

## **Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan – Frequently Asked Questions – Updated 14 Jan. 2017.**

Many people are writing to Eynsham Futures (EFSG) to express their opinions about the current situation faced by Eynsham due to the proposed 1000 home development to the west of the village and the entirely new and self-contained 2200-home Tilgarsley Garden Village to be built north of the A40 but still in the Parish of Eynsham.

We very much welcome all your comments, particularly those which directly relate to the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan or to the analysis we have done on the Site Options. Feedback that refers to a policy will be recorded and be used to amend the policy where considered necessary. More general comments will be used to point us to things which might be made better.

However, we do have a problem answering all the general comments being made, many of which cover similar ground. We have collected a number of responses we have made already as they will help you understand the situation and the context in which the ENP has been prepared.

*These answers do not necessarily represent the position of Eynsham Parish Council or Eynsham Futures, nor do either party necessarily agree with the substance of the answer but the answers represent our understanding of the situation at the current time whether we agree with it or not.*

*Where the thinking of EPC/EFSG is being expressed this is generally made clear in the answer.*

### **Questions about Garden Villages in general**

- Q1. Garden Villages (GV) are supposed to be built away from existing villages – surely the WODC bid flouts the rules and make it inadmissible? Won't that scupper the whole idea.*
- Q2. Won't building the GV so close to Eynsham be bad for us?*
- Q3. Isn't the EOI a travesty of many of the GV ideals? Should we not oppose it on that basis?*
- Q4. Are these houses reserved for Oxford people? Why should they get houses near Eynsham when existing Eynsham young people cannot be guaranteed local homes?*

### **Questions about Oxford City's 'unmet housing need'.**

- Q5. If these houses not specifically for Oxford people why should they have to be built as close to the City as possible?*
- Q6. What is driving the need to build 550 'unmet need' homes attached to Eynsham?*
- Q7. Can't Oxford build at higher density? Or on the Green Belt?*
- Q8. As the houses are required for workers in Oxford, why not move the greenbelt outwards and build more flats in order to maximise the use of space within the city itself?*
- Q9. Why do we want extra employment opportunities? The houses are to supply already existing employment opportunities.*

### **Questions about the A40**

- Q10. How will dualling the A40 resolve traffic issues as it is impossible to dual once it gets to Oxford - the traffic will still bottleneck there?*
- Q11. How will putting people onto a bus help people who need to get to BMW, JR Hospital or even further afield?*
- Q12. Why isn't the Park and Ride being put closer to the source of traffic – like Witney?*
- Q13. Surely the Garden Village shouldn't even be considered unless the A40 is dual carriageway from Witney to Oxford. Ideally with a bus lane too. There is no point in adding housing or businesses if the traffic is at a standstill.*

## **Questions about public services – schools, health, etc – and shops**

Q14. *What extra medical facilities will be provided - as most of us know a 'routine' doctors appointment at present can take a waiting time of up to 3 weeks.*

Q15. *Will all the extra children of secondary school age be able to go to Bartholomew School?*

## **Questions about the 'bigger picture' context of these development issues**

Q16. *Why has Eynsham been picked as the only site for Oxford's 'unmet housing need'?*

Q17. *The landscape and countryside north of the A40 is much more appealing than the flat featureless plains of the Thames Valley west of the village; don't much better opportunities exist to the west of the village?*

Q18. *Oxfordshire has full employment and expensive housing – shouldn't the emphasis be on building new homes and new employment where it is needed, say, in the North?*

*We will add more if there is evidence that anyone reads the answers – at the moment, there isn't!*

### **Q1 Garden Villages (GV) are supposed to be built away from existing villages – surely the WODC bid flouts the rules and make it inadmissible? Won't that scupper the whole idea.**

**A:** Our original answer said “ it isn't clear how much weight will be attached to the criteria suggested in the prospectus asking for bids” - well now we know – not a lot!

Now the bid is successful and with a competitive bid in progress we don't consider that WODC needs to build as many houses as it can on the western edge of Eynsham instead. EFSG wants to keep any western extension closer to 600 new homes to prevent urban sprawl. WODC should push ahead with the planning stage of the GV as quickly as possible so there is no need to build large numbers of 'unmet need' homes to the west. Building the GV quickly will also help fund the necessary infrastructure – roads, schools, shops, health centre, village hall – which all have to be built to make the GV self-sufficient.

### **Q2 Won't building the GV so close to Eynsham be bad for us?**

**A:** A lot of people seem to assume that it will but there are far fewer reasons put forward why this will be the case. Given that they don't have the plague (the original Tilgarsley disappeared just after the Black Death in 1350's) what do we have to fear from our new neighbours? The most likely issues would come if the new facilities aren't built in time – for which reason the ENP requires facilities in place by the time each house are completed (ENP3.1) – but even then, people will go to the nearest centre which will be Eynsham unless the GV location is closer to, say, Witney. It can be argued that sharing facilities with a fully equipped 'separate community' could be beneficial as not every facility can be 'cloned' – it is unlikely that each Church or eating place will be duplicated and when it comes to the Sports Centre, perhaps it would be better to build complementary facilities such as tennis courts rather than just duplicate what already exists in Eynsham. On that basis having good cycle and footpath links will reduce the need to drive into Eynsham which does have a lack of parking space already. So the question remains – *why* will a GV be bad for Eynsham?

### **Q3 Isn't the EOI a travesty of many of the GV ideals? Should we not oppose it on that basis?**

**A:** It's true that some very important ideals and principles of the Garden Village concept are ignored by the WODC EOI – see Q1. The most important is probably that a GV should be on land not already earmarked for housing and that land should be bought – by compulsory purchase if necessary – at perhaps twice the agricultural value with the substantial difference between that and the sale price of houses used to build all the new infrastructure while still providing low-cost,

low density housing (so it is really a *village with gardens*). Near Eynsham land sells for 50-100 times the agricultural value so there would be virtually nothing left to fund the GV ideals. In putting forward a Garden Village – WODC have signed up to the ideals and principles included in the government's GV prospectus - and they should not be able to back away from these at a later date. There is nothing in the GV concept that is contrary to our neighbourhood Plan and we should welcome the government money which is needed to make sure the Garden Village can be delivered and to do a proper Environmental Assessment of the site.

**Q4 Are these houses reserved for Oxford people? Why should they get houses near Eynsham when existing Eynsham young people cannot be guaranteed local homes?**

**A:** Each Local Planning Authority is responsible for estimating the houses it will need to house its population over the next local plan period (up to 2031). This is based on the number of people likely to be forming new households and on the jobs that are predicted to be available. There are formulae used to do this based on past experience and it clearly isn't an exact science but it is considered necessary to ensure that our children and grandchildren have some chance of somewhere to live given an expanding population. Oxford City has gone through this process and finds itself unable to find anywhere to build 15,000 out of a need of 28,000 of these homes; these homes would be offered on the open market or as 'affordable' homes according to City policy.

It is sometimes thought that homes should be provided primarily for local people but many people move to find the right job or just because they want to live elsewhere and we respect people's ability to do this as part of our free society. For this reason, housing is generally 'open market' although WODC is able to insist that 50% is 'affordable', such is the huge uplift in value on land allocated for housing here. A significant proportion of 'affordable' housing is social housing which is allocated to people on the basis of need (points system) but few points are allocated for being 'local'. Only a small number of houses are ever dedicated for local people – these are usually 'rural exception' sites in locations where houses would not normally be permitted so that rural workers are not priced out of the market by second-homers. Our understanding is that GV homes will be open market and affordable as they would be if they were built in Oxford but probably using WODC's '50% affordable' rule with the social housing allocated by WODC.

**Q5 If these houses not specifically for Oxford people why should they have to be built as close to the City as possible?**

**A:** Although the previous answer explains why it is wrong to think that these houses are *only* for people *from* Oxford, they are replacing ones that would have normally been built *in* Oxford. The residents might have been born in the city or want to move there for work or to support relatives so being close to the city makes some sense. However, EFSG will argue that building *all* the houses in one location fails to offer any choice to potential residents. Some might prefer to live near a railway station as they may commute to Reading or even London; some may prefer to trade a longer commute on the S1 bus for living in a larger town with supermarkets and night-life. On this basis we can argue that it is unreasonable to place *all* the unmet need in one small location, even if it is reasonable for a significant part to be built in a new settlement.

**Q6 What is driving the need to build 550 'unmet need' homes attached to Eynsham?**

**A:** When the criteria were set for finding sites to meet Oxford City's need it was said that new sites should be 500 or more to ensure that all the necessary facilities are provided on them. This would apply to the Garden Village of course – EFSG will argue that even 2200 is below the ideal size for a new community – but WODC seem to be quite wrong in interpreting this guidance as 'no site shall be less than 500' where the site is part of an existing settlement as it would be to the west of Eynsham or at other existing settlements within the District.

The other reason is speed of delivery – the GV is expected to take longer to get started. EFSG is

asking that focus is placed on building the GV site as a priority with the west available as a reserve both for local need and for Oxford's need.

**Q7 Can't Oxford build at higher density? Or on the Green Belt?**

**Q8 As the houses are required for workers in Oxford, why not move the greenbelt outwards and build more flats in order to maximise the use of space within the city itself?**

**A:** Oxford's estimate of available land - which includes, for example, allotments, all but the most severe flood-risk areas and public green space - is about 280ha and their estimate of need is currently 28,000 homes so *all* their 28,000 homes would be built at 100/ha compared to a more typical 35/ha we regard as high density for Eynsham. While 100/ha is possible and there are some attractive sites with this density in big cities, to build all of them at this density when many of the sites are small ones tucked between existing houses simply isn't practical [***Well it wasn't when the original was written but now the government plans to change the rules so you can pull down one house in a street and build a mini tower block in its place. The idea is still wrong!***]. Even so, some sites will be built at densities of 60-90/ha according to their [2014 SHLAA](#). Building on their green belt was considered in this same assessment – but much of the Oxford Green Belt is in the surrounding Districts which still have the option of building on their green belt land to meet Oxford's unmet need if they choose to do so but they generally prefer to avoid the huge row that develops when the green belt is threatened (as at Grenoble Road).

**Q9 Why do we want extra employment opportunities? The houses are to supply already existing employment opportunities.**

**A:** The homes are not for people who need homes today – unlike the slum-clearances of the 50's and 60's where people needed to be moved out to decent homes as quickly as possible. The need is for people who may be teenagers/early twenties now but will be forming new households in 2021 – 2031 which is when the houses will become available. These new adults will need jobs as their jobs don't exist yet either. There will be some people coming to work in the area, attracted by University spin-outs, but these businesses will need space to grow from starter units to perhaps something the size of Siemens Magnets (a start-up itself in the 70's). Knowledge-based industries are attracted to University towns as heavy industry was attracted to the coal and iron producing areas of the north of England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. ***If we don't have space for local employment it will force future Eynsham residents into ever-longer commutes elsewhere.*** The recent questionnaire results indicate that 85% of respondents want some employment included in the new settlement.

**Q10 How will dualling the A40 resolve traffic issues as it is impossible to dual once it gets to Oxford - the traffic will still bottleneck there?**

**Q11 How will putting people onto a bus help people who need to get to BMW, JR Hospital or even further afield?**

**A:** Both questions reflect two distinct commuting flows; it will probably be necessary to address both in the long-term but improving one now will make things better for everyone. Buses are the only way to address the problems faced by those commuting into the city as the city is already too congested to absorb more cars. Buses should also run to the east of Oxford for BMW and the Hospitals but the traffic is so bad that the buses take too long to complete the journey for the service to be viable in rush hours. Getting a significant number of those who *can* use the Park and Ride to do so should then make it possible for a service to east Oxford to become viable. Fewer cars going to the city will make things a bit easier for those who have to use their cars for long-distance commuting too. When the A40-A34 link is eventually built and Wolvercote roundabout is not the limiting factor for traffic flow, dualling the A40 will make some sense; by then there will be extra traffic anyway and dualling may be necessary, even though most city

commuters are using the buses by then.

**Q12 Why isn't the Park and Ride being put closer to the source of traffic – like Witney?**

**A:** Those preparing the P&R strategy quote research which indicates that people will only travel a certain distance on the bus and, while Eynsham is OK, Witney, specifically Shores Green (where Oxford Hill runs out to the A40) is just too far. Some argue that OCC are just proposing land that they own because it is easier and has no cost implications; others suggest that there may well be another P&R further out in due course. All EFSG can see is that even 1000 spaces won't be enough given that is only about 10% of the commuting traffic and ENP maps do show a suggested extension for the site.

**Q13 Surely the Garden Village shouldn't even be considered unless the A40 is dual carriageway from Witney to Oxford. Ideally with a bus lane too. There is no point in adding housing or businesses if the traffic is at a standstill.**

**A:** You would think this would be blindingly obvious but unfortunately the two issues are the responsibility of two different councils (three as we are coping with Oxford City's unmet housing need). **WODC have a statutory responsibility** to ensure that adequate land is available for housing over the next 5 years at least and to make a viable plan to meet this requirement every 15 years. **OCC do not have a statutory obligation** to keep the traffic flowing and claim not to have the money to do anything that is not a statutory requirement. You might think that national government would see this and do something about it but no, joined up thinking is not a feature of local or national government and EFSG are not in a position to resolve the matter.

**Q14 What extra medical facilities will be provided - as most of us know a 'routine' doctors appointment at present can take a waiting time of up to 3 weeks.**

**A:** This has changed significantly now we are in conversation with the Medical Centre. As a result we have added an entire section to ENP3 health Care Facilities. The situation is currently

- the Medical Centre is **not** readily able to support an extra 1000 homes in Eynsham itself
- there is a national shortage of GPs and appointment delays are a national problem
- more residents will fund more GPs (assuming there are any more GPs available)
- the Garden Village should have its own health centre (under GV rules) and not rely on Eynsham but getting funding for a new surgery in a new community of 5000 people is not as straightforward as had been assumed.

**Q15 Will all the extra children of secondary school age be able to go to Bartholomew School?**

**A:** That is the plan. The EPA, which runs Bartholomew School and 6 feeder primary schools, is currently reviewing its position but it does take a significant number of students from West Oxford at present, so there is spare capacity. Ultimately the school may have to expand and it is almost at the limit of its current site so there are potential issues which are not fully resolved. The ENP identifies safe crossing of the A40 for students from the Garden Village as a significant issue to be addressed and suggests that the land at the end of Thornbury Road should be reserved in case an expansion of the school site is required to support the Garden Village.

**Q16 Why has Eynsham been picked as the only site for Oxford's 'unmet housing need'?**

**A:** The Oxfordshire Growth Board (made up of the leaders of all Oxfordshire's councils) are responsible for this. They set two criteria – that all sites must be over 500 houses and must be as near the city as possible. **We think these decisions are unjustified in fact** and being applied far too rigorously and are challenging them. Once these rules are applied to the letter, Eynsham is the only location left in West Oxfordshire – which is why we think the rules are flawed. If a whole community were being exported from Oxford – as was necessary during the slum clearances of old

industrial cities in the 50's, these rules make sense, but this is not the case now – see [Q2](#).

**Q17 The landscape and countryside north of the A40 is much more appealing than the flat featureless plains of the Thames Valley west of the village; don't much better opportunities exist to the west of the village?**

**A:** Our first answer ended with “... or it would have to be on land in South Leigh Parish”. Now the Barnard Gate Garden Village proposal does exactly that – we will have to see how things develop from here! See <http://bit.do/BGGVa> \*\*

**Q18 Oxfordshire has full employment and expensive housing – shouldn't the emphasis be on building new homes and new employment where it is needed, say, in the North?**

**A:** It is possible to argue that Manchester and Newcastle have excellent Universities which could spin off high-tech start-ups and an entry-level house there costs less than £100k. The alternative appears to be to build houses over the whole of the south-east.

It sounds a sensible application of 'market forces' which have actually been in play for some time. First-time buyers on a median Oxford income need to be looking to Swindon or Banbury to find an affordable house and the distance grows by the month!

But we have to be careful that the message being given to our local young people who want to set up a home of their own is not – “you will have to move to Sunderland or Manchester if you want to buy your own home – we would like you to live near us but we are not willing to have your new homes near us”.