



Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP,
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government,
House of Commons,
Westminster,
London SW1A 0AA

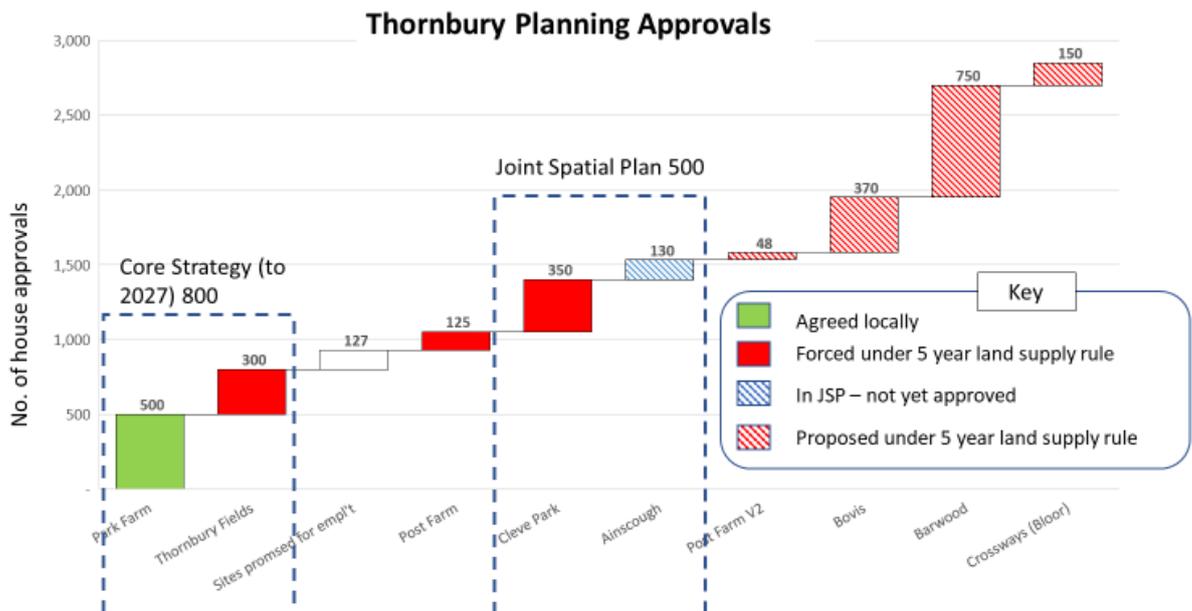
Dear Mr Brokenshire,

The Planning System is Failing Our Town – a request for help

On behalf of Thornbury Residents Against Poorly Planned Development (TRAPP'D) and the signatories to this letter we call for your urgent help to save our town, which has been badly failed by the planning system.

When the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy was being developed in 2013, Thornbury Parish Council agreed to take 500 houses which we now know as Park Farm. At the last minute another 300 houses (Thornbury Fields) was forced into the Plan on the grounds that the Local Authority could not demonstrate a five-year land supply, and that, we were promised, meant Thornbury was now protected from further speculative development until 2027, as we had taken our share.

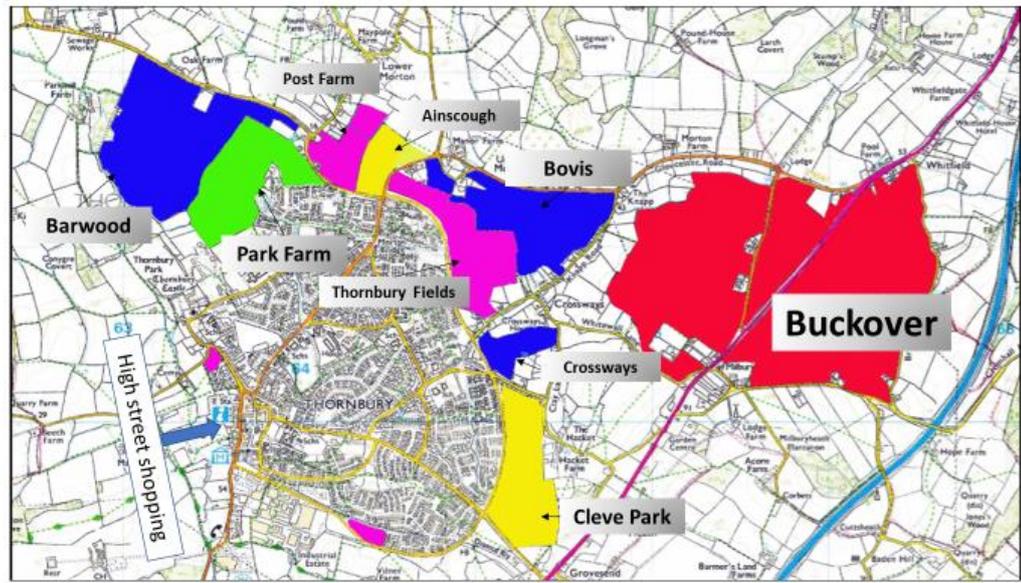
Since that time all other proposals are outside of the Local Plan, with a further 300 approvals granted, including a number on land that was supposed to be reserved for employment purposes. Then came the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) with another 500, the first 350 of which (Cleve Park) has now also been approved on appeal on the basis of the 5-year land supply rule. However, it will not end there; developers representing proposals for more than an additional 1,300 houses are now seeking to join the bandwagon, and are currently sharpening their arguments about the "sustainability of Thornbury" and the "Council's lack of a five-year supply":



Compared to the original locally agreed 500 houses we face the prospect of at least 3,000; compared to the next 500 in the draft JSP we face the prospect of 1,800 or more. That is **before** we add the controversial Buckover proposal for yet another 3,000.

This is what the town will then look like:

Thornbury Developments



In other words, we are looking at the development of 6,000 new houses in a town of 5,000 just a short while ago. The shape of the town is becoming grotesquely distended in an urban bulge away from the High Street and, since the number of jobs in the town continues to fall, these developments rely entirely on the private car for access to both local services and employment. There have been no significant infrastructure improvements to support any of these developments, and nothing is guaranteed in the JSP (which seems to rely on the vague hope of an extension to the calamitous Metrobus).

So far, about 500 houses of these houses have been built – **just 8% of the outcome as we see it today** – and already we see an overload on our roads and car parks, in our healthcare facilities and soon in our schools.

From a planning perspective the worst of these proposals is undoubtedly Buckover. The busy A38 – the designated relief road for the M5 – runs straight through the middle of this proposal, which grinds to a crawl whenever there is a problem on the M5, or simply a Spring / Summer bank holiday. A freedom of information request revealed that the Council’s Head of Transport and Strategic Projects assessed the transport

Situation normal



.... for A38 at Buckover on bank holiday weekend



What happens on the A38 when there’s a problem on the M5... ..

problems associated with this site as unacceptable and suggested that this would have to be “fudged” if the project was to go ahead. The A38 problem together

with the fact that this is an extension to the town of Thornbury, in all but name, are the main factors that render this proposal totally unsound.



During the election for the West of England Mayor, the successful candidate, Tim Bowles, campaigned on a promise to stop Buckover stating on his website that *“It is clear there is very little support for the Buckover development from residents in Thornbury and Alveston. I am calling for this development to be stopped. If elected as our first West of England Mayor these plans will be reviewed. I am saying no to Buckover”*. However, once elected he reneged on this promise claiming that it was *“now clear”* he was *“not part of the joint strategic plan process”*. He has refused to apologise for misleading the electorate and has infuriated residents of the town with his deception and double-speak.



In the latest political development, the Leader of the South Gloucestershire Council, Matthew Riddle, stepped down from that position on May 16th 2018, and TRAPP'D understands that he stated to colleagues this was due to a conflict with his land interests (TRAPP'D has seen a declaration of interest by Cllr Riddle that appears to show he has a personal interest in the Barwood proposal). We do not know whether Matthew Riddle had any role in negotiating the allocation of housing between the four Local Authorities in the West of England, but we certainly believe that this process resulted in South Gloucestershire taking far more than its share of the Joint Spatial Plan housing numbers. Clearly, any outcome in the JSP that increases the commitment that the Local Authority has for housing numbers also has the potential to benefit any landowner seeking planning approval for a large development. We have asked the Council to confirm whether any person with a pecuniary interest in developments submitted for consideration in the JSP has had any involvement in the process itself.

The residents of Thornbury have now had enough and call on the Secretary of State for help!

You may be aware that our MP, Luke Hall, has consistently fought against the Buckover development, and was instrumental in bringing the shortcomings of this proposal to attention of the relevant bodies, which led to the failure of the Buckover Garden Village to be included within the Government's Official *Garden Villages, towns and cities programme*. He has also conducted an extensive survey of residents which revealed the plan has a complete lack of demonstrable support from residents; 96% of survey respondents strongly objected to the plan and 97% of respondents to the official consultation did not feel the plan was deliverable. He has now called for a separate review of Buckover as part of the Examination in Public of the JSP that will take place in the Autumn of this year. **We believe it is vital that the independent inspectors give our community a real opportunity to put our case before them, namely that this Buckover proposal is fundamentally flawed, and we think that Luke Hall's initiative on this deserves your support.**

We also hope you will agree that the wider case of Thornbury would makes an excellent case study of what can go wrong in the planning process – in particular the pitfalls of the five-year land supply rule – and how the planning process can fail a community such as ours. We are aware of the recent consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Government's white paper on housing that seeks to address the *“broken housing market”*. **We therefore think the timing would be perfect to look at Thornbury as a case study, and we would invite you to come to our town to meet some of the residents, and see first-hand the shortcomings of the current process.**

Signed for and on behalf of the following signatories to this open letter:

