

WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection

Colin Mullis

I wish to register my objection to the proposed new 'Thatcham NE Development' as I find it unsound.

Transport

- Reviewing the comments by Bucklebury residents submitted at Regulation 18 about North East Thatcham, a recurring theme is increased traffic through the villages. We sought assurances and were led to understand by WBC planners that traffic from the development would link to Floral Way and the A4. This is true but what they 'forgot' to mention was a plan for an exit at the north of the site onto Harts Hill. This only became apparent on Friday, 6th January when the Transport assessment was published: [Phase_2_Transport_Assessment_Report_July_2021.pdf](#). **This is serious for us because traffic from, or to, the site is only going to go in one direction from this exit – towards Upper Bucklebury where it will split between the traffic going through Cold Ash and the traffic through Upper Bucklebury and Chapel Row**
- I understand there are access arrangements for the northern end of the NET site proposes new priority junctions (with right turn lanes where appropriate) on both Floral Way and Harts Hill Road. Results from the modelling suggest that these will not cause problems'. However, the document has no modelling results for this. There are drawings for all the other proposed junctions but none for the Harts Hill one – **why not?**
- There are drawings showing a new car park on Harts Hill. The purpose is a mystery but will surely add more traffic to the same part of what is already a dangerous road and may also promote the night-time antisocial behaviour all too apparent in the car parks on the Common.

Healthcare

- The NE Thatcham development plan (SP17) proposes a 450 sq m primary healthcare facility with the suggestion that a GP Surgery be offered to the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board or other such appropriate body. **However, the document is bereft of detail or insight into strategic healthcare planning!**
- It is of concern that neither WBC nor the developers, as public and private stakeholders respectively, appear to have arranged or published a prospective HIA specific to the proposed North-East Thatcham development.
- Tackling health and wellbeing requires a multi-agency approach. The Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2020 2021-2030, has been developed by the Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham Health and Wellbeing Boards together with the Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership. **I have a concern that there appears to have been no direct engagement between the North-East Thatcham Development Consortium and local general practices.**

Environment

I have a concern on three main areas:

- Collateral damage to the Bucklebury Plateau Biodiversity Opportunity Area, and its ancient woodlands and heaths, in particular, Bucklebury Common.
- Siting a major greenfield development in the broader landscape setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB that will forever impair enjoyment of the open countryside by local communities.
- Causing detrimental impacts to legally protected wildlife known to be present on the site but assuming that sufficient mitigation measures can be taken after development e.g. through the vague promise of a 'community park'
- Taken together, and after a thorough professional review of the background documentation provided by WBC in support of the draft LPR, I have concluded that there is no evidence to support claims that SP17 will have a positive impact on the environment. **By contrast, there is every reason to believe it will have a significantly negative impact.**
- I understand it has been estimated that at least 4,000 people will be concentrated in the development site. They of course must have access to green space for recreation and general wellbeing. We do not believe that the claimed provisions for green space will satisfy this demand on site. The original Thatcham Growth Plan had a vague proposal for two 'country parks' spaced across the top of the slope, inside the Biodiversity Opportunity Area, claiming the potential for significant biodiversity enhancement over its current land use
- In the updated SP17 text, the country parks have been downgraded to undefined 'community parks' which only proves how little commitment WBC has given to protecting the natural environment and public enjoyment of it.

Education

Information has been provided by WBC regarding education, however I find the plan for secondary school provision is 'unsound' based on the following:

- There is no satisfactory evidence of the number of pupils the school is to cater for;
- The location of a school(s) is not clear;
- The number of Form Entries is not defined, but it is noted that anything less than a 6FE school is unsustainable.
- The timing of the funding is not clear; and
- There is no evidence that the proposed funding is sufficient to meet the Council's obligations to provide education.

West Berkshire Council, 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.

Miscellaneous

The Regulation 18 Consultation stated that only 1250 dwellings would be built in the plan period, and this I understand has now increased to 1500. The 15000 number is stated as both a minimum and an approximate number and supporting studies are still based on 2500 dwellings. I am concerned that this could increase to the original 2,500 when the plan is reviewed after 5 years or in the next plan period.

There is no evidence WBC has consulted properly with Thames Water over the time needed for provisions of water and foul drainage to accommodate the proposed ne dwellings.

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 to update Local Plans, removed the top-down housing targets (particularly for Local Authorities with constrains like AONBs etc.) and gave a two-year transition period for LS's in final stages of preparing Local Plans and this statement should be taken into account by WBC.

In conclusion- because of the concerns I have raised, the Reg 19 PPR Submission in its entirety should be considered unsound.

Colin Mullis

27th February 2023