



**West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 (LPR)
 Consultation on Proposed Main Modifications
 (6 December 2024 – 31 January 2025)**

Representation Form

Ref:
 (For official use only)

Please complete and return this form:

By email:

By post: Planning Policy, Development and Housing, Council Offices,
 Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD

Return by:

11:59pm on Friday 31 January 2025

Please read the **Guidance Note**, available on the Council's website <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/lpr-proposed-main-modifications>, before making your representations.

This form has two parts:

PART A – Your details

PART B – Your representation(s)

Please complete a new form for each representation you wish to make.

PART A: Your details

Please note the following:

- *We cannot register your representation without your details.*
- *Representations cannot be kept confidential and will be available for public scrutiny, however, your contact details will not be published.*

	1. Your details	2. Agent's details (if applicable)
Title	Mr	
First Name*	David	
Last Name*	Southgate	
Job title <i>(where relevant)</i>	N/A	
Organisation <i>(where relevant)</i>	N/A	
Address* <i>Please include postcode</i>		
Email address*		
Telephone number		
Consultee ID <i>(if known)</i>		

*Mandatory Field

PART B – Your representation(s)

All comments made at previous stages of the LPR have been taken into account by the Inspector and there is no need to resubmit these. Publication of the proposed Main Modifications is a regulatory stage and any representations made should relate specifically to the legal compliance and soundness of the proposed Main Modifications and should not relate to parts of the Plan that are not proposed to be modified.

Please note your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change.

Your name or organisation (and client if you are an agent):	N/A
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Proposed Main Modifications and Proposed Changes to the Policies Map

1. Please indicate whether your representation relates to the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications or the Schedule of Proposed Changes to the Policies Map and provide the modification/change number you are commenting on below:

Document name	WBC Local Plan Main Modifications
Modification/Change reference number (MM / PMC)	MM25 & MM26

2. Do you consider the Proposed Main Modification or Proposed Policy Map Change to be:
(please tick/mark 'X' one answer for a and one for b)

- a) **Legally compliant** Yes No
- b) **Sound** Yes No

Please refer to the guidance notes for a full explanation of 'legally compliant' and 'soundness'

If you consider the Proposed Main Modification or Proposed Policy Map Change not to be sound, please identify which test of soundness your representation relates to:
(please tick/mark 'X' all that apply)

Positively Prepared: The LPR should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements.	X
Justified: the LPR should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives	X
Effective: the LPR should be deliverable	X
Consistent with national policy: the LPR should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies of the NPPF	X

3. If you have answered 'No' to question 2a or 2b above, please provide details of why you consider the Proposed Main Modification or Proposed Policy Map Change is not legally compliant or is unsound, including any changes you consider necessary to make the Plan legally compliant or sound.

You will need to say why this change will make the Local Plan Review legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

*These comments are made against the tests of soundness as set out in paragraph 35 of the previous version of the National Planning Policy Framework which the plan was examined against. This states that plans are 'sound' if they are: **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development; **Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence; **Effective**—deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on crossboundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and **Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant. For the reasons set out within this response, it is considered that the main modification proposed are unsound and fail against each of the tests as set out in paragraph 35 of the framework. The failings against the tests of soundness are set out in each of the subsequent sections of these representations.*

It is not considered that the proposed modifications to the rest of the policy provide a sound approach to the delivery of a comprehensive development. Far from providing more certainty on the delivery of infrastructure, the modifications to the wider policy bring about further ambiguity. The increase of allocation on the site to 2,500 dwellings has consistently shown to be unsound.

Whilst the requirement of a Masterplan SPD is welcomed it is not considered that this would make the policy, or wider plan, sound. The opportunity for consultation with the parishioners in a local Parish Council public meeting was refused by WBC and engagement with the Parish Council was last minute making it very difficult for the public to meaningfully engage and be heard.

The requirement for the masterplan to be undertaken and adopted prior to an application being submitted is evidence in its own right that the allocation of the site for 1,500 dwellings, let alone 2,500, was made in haste at the very end of the plan making progress and lacked the justification and evidence base for this to be considered a sound approach.

The provision of healthcare on the site was severely flawed and there was no certainty on the form of provision that might come forward on the site or the viability of such a provision. The removal of the requirements in regard to size of the surgery reflects this lack of certainty. The inclusion of a requirement for further detailed feasibility work has been added by the council but this does not remedy the fundamental issues of soundness in the approach to what should be an infrastructure led development. As with the healthcare provision, the secondary school and SEND provision is subject to the requirement of a further feasibility study. In regard to both healthcare and school provision if a sound approach had been taken by WBC in advance of the

submission of the plan, then the requirement for a further feasibility study would not be necessary.

The increase of the dwellings to be delivered on this site by order of 1,000 dwellings will put significant pressure on the amount of green infrastructure which could feasibly be delivered on the site and the overall form this will take. This would clearly be a vital part of the masterplan SPD process, but fundamental concerns remain around how the green infrastructure will be delivered and maintained on site in a way which protects the existing communities around the site and provides a sustainable form of development.

Transport impacts of the proposed allocation were a key area of concern in advance of the hearing sessions and this has been exacerbated by the increase in dwellings to 2,500. The evidence base and assessments in relation to traffic impact are fundamentally flawed and remain so. Further submissions are made in relation to the scoring of the site in the revised SA regarding highway impact. In terms of the modifications, the insertion of wording to include multiple access points gives significant cause for concern. The revised maps accompanying policy SP17 show an access point onto Harts Hill Road, this would give a direct route through the site into Upper Bucklebury Village and would actively encourage the directing of traffic through this route in order to avoid congestion on the A4 / Floral Way and would be used to get access to the M4. The Main Mods to the LP takes an insular view on the impact of traffic concentrating on internal movement within the site and access points. The LP indulges in wishful thinking over sustainable transport modes for SP17. Its suggestion that residents will choose to cycle, walk or use infrequent bus services is illusory. Most residents will have no option but to use their cars to commute to work and for the school run if, as seems probable, the secondary/SEND school will be off-site. Much increased traffic congestion on the A4 at peak times will see hundreds of additional car journeys going up Harts Hill Rd for the M4 J12 and J13 and A34. Yet there are no planned road improvements to the roads surrounding the site. The LP fails to address improving highway capacity in the vicinity of the site with no road junction enhancements yet astonishingly the SA says the SP17 development is likely to have a positive impact on road safety. There is also a direct contradiction in the wording of the policy which requires adverse impacts to be minimised and the scoring in the SA which states that there are no such impacts.

The removal of the wording in relation to energy requirements from the wording of the policy is not considered to be effective or justified and creates significant ambiguity around the actual form of development that will be created. It means that any planning application(s) can be brought forward with an Energy Statement which simply seeks to meet the minimum base level requirements and will lead to a form of development which provides a poor-quality form of development. The requirement of the Construction and Operations Management Plan is considered vital given the known constraints of the site. The reference to below ground infrastructure reflects the known constraints in terms of oil and gas pipelines crossing the site. It is highly irregular that despite the known presence of these constraints that no further work has been undertaken on the feasibility of development over or near to them and what impact these elements will have on the overall capacity of the site. This is work which should have been done in advance of the allocation of the site for development and is considered to represent an unsound approach in its own right as a stand-alone issue.

It is considered that the assessment of biodiversity harm resulting from the development of the SP17 has been fundamentally incorrectly assessed. Furthermore, it was demonstrated to the inspector that the survey work undertaken in relation to the biodiversity baseline on the site and the ecological impact of development of the site were not robust, reliable or up-to-date. It is therefore highly surprising that the council is continuing to rely on this evidence to justify development of the site. The requirement for the development proposals to be supported by a

biodiversity strategy will not remedy the issues of soundness already identified. In the event that allocation of the site is found to be sound then it is vital that the biodiversity strategy is carried out in advance of the submission of the application and is used to inform the Masterplanning process.

The increase of the allocation to 2,500 dwellings significantly exacerbates the Landscape concerns. Given the sensitivity of the location of the site in the setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB, as accepted by WBC, the LVIA forms a fundamental aspect of any future application. The wording of the policy is clear that this will inform the Masterplan SPD and it is therefore clear that this must be an iterative and sequential process which further impacts on expected timescales for this work and the overall capacity of the site should the LVIA indicate that development of much lower quantum of homes would be required to ensure that the setting of the AONB is protected.

The potential for impact from development in terms of light pollution is considered to be significant. The increase in number of units proposed under policy SP17 will significantly increase such impact. It is considered that this process must be undertaken alongside the LVIA process and should inform the masterplan SPD rather than being left to the application process. The wording of the policy should be amended to reflect this requirement.

The Masterplanning process is considered to be a vital process in order to establish the true capacity of the site. However, for the reasons set out, the fact that this has been added to the requirements of the policy reinforces the concerns raised on the fundamental issues of soundness and lack of evidence base underpinning the allocation and its addition as a main modification does not remedy the objections raised on this basis. The principle of collaboration with parish councils, the community and other stakeholders is welcomed but with no scope or framework for these discussions there is little in the way of comfort offered to those parties on how the Masterplanning process will be undertaken and what the outcomes will be if fundamental concerns about the process or outputs be raised. The council has consistently failed to consult with local groups as part of the local plan. A further example of this was the invitations by the council on 15 January to parish councils to provide an overview of the Main Modifications consultation to a meeting on 22 January which would be less than 10 days before the end of this current consultation. On this basis there is little comfort that the council will seek to constructively engage with parish councils during the preparation of the masterplan.

The main modifications document shows access points from Harts Hill Road. This is not considered necessary or justified and would further exacerbate the significant highway impacts as highlighted in the submissions made throughout the examination process. There is no requirement to show indicative access points in the plan attached to policy SP17 until further work on this matter has been undertaken. The plan also shows an indicative green infrastructure buffer which cannot be confirmed until the Masterplanning process has been undertaken. It is also clear that no buffer has been made around the area of ancient woodland which extends into the site, nor does it include any buffer around the heritage assets on the site.

The settlement boundary is drawn around the entire site and would therefore mean that any area of green infrastructure remains in the settlement boundary. The settlement boundary cannot be altered by the masterplanning process and therefore the consideration of designation of a gap between Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury could only be controlled as part of the next plan review. This provides no certainty for the residents of Upper Bucklebury and the requirement for a gap should be made clear as a central part of the wording of policy SP17 and not left to an ambiguous and undeliverable promise within the supporting text of the policy.

The proposed amendments introduce considerable ambiguity on the type, amount and location of the community benefits which will be provided as a result of the development. The suggestion that such infrastructure can be provided offsite is not considered to be justified and would lead to significant impacts for the wider community and the new residents of any future community.

As with the community infrastructure, the suggestion that such infrastructure can be provided off-site is not considered to be justified and would lead to significant impacts for the wider community and the new residents of any future community.

The increased risk from flooding is of significant concern. The provision of SuDS should be considered as part of the Masterplan SPD process and the wording of the supporting text should be updated in order to reflect this requirement.

The constraints relating to the oil and gas pipelines which cross the site have not as yet been included. Given the significant constraint to development that these assets represent it is not considered appropriate for this to be a matter which is controlled at application stage. The actual impact of these constraints must form part of the masterplanning process for the site and the wording of the supporting text updated to reflect this requirement.

The supporting text also sets out that it is the intention for the SPD to be adopted within a 12month process from adoption of the Local Plan however there is no indication of what will happen should the process take longer than a year or if significant objections from the local community, council, third parties or consultees remain after a year.

Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)

4. Do you have any comments on the updated Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment Report – Proposed Main Modifications (November 2024)?

(Please be as precise as possible)

Page number	
Paragraph number	
Comments:	
<p>Concern is raised in regards to how scoring against key impacts on matters such as landscape and biodiversity and why the council has not changed the scoring on these matters despite the significant increase in housing from the land at North East Thatcham.</p> <p>The council wording states that the increase in dwellings is directly linked to the request from the inspector but makes no attempt to address the reasons as previously set out on the potential impacts on the local community.</p> <p>The council states within the wording of policy SP17 that mitigation will be required in respect of matters such as air quality, highways, and heritage yet within the scoring of the SA for main modifications it is said that there will be no impact in regard to these matters. This is considered to directly contradict the assessment of the council within the wording of the policy itself.</p>	

It is clear from the revised wording of SP17 that the impact of the development in many aspects is to be assessed through further studies and the Masterplanning process. This includes, but is not limited to, landscape impact, historic environment, flooding, highways and provision of infrastructure. However, despite this the council has maintained its assessment of the allocation on such policy objectives as having a positive outcome. The scoring against all policy objectives is maintained and identical to that scored against the previous assessment of the site for 1,500 homes. It is inconceivable that an increase in over 1,000 dwellings from the previous allocations would amount to no change in effects against policy objectives and the SA for the main modifications is considered to be fatally flawed in its approach in this regard.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

5. Do you have any comments on the addendum to the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Proposed Main Modifications (November 2024)?

(Please be as precise as possible)

Page number	
Paragraph number	
Comments:	
<p>These representations demonstrate that the main modifications proposed to the plan have compounded the concerns raised throughout the local plan process on the significant failings with the soundness of the plan. The main modifications proposed would continue to mean that LPR is not positively prepared and would not achieve the goal of sustainable development for WBC. The main modifications proposed by the council are not justified. Many of the grounds for assessment of impacts and benefits lack credibility and are not based on available evidence. The concerns raised at regulation 19 stage and in matters statements remain and have not been remotely addressed by the modifications proposed. The main modifications proposed are not effective. There was previous no evidence that the development of 1,500 homes at North East Thatcham would be deliverable and the increase to 2,500 provides no resolution to the fundamental issues of deliverability and viability. The main modifications proposed are not consistent with national policy. In many instances the increase in dwellings to 2,500 at North East Thatcham under policy SP17 would directly conflict with national policy, particularly in relation to landscape character and impact upon the AONB.</p>	

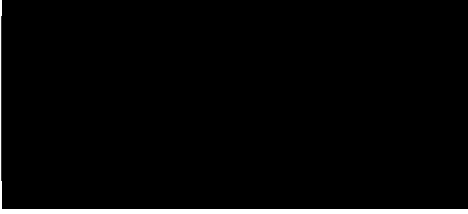
Notification of Progress of the Local Plan Review

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

(please tick/mark 'X' all that apply)

<i>The publication of the report of the Inspector appointed to carry out the examination</i>	X
<i>The adoption of the Local Plan Review</i>	X

Please ensure that we have either an up-to-date email address or postal address at which we can contact you. You can amend your contact details by logging onto your account on the Local Plan Consultation Portal or by contacting the Planning Policy Team.

Signature		Date	28/01/2025
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Your completed representations must be received by the Council by 11:59pm on Friday 31 January 2025.

Please note – Personal/Contact Details

All submitted representations will be made publicly available, including on the Council’s website, with the person/organisation making the representation being identified. A copy of all submitted representations will also be made available to the Planning Inspectorate and the person appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct the examination.

To ensure an effective and fair examination, it is important that the Inspector and all other participants in the examination process are able to know who has made representations on the LPR. The Council therefore cannot accept anonymous representations – you must provide us with your name and contact details. Address details will not be made publicly available. All personal data will be handled in line with the Council’s Privacy Policy on the Development Plan. You can view the Council’s privacy notices at <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/privacynotices>.

The Council will also need to make sure that the names and full addresses of those making representations can be made available and taken into account by the Inspector. By submitting a representation, you confirm that you agree to this and accept responsibility for your comments. The Planning Inspectorate’s privacy statement for local plan examinations is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans#plans-privacy-statement>.