

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

WBC LPR Regulation 19 Objection SP17

Sirs,

I am objecting to the above plan because it is unsound on numerous grounds.

### 1. Transport

#### 1.1 Increase in traffic to Upper Bucklebury

The planned exit on the northern end of the site onto Hart's Hill Road will lead traffic from the extra 4,000 residents up the hill to Upper Bucklebury and then on to the Ridge going east through the village and west, past our house towards Cold Ash. The Ridge, which is a long straight road, is a rat run for motorists in a hurry. It is already hazardous working to maintain the soakaway and hedges at the front of the properties in Burden's Heath. This extra proposed traffic will unthinkably increase the hazard to life and limb. This end of the village has no pavements and extra, inappropriate traffic will not only pose an unacceptable degree of risk to me and my husband walking into the village to shop or post letters, but also for our more elderly neighbours, the schoolchildren walking home past our house, and the disabled child in a wheelchair and his parents from a few houses down.

This aspect of the plan is unsound.

#### 1.2 Access and junctions

Why is there no drawing for the new priority junction on Hart's Hill Road? Without this how can any of us know whether this will cause problems? People have a right to know the thinking behind your otherwise empty assurances.

This aspect of the plan may well be unsound.

#### 1.3 Car Park

Drawings show a new car park, on Harts Hill Road. Why is this needed? HHR is a narrow road with steep banks, limited visibility and high traffic. Adding to this will be dangerous, and who will police it to prevent the dumping, littering and other antisocial behaviour experienced on the other car parks on the common?

This aspect of the plan is unsound.

#### 1.4 Safe and Sustainable Transport

WBC's assessments (SEA) says the plan will reduce accidents and improve safety. Based on my previous observations I cannot believe this. Adding more traffic to an already heavily trafficked village will do exactly the opposite.

WBC also maintains that the plan will have a significant positive impact on walking, cycling and public transport. Not for us it won't. I will certainly not be buying a bicycle to compete with rat run drivers on the Ridge with another 4,000 people's cars on the local roads. As for walking, my husband and I spend every Sunday taking local circular walks from home, averaging 10 to 15 miles: this is our

primary source of exercise and pleasure. If this plan is allowed to go forward most of these walks will be eradicated by building over them, and the extra traffic emissions will be the exact opposite of healthy. No one enjoys road walking: we moved to this house in this area largely because of nature. We meet many local people on our walks, including families with children and dogs, who will also bitterly feel this loss. So how can the plan be said to have a positive effect on walking?

This aspect of the plan is unsound.

## 2. Healthcare

Reading the comments of other local people I have grave doubts that the provision of extra services such as healthcare have been thought through. Who will service all these new people? Our local surgery at Chapel Row is already fully stretched. For dentistry, we have to go into Newbury rather than a local dentist. Where will new facilities go? Where will the funding come from? Staff are leaving the NHS in droves and there is a shortage of doctors and nurses. Who will run them and where will the extra workers come from?

This aspect of the plan is unsound.

## 3. Environment

Far from having a positive effect on the environment, the plan, if implemented, will do exactly the opposite.

3.1 Local people are concerned about damage to the Bucklebury Plateau Biodiversity Opportunity Area, the common, with its ancient woodlands and heaths. 'Lowland heaths' are highly endangered environments and the UK has the greatest proportion of those that survive across Europe: we should be cherishing these environments and their unique biodiversity.

3.2 This is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: a major reason we moved here over 20 years ago. Siting a major greenfield development here will permanently damage the countryside and spoil its enjoyment by those who live here. It will change the whole quality of the region.

3.3 The plan would negatively affect legal protected wildlife, not to mention wildlife in general, on site and in the larger area. No effective scheme for mitigating its loss has been worked out. Having volunteered for the local wildlife trust for over 10 years, subscribing to *British Wildlife*, and having taken 8 day courses on related subjects, I am extremely sceptical of promises of mitigation of this loss. How exactly are you planning to ameliorate the destruction of so much prime habitat? Vague references to some sort of park are not a plan for mitigation. Not one iota of evidence has been put forward for improvement of the environment.

It is well known that carbon sequestration by the land depends on its biodiversity and the integrity of the complex web of life the environment. The plan to house some 4000 people here not only destroys natural assets in the area built upon but also fragments the larger surrounding environment, and fragmentation leads to loss of biodiversity (both non-protected and protected species). It also releases carbon previously sequestered in the soil, and this can be quantified. Carbon release into the atmosphere is bad for both nature and people. How exactly is this going to be mitigated?

Vague promises of two 'community parks' or even the originally promised 'country parks' do not remotely constitute mitigation of any of these losses. Complex ecosystems provide benefits that some grassland and some newly planted trees do not. Where are the details of these parks and who is going to fund their creation and maintenance? I believe concrete plans would expose the futility of the exercise as more than the most inadequate sticking plaster to a gaping wound.

Where is the Sustainability Charter to show how net gains of biodiversity and environmental sustainability will be reached. WBC themselves say this is a requirement, so where is it?

The plan negatively affects local people's enjoyment of nature and the wellbeing that comes from it. Many more people will be crowding into much less nature. We personally as regular local walkers (5–18 miles each Sunday) will lose roughly half of our usual walks, and the rest will become more heavily used. Extra traffic reduces air quality both on these walks and also in our home.

Does anyone really expect us to believe that building this number of houses in an area of natural beauty will both provide enough green spaces for their new owners as well as improved access to nature for those already living in the area? This is pure wishful thinking. Spillover of more people onto the wider common and environs will damage nature, not conserve it.

WBC's assertions that the countryside will be improved by this plan are just that: assertions. So far, these assertions do not stand up to proper analysis.

For all these reasons, the parts of the plan dedicated to improving the environment are totally, utterly unsound.

#### 4. Education

4.1 Where is the evidence for the number of new students to be accommodated in the area? Where are they to go?

4.2 Where is any new school to be situated?

4.3 Will it be a 6FE school?

4.4 What about the timing of the funding?

4.5 Where will the playing grounds for the new schools be found?

4.6 Will the amount of the funding be at all adequate to meet WBC's educational obligations?

Lack of full details in the LPR renders this aspect of the plan unsound.

#### 5. Other

##### 5.1 Timing

On 6 December, Michael Gove (SOS for Housing and Communities) released a Written Material Statement detailing that the housing number should not now be mandatory but advisory. It said the Planning Inspectorate should no longer override sensible local decision-making, meaning decision-making that is sensitive to local concerns and that reflects local constraints and concerns.

I understand from a communication from Bucklebury Says No that the timing of the NPPF consultation means that the method for calculating the housing requirement will be advisory only, and that the character of the area should be an important factor in deciding how much housing can be accommodated. They say that several local authorities have paused their housing plan process awaiting the outcome of consultation on the basis that a lower housing requirement might apply.

I wholly agree that WBC should take the opportunity, as have other councils, to pause the planning process until the expected new planning guidance comes in later in the year, so that any housing development will reflect the character of our village and of the outstandingly beautiful and cherished countryside in which it stands.

Yours faithfully,  
Jo Firth