

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of
Thatcham Town Council
held on Monday 5th February 2024 at 18.00hrs
in the Council Chamber, Brownsfield Road, Thatcham

Present: Councillor Mark Lillycrop (Mayor)
 Councillors John Boyd, Mike Cole, Iain Cottingham, Owen Jeffery,
 Justin Pemberton, Petra Pemberton, Simon Pike, Stephanie Steevenson and
 Val Watts

In attendance: John Sackett (Events Manager)
 Brian Woodham (Thatcham Surface Water Management Plan Funding
 Committee)
 3 members of public

FULL/2024/013 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Suzanne Adamantos,
 Jeff Brooks, Jeremy Cottam and Ben Schiffer-Harte.

FULL/2024/014 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cottingham declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 3
 (FULL/2024/015) as Chairman of Thatcham Town Cricket Club.

Councillor Boyd declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 3
 (FULL/2024/015) as the Town Council representative to the Thatcham Town
 Cricket Club Committee.

FULL/2024/015 THATCHAM TOWN CRICKET CLUB LEASE

Council considered a report from the Town Clerk regarding a request from
 Sport England for Thatcham Town Cricket Club to seek extension of its lease
 with Thatcham Town Council for use of Browns Sports Field, arising from
 Sport England's consultee response to a planning application to construct
 flood alleviation works at the northern end of the site.

The current lease was due to expire in September 2041.

On behalf of Thatcham Town Cricket Club, Councillor Cottingham requested
 that Heads of Terms be provided, reflecting the decision of Council, for
 forwarding to Sport England, prior to West Berkshire Council determining the
 application.

RESOLVED

to offer Thatcham Town Cricket Club a new 50-year lease [to 2074] for use of
 the Browns Sports Field, with a 15-year notice period and a caveat that the
 primary use of the site must be for cricket.

FULL/2024/016 MOTION

Council considered the following Motion from Councillor Jeffery:

This Council notes that in the closing weeks of the previous West Berkshire
 Council administration in April 2023, the Local Plan was submitted to the
 Inspector against vigorous Liberal Democrat opposition and notably very
 strong local Thatcham residents' opposition.

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FULL/2024/016 MOTION continued

Considerable and highly significant issues were raised by this Council during the Regulation 18 and 19 consultations, based on expert review by the then Leader of Thatcham Town Council, David Lister, and Cllr Simon Pike, respectively. These included incorrect financial assumptions by the Developers; failure to provide viable transport infrastructure; inadequate additional Doctors' Surgery provision; wholly inadequate school provision based on a school size that is too small to be considered viable; lower than appropriate ecological and environmental standards in the design and build of at least the entire first phase, and a failure to provide adequate plans and mitigation to incorporate a new development that would be approximately the same size as that of Hungerford town into the existing town of Thatcham.

This Council has provided a substantial submission to the Inspector, detailing why Council believes that the Local Plan is unsuitable and has deficiencies in how it was constructed.

The newly elected District Council Liberal Democrat Administration sought to address these deficiencies by resolving to withdraw the submission and return to Regulation 18 stage in order to do so. Minister Lee Rowley wrote to West Berkshire Council on the day of the Special Council meeting wherein the motion to withdraw the submitted plan was to be considered, instructing the Council NOT to resolve to withdraw it.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- i. Express deep regret at the summary interference in the Local Plan process;
 - ii. Make full and thorough representation at the Examination at which Thatcham Town Council will oppose this development in Thatcham Northeast (and extending to the boundaries of Bucklebury, Cold Ash and Midgham) which we believe will put far too great a burden on the infrastructure of the Town and surrounding parishes;
 - iii. Remind all parties to this proposal that we are in a climate crisis nationally and internationally and that this proposal considerably adds to likely vehicle journeys to neighbouring towns and the railway station by commuters (noting parts of the proposed development are approximately two kilometres from the station and involve crossing the A4 which is busy with cars but is also designated as heavily utilised HGV route both East and West bound);
 - iv. Vigorously press the case that any major development in Thatcham takes full account of the need to provide a purpose designed, purpose built, adequately sized Secondary School – noting that a full redevelopment of the 1950's concrete-built Kennet School is vastly overdue; and that the School site that could become available would be sustainable for new housing that is in short walking distance of town centre shops and of the railway station on the newly electrified line to Paddington, Newbury and Reading.
- to support the Motion.

RESOLVED

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Councillor Cole left the meeting
2 members of public left the meeting

FULL/2024/017 WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Following delegation at the last meeting to the Planning & Highways Committee to prepare a response to the Inspector's report; 'IN6 Inspector's matters, issues and questions and written statements', relating to examination of the West Berkshire Local Plan 2022-2039, Council received a draft response to 'Matters 1 to 3', that would be developed further by the Planning & Highways Committee at its meeting on 13th February 2024, prior to submission before the deadline of Friday 16th February 2024.

RESOLVED to note the information.

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 18:53hrs.

Signed: _____ Date: _____