

Comment

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Comment by	Joanna Cooke (1334695)
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2. Do you consider the Local Plan Review is sound?

Please see the guidance notes for an explanation of what 'soundness' means.

The soundness of the LPR should be assessed against the following criteria from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Please tick all that apply:

Positively Prepared: The plan provides a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed need and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development. . No

Justified: the plan is an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence. . No

Effective: the plan is deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground. . No

Consistent with national policy: the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies of the NPPF. . No

Please give reasons for your answer

I find the plan unsound for a number of reasons. These reasons are listed below.

- 1 TRANSPORT.
- 2 Increased traffic.

I am very concerned about the amount of increased traffic that the development will bring to not only Upper Bucklebury, but also to other nearby villages such as Cold Ash. In particular I am extremely concerned about the plan for an exit at the north of the development onto Harts Hill Road. There are no modelling results for this junction in the Transport Assessment and no drawings either. Considering there are drawings for all the other proposed junctions, I find it very worrying that the proposed junction on Harts Hill Road does not appear to have been researched fully. As anyone who frequents Harts Hill Road will be able to confirm, this road is completely inadequate for larger amounts of traffic, has no pavements and has a high potential for serious accidents, as can be confirmed just from earlier this year with large numbers of cars having trouble on the icy road and with the Police having to be called out to at least one accident due to the road conditions.

- 1 Safe and sustainable transport.

I question the Council Assessment that states '*the policy is likely to have a positive impact on road safety as safe travel will be critical to the design of the site.*' Considering WBC also predicts that there will be '*some displacement of A4 traffic onto wider rural routes such as Upper Bucklebury*', I fail to see how both statements can be true when the rural route leading to Upper Bucklebury is already inadequate and unsafe for the reasons previously stated above.

I also question the council statement that '*the policy is likely to have a significant impact on walking, cycling and public transport as the development should be designed with these in mind.*' Firstly, the popular and scenic walking route over the fields between Upper Bucklebury and Floral Way would be replaced with houses, and I do not see this as a positive change. Secondly, the increased traffic on Harts Hill Road would make this even more dangerous for cyclists, and it is already dangerous to the point where I would not cycle along it myself, or let my children cycle on it. Considering that I am expecting my oldest child to start attending Kennet School in September, it would be an extremely convenient option to allow her to cycle to and from school, especially as sustainability is something that is important to me, however there is absolutely no way that I would even consider allowing her to cycle on Harts Hill Road as it is already too dangerous, narrow and busy for cyclists to feel safe. Thirdly, as public transport is extremely limited in Upper Bucklebury, we need to travel to Thatcham in order to be able to use it, so it is unclear to me how this large development - which will both put the local public transport service under yet more pressure and also make it more difficult for residents of Upper Bucklebury to access public transport due to increased traffic on Harts Hill Road – will be a positive thing.

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- 1 Primary school and nursery provision.

There are no details in the LPR for the provision of nursery, early years and primary education. There is no data or evidence on the planned number of schools or form entry requirements, and with the only referenced data being 12 years old, I fail to see how this can be relevant to current requirements.

- 1 Secondary education provision.

Currently, many children from Bucklebury attend Kennet School (our nearest catchment school), which is oversubscribed every single year. As children who live nearer to the school are given precedence, this would mean that children from the proposed NE Thatcham development would take priority, although Kennet would be very unlikely to be able accommodate all of them. Children from Bucklebury would have to go to the Downs, which firstly they are only in a secondary catchment area for, and secondly is a 45 minute bus ride away compared to the very short journey to Kennet.

It is clear that already there are not enough secondary school places in Thatcham and therefore a secondary school would have to be provided as a matter of necessity for this proposed development. However, there are no details of the land to be provided. In addition, the Development Plan states that the NE Thatcham Development is not sufficient to fill a 6 Form Entry secondary school on its own,

so it is unclear whether one will even be provided at all, and the plan is therefore not even considering the effect this would have on the children already living in the surrounding areas who, as a result of this development would be unable to attend their local school. Obviously it goes without saying, that forcing children to attend schools that are further away, will both contribute to the increased traffic issues and will be extremely detrimental to sustainability objectives.

1 Sports fields.

The LPR mentions providing sports fields, however these need to be on flat ground of which the only suitable area is that nearest the A4 and therefore in the area with the most traffic fumes (see my earlier point regarding transport, for info on increased traffic). There does not appear to be any funding for these facilities, and the LPR also seems to assume that the school playing fields (assuming the school is even viable) would also be available to use as sports fields. It is highly unlikely that this would be the case, as schools would not be able to allow public access to their grounds for safeguarding reasons among many others.

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1 It is extremely concerning that the LPR fully states its intent to purposely direct extra traffic straight into the area of AONB (WBC quote '*...displacement of A4 traffic onto wider rural routes such as Upper Bucklebury*'). It is clear that the proposed development on a greenfield site, so close to the AONB and which currently provides a home to legally protected wildlife, will have a huge detrimental effect to the local environment and public enjoyment of it.

2 A request for an access road for just five new homes in Cold Ash has recently been refused by the council due to the 'adverse suburbanising impact' this would cause. The same argument also applies for this development, only on a much larger scale. I cannot think of a much more adverse suburbanising impact, than situating thousands of new homes on greenfield land just a mile from the AONB.

6. Notification of Progress of the Local Plan Review

Do you wish to be notified of any of the following?

Please tick all that apply

The submission of the Local Plan Review for Independent Examination

The publication of the report of the Inspector appointed to carry out the examination

The adoption of the Local Plan Review