack of provision makes WBC's proposals unsound.

Robert Jolley

ROBERT JOLLEY

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.A large black rectangular redaction box covering contact information.

