

# BPC Summary of WBC Proposal for Thatcham North East

A brief overview of the Thatcham North East section of the WBC's Draft Local Plan.

This is intended as a description of salient points of the proposed Thatcham North East development, rather than any intended response to the plan.

# Background

- As required by Government, WBC have to ensure sufficient sites for building are allocated to meet future housing and economic needs.
- As part of this ongoing process, West Berkshire Council (WBC) are updating their Local Plan, the 'Local Plan Review 2020 - 2037: Emerging Draft' (available on WBC website, link at end)
- Within the emerging draft of this update, WBC has proposed a site for 2500 houses and associated infrastructure to the north east of Thatcham.
- Stage 1 consultations are now complete. WBC are expected to publish the Draft Local Plan in May (Stage 2) for further consultation.

- The current WBC Local Plan 2016 - 2026 concentrated housing expansion in Newbury with 5,400 new homes, with approximately 900 homes in Thatcham.
- WBC is required to build approximately 520-570 houses per year, every year, to keep up with Government requirements.
- As part of the upcoming update, WBC requested submissions from developers for suitable sites across the district. This led to the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), WBC's future 'land bank.'
- Approx 85% of West Berkshire is not suitable for development, either through the safety traces of the AWE sites, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the north, and various flood plains.

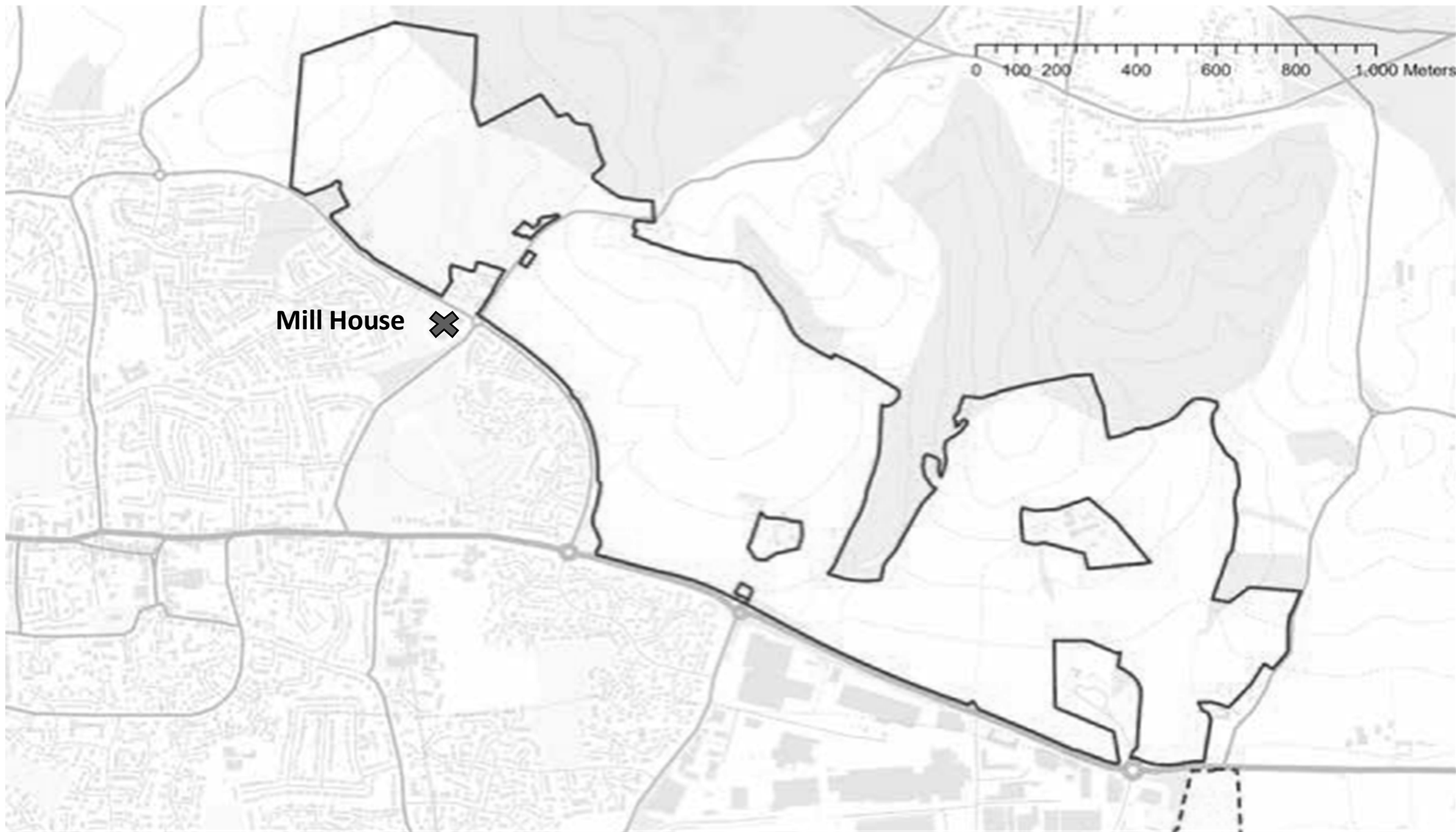
- WBC intended to build a site of 6000 houses at Grazeley (south of J11 M4), but a recent change in the safety zone around AWE prevents this 'strategic' development, and led to a significant shortfall in WBC's ability to deliver the required housing stock
- WBC reviewed all the sites available in its available 'land bank', and held community discussions about the viability of sites.
- Sites in Upper Bucklebury and along Harts Hill Road were part of this process, but were rejected at this time.
- A proposal for the 2500 house development to the north east of Thatcham was considered suitable for further investigation, despite the current plan requiring that Thatcham be fundamentally left alone to absorb all the recent development.

# Thatcham NE Proposal

- WBC conducted a three stage review of Thatcham. Stages 1 and 2 are Thatcham Past and Thatcham Present.
- There has been significant piecemeal development of houses in Thatcham without the associated improvement in facilities of shops, schools, sports facilities. Secondary in facilities to Newbury.
- Led to 'Thatcham Strategic Growth Study Stage 3 Thatcham Future', which puts forward the vision for 2500 houses to the north east of Thatcham

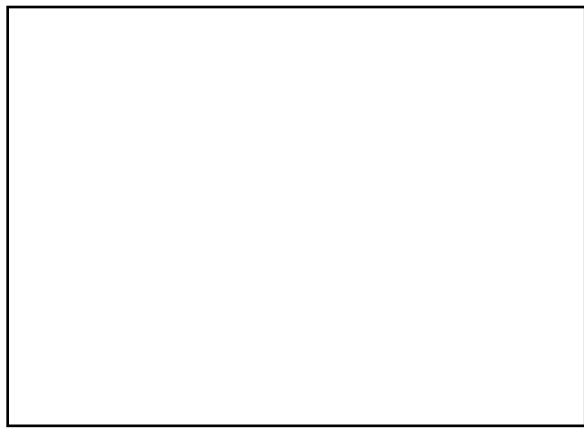
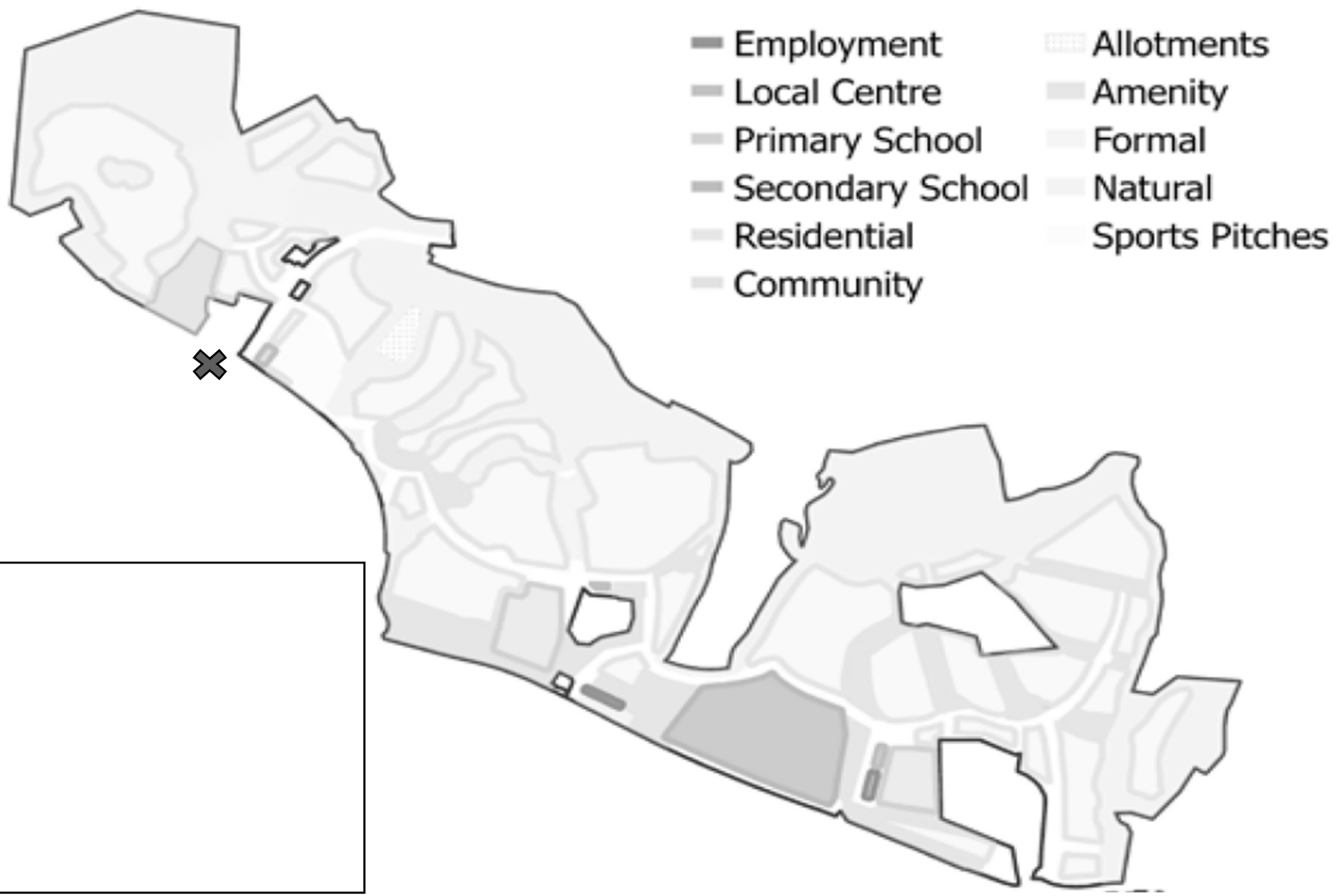
# The proposed Thatcham NE Plan

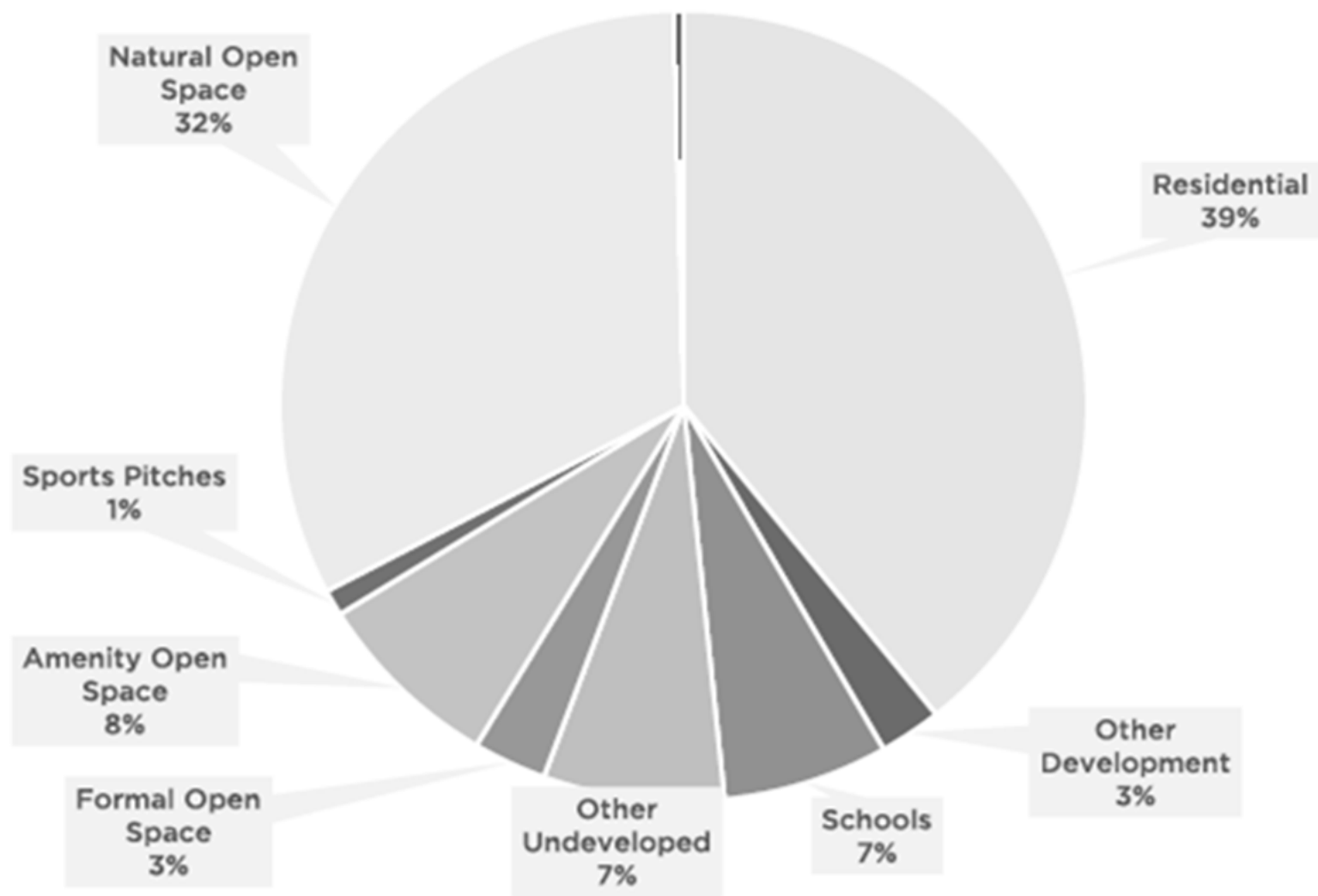
- Contained in the Thatcham Strategic Growth Study Stage 3 (available on WBC website, link at end)
- 4 proposals were amalgamated to produce this plan for 2500 houses and associated infrastructure to be built to the north and east of Thatcham.
- Expectation is that 1250 houses would be built by 2037.
- On subsequent slides, the Blue Cross represents the Mill House pub/ Coop/ takeaways area. Upper Bucklebury is by the scale marking to the top



- Due to the scale of the proposal, *at this stage* the plan includes provision for local shops, local services, office space, 2x primary schools, 1x senior school, community space, and sports facilities.
- Includes a “hilltop country park.” Appears to be a significant green buffer located along the northern boundaries. It is not clear how this is funded long term.
- 50% green open space.
- 40% affordable housing.







# Considerations

- These 2500 houses will be built somewhere in West Berkshire.
- If WBC does not have a Local Plan then developers may have much more latitude in where they can develop, including within the AONB.
- If the Thatcham North East development does not progress, then the constituent sites may be developed individually; with less of the proposed infrastructure.
- In contradiction to the current plan, WBC now propose that development of this scale is required to 'regenerate' Thatcham.
- The plan offers little consideration of the effects on the surrounding areas.

- North Wessex Downs AONB Board has objected to development on all the sites that make up Thatcham NE, due to the impact on the setting of the AONB and the breaking of the Floral Way boundary.
- There is a significant 'green' buffer proposed to the northern edges of the site, to ensure that there is limited visibility of the site from the AONB. The building boundary is inside the shown site boundary due to this green buffer. There is little information as to what would constitute this green buffer, and how it would be funded or maintained.
- One of the constituent sites of Thatcham NE was rejected by WBC in 2015. WBC cited damage to the landscape and environment within their reasons for refusal (and subsequent fight to ministerial level). Thatcham NE would be 5 times bigger.

- Traffic would likely increase dramatically, despite planning efforts to mitigate this.
- The development may increase flood risk in Thatcham.
- There would likely be a significant impact on the environment, wildlife, and landscape of the north eastern Thatcham vicinity. This includes the edge of the AONB, Upper Bucklebury, and the Common.
- There are other sites available that may reduce WBC's reliance on Thatcham North East to achieve a workable Local Plan.
- BPC objected to the Thatcham North East development within its response to the WBC Emerging Draft Local Plan consultation.

# Moving forward

- WBC will publish its Draft Local Plan at some stage during the Spring (expected May)
- BPC have linked with a local Facebook Group to form a BPC Working Group (WG) to coordinate a parish wide response to this Stage 2 consultation.
- The WG is liaising with Thatcham Town Council and other local PCs to coordinate responses, and to reduce costs.
- Updates from the WG will be available on the parish website: [www.buckleburyparish.org](http://www.buckleburyparish.org) , via Facebook “Bucklebury Parish Against Thatcham NE Development” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/411212780100239> ), Twitter ‘Bucklebury Parish Against Thatcham Development’ but the handle is @AgainstParish, and Instagram (#saynotothatchamdevelopment)
- WG email is [buckleburysaysno@gmail.com](mailto:buckleburysaysno@gmail.com) for more information.

# Questions

- This brief is based upon the source WBC documents, the ‘Local Plan Review 2020 - 2037: Emerging Draft’ and ‘Thatcham Strategic Growth Study Stage 3 Thatcham Future,’ both of which are available on WBC’s website.

[https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/49828/Emerging-Draft-West-Berkshire-Local-Plan-Review-to-2037/pdf/Emerging\\_Draft\\_West\\_Berks\\_LPR\\_\(Dec\\_2020\)\\_Red\\_file\\_size.pdf?m=637437237642200000](https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/49828/Emerging-Draft-West-Berkshire-Local-Plan-Review-to-2037/pdf/Emerging_Draft_West_Berks_LPR_(Dec_2020)_Red_file_size.pdf?m=637437237642200000)

[https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/49799/Thatcham-Strategic-Growth-Study-Stage-3-Thatcham-Future/pdf/Thatcham\\_Strategic\\_Growth\\_Study\\_Stage\\_3.pdf?m=637430460161270000](https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/49799/Thatcham-Strategic-Growth-Study-Stage-3-Thatcham-Future/pdf/Thatcham_Strategic_Growth_Study_Stage_3.pdf?m=637430460161270000)

- Any questions, please contact [buckleburysaysno@gmail.com](mailto:buckleburysaysno@gmail.com) or the BPC clerk at [clerk@buckleburyparish.org](mailto:clerk@buckleburyparish.org)

# Individual comments

- WBC welcome individual comments during the consultation periods, and each individual's comments will be considered in developing the proposal. Thatcham North East is just a proposal, and comments from individuals (and PCs) may lead to amendments.
- The next consultation period is expected to begin in May.
- Comments can be posted at the WBC website, then "Having Your Say", then "View a Consultation", then "Local Plan Review to 2037"
- Or by email to [planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk)