

Comments on WBC Local Plan Main Modifications MM25 & MM26

I will keep my objections brief in relation to the main modifications of the proposed local plan in respect of the development in North East Thatcham SP17.

There is an overriding premise that all issues can be resolved through mitigation or developer contribution and the infrastructure will be put in place to support the development of up to 2500 homes.

The facts are that in the majority of cases, the infrastructure is rarely put in place; items such as the provision of schools, doctors' surgeries, cycle paths, sewerage plants will not be provided. The impact of flooding will not be addressed until there is a flooding event and effectively too late. The issues will not only affect the purchasers of the properties being developed on this site but will have a significant impact on the properties in the lower lying parts of Thatcham. You can put as many words as you like in these documents but you are failing to address the major issues.

My main frustration is the lack of foresight in the development of the plan and the total lack of consideration for dealing with the issues that face us and how people in the 21st century and beyond will need to live. You can almost guarantee there will be a catastrophic flooding event in Thatcham at some point in the future; the effects of global warming are here and will only get worse as time goes on.

I understand that we need houses to be built and ideally, I would like to see them placed further away from the AONB but that is not the overriding issue here. I am sure this plan will be accepted in some form and there will be a tick in the box, West Berkshire will have a plan and a forecast to build the requisite number of houses. The issue is that we, locally and as a country are not looking at what strategically will meet the longer-term requirements for people to live. We need to stop looking at things as a tick in the box and look seriously at our future. There is nothing in this plan that does that; if it did the 2500 houses would not be there; some maybe but not all of them.

I would urge the planning inspectorate to stand back and look at these proposals in a different way.

To look at how the infrastructure can be put in place to alleviate traffic and transport issues; any development should only be the size that can be supported by what is possible. Any major development should have access to existing routes with the capacity to support them. We know new infrastructure will take years to build if it is ever done.

To look at the required infrastructure for Thatcham and Newbury as a whole. Unless this is done, there will be continued piecemeal development that won't satisfy the whole area and will make certain areas and facilities unviable.

How can the flooding issues be dealt with; is there physically the land available to prevent a major flooding event in Thatcham? I very much doubt there is. This must be seriously considered before any bricks are laid.

John Brims

