

Peter Emery – District Councillor

I have decided to withdraw my support from the Eynsham Garden Village and from the WODC emerging local plan with immediate effect. I have informed James Mills, Leader of WODC of my decision.

Why have I done this?

I have been an advocate for the Garden Village at Eynsham from the outset. It appeared to me that it represented the best of a bad job and, if Eynsham was to bear the brunt of catering for the West Oxfordshire share of the Oxford City 'unmet need' then it offered the opportunity for something positive to result. I envisaged the provision of much needed infrastructure, a new school and a new doctor's surgery to ease the pressure on the facilities in Eynsham village and the hope of high tech, well paid employment in the proposed Science Park.

However.

As I worked closely with Richard and Posy in the Neighbourhood Plan group it became clear that not everything in the garden (village) was rosy.

Where was the consultation that the DCLG¹ qualifying rules for a Garden Village candidate demanded? Your District Councillors were completely unaware of the planned Garden Village and the western extension (SDA²) to Eynsham until they attended a planning workshop in early July 2016. And how much consultation has taken place with the District Councillors and with your Parish Council in the intervening 11 months?

None.

Where was the separation, physical and otherwise of the Garden Village from Eynsham in line with DCLG rules?

The A40, that is the separation buffer. And even the Inspector who is currently checking out the WODC Local Plan has commented that the two communities will be 'distinct' not physically separated.

The 'Campus Style' Science Park? Now downgraded to a Business Park/Industrial Estate.

Two meetings were arranged by Eynsham Parish Council in the village hall to discuss the Local Plan and its impact on Eynsham, both were extremely well attended and both created a lot of questions that James Mills, leader of WODC and Giles Hughes, Senior Planning Officer said would be answered.

An answer has finally appeared many months later in the form of a document³ from Mr Hughes where he 'answers' the various questions. But he does not. He uses broad brush phrases and generalities to produce some kind of answer, but they are not convincing answers.

When I started to look closely at the WODC Local Plan and looked at how the Strategic Site locations had been arrived at by WODC and the Local Development Board, with particular emphasis on sites to locate the Oxford City 'Unmet Need' I found that there was no clear link to indicate why one site was better than another, I have had to conclude that they are simply more convenient for the planners. WODC has now published some new documents as part of the review of the Local Plan which show the thinking behind the allocation of Strategic Sites for Homes within the district. This document further confirms the woolly thinking and repeated mantras of the planners without shedding any more light onto the decision process. All in all, I believe that the village has been badly served by WODC Planning and I can no longer support their actions.

You should be aware that I only speak for myself and these are my views on the planning situation affecting Eynsham. If you want to know what the other two elected District Councillors representing Eynsham think, Peter Kelland and Edward James, then you should ask them directly. I am happy to discuss my views with residents at any time.

¹ DCLG, Department for Communities and Local Government

² SDA, Strategic Development Area

³ Giles Hughes, [Garden Village Briefing Note](#), June 2017