



Residents Critique
of the
Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan
in its Strategic Context

Introduction

Situated within Oxfordshire County, West Oxfordshire District and close to Oxford City, the ENP is directly influenced by strategic proposals currently at public consultation stage and not yet fully agreed. These plans are immediately affecting Eynsham as a village and have shaped the development of the ENP policies.

As these higher level County or District strategies are taking place within Eynsham Parish, resident's comments received are very relevant to the ENP and to shaping the future of the Parish. This feedback is summarised on the following pages, not only to explain the interdependency of what is being proposed at a strategic level, but also to facilitate a joined-up vision for Eynsham within its local context over the next 15 years.

A factual summary of the strategic proposals is followed by a bullet pointed summary of Eynsham's resident's response.

Oxfordshire County – A40 Transport Strategy

Main roads such as the A40 passing Eynsham village to the north, are looked after at County level. The A40 is a major road (although it lost its official 'Trunk Road' status a few years back) running in an east-west direction connecting London to Fishguard in Wales, via Gloucester and Oxford. In its local context, Eynsham is well connected to both Oxford and Witney via the A40 artery.

It is widely recognised that the A40 faces severe congestion at rush hour between Witney, Eynsham and Oxford with traffic queuing into and past Oxford for onward journeys. To address this congestion along the A40 into Oxford, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is planning wider infrastructure improvements as part of its Oxford Transport Strategy as well as Local Transport Plan. A separate public consultation on the proposals was held in Eynsham in December 2016.

OCC propose to build a Park and Ride (P&R) just north of Eynsham and intend to dual the A40 between Witney and Eynsham, combined with a bus lane from the new Eynsham P&R westbound only towards Oxford stopping short at the Duke's Cut canal bridge. OCC are seeking funding for more extensive A40 improvements at a later period, whereas the P&R and eastbound bus lane are confirmed.

Summary of resident's comments on the A40

- Call to build infrastructure first before any development is going forward is strongly expressed within the community. 3,200 homes cannot be built within the Parish all depending on the A40 without improving transport infrastructure links first. This does not necessarily mean improving / dualling the A40 or otherwise. Alternative thoughts on rail / bus links are offered (see point 3.) whilst appreciating the difficulty with funding.
- The question arises if OCC's Transport Strategy has taken account of the additional traffic generated by the 3,200 homes proposed in Eynsham, as well as the developments that are coming forward in and around Witney and Carterton.
- OCC's plans for the A40 remain unsupported by the community and are considered unsustainable in the long term as they do not consider the increased amount of users generated by new developments.
- The capacity of the P&R seems to be too low in the light of projected housing numbers.
- The bus lane running westbound only seems illogical and not an improvement to travel times into Oxford and should include bus lanes returning from Oxford and the east.
- The proposed location of the P&R in the proximity of Eynsham is expected to cause more problems for Eynsham due to uncontrolled parking at the entrances to the A40 and near the bus stops, in

addition to parking in the village centre and surrounding streets, including the bus lay-by outside the secondary school.

Oxford City – Housing Strategy and Oxford City’s Unmet Housing Need (OUHN)

Oxford City is facing an enormous challenge to deliver new homes to meet the City’s identified housing need. Oxford City Council’s Housing Strategy 2015-2018 sets out what the Council and its partners are planning to do to overcome the key issues for housing and help deliver the ‘The Housing Offer’ to the people of Oxford.

To find out how many homes are needed in Oxford, an independent study called ‘Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment’ (SHMA) was commissioned by the Oxfordshire Growth Board in 2014 and objectively assessed the housing need for each of the 5 Oxfordshire districts, including Oxford City. The number of homes to be delivered in Oxford by 2031 is 28,000. This number cannot be achieved solely within Oxford due to its tight administrative boundary and the surrounding Green Belt. Of the 28,000 homes, Oxford City can accommodate 13,000.

Under a legal duty to cooperate on planning issues, including the task of finding suitable sites, the remainder of 15,000 homes (called Oxford City’s Unmet Housing Need (OUHN)), have to be accommodated in the surrounding 5 Oxfordshire District Councils as follows:

Cherwell	4400
Oxford City	550
South Oxfordshire	4950
Vale of the White Horse	2200
West Oxfordshire (WODC)	2750
Total	14,850

Eynsham is identified as a prime location for new development and meeting the entire WODC share of 2,750 homes. This was agreed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board on 26.09.2016 (refer to section below).

Resident's comments are primarily related to the Garden Village later in this document.

West Oxfordshire District – West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

On top of meeting their legal duty to allocate OUHN 2,750 homes, WODC also have to deliver homes for its own local need, currently at 450 homes, equalling to a total of 3,200 homes.

To find suitable sites for OUHN, the SHMA looked at sites around West Oxfordshire that fulfilled site search criteria with regards to distance and size (sites that could take more than 500 homes were considered only). The result was that the location that was the best (only possible) fit in WODC is Eynsham.

WODC accepted the findings of the SHMA and are therefore looking to locate all 2,750 homes around Eynsham. They consider that the best way of providing most (2,200) of these homes is to create a completely new settlement in a Garden Village (details below). WODC also aim to allocate 550 homes in the proposed western extension of Eynsham already considered in the ENP policy section. However, as the WODC Local Plan 2031 is not adopted at the time of writing this Plan, the housing allocation for Eynsham is not fully confirmed.

In the absence of an adopted Local Plan, there are a number of housing developments coming forward within Eynsham, on unallocated windfall sites, that developers are promoting outside the Local Plan’s allocation process. Sites have been recently approved such as at Land West of Thornbury Road (160 dwellings), Eynsham Nursery (77 dwellings) and The Gables at Newland Street (13 dwellings), the latter two on Appeal. The total housing provided by these now approved developments is 250 homes. Only the 160 homes at Thornbury Road count towards WODC’s Local Plan 2031 housing total while the others contribute

to establishing a current five year land supply.

Resident's comments are primarily related to development locations in the local area - noted later in this document.

The Expression of Interest for the 'Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village' (OCGV) within Eynsham Parish

West Oxfordshire District Council submitted an expression of interest in response to the Government's Locally-Led Garden Village initiative. The Government announced its support for "Oxfordshire Cotswold Garden Village" (OCGV). to be built on countryside to the north of Eynsham. in January 2017. Over a development site of approximately 320ha (791 acres), the number of housing being delivered up to 2031 is 2,200 homes.

This forms a key element of the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan and meeting the identified strategic housing and economic needs, as well as making a major contribution to jobs in a high quality living environment. It will also unlock funds to improve infrastructure and make the case for improvements to local transport links, including upgrades to the A40.

Whilst located just north of Eynsham the proposed Garden Village is planned to be a new stand-alone settlement, self contained with its own village facilities, such as schools, healthcare, community resources and employment opportunities. It will take account of environmental considerations and planned infrastructure improvements. A science park is planned to make the connection with Oxfordshire's knowledge spine.

Summary of resident's comments on the Garden Village

- The wish to call the proposed Garden Village settlement 'Tilgarsley' Garden Village is noted.
- Garden Village principles are generally very welcomed and thought to be a good opportunity for a high standard development, in addition to bringing its own infrastructure. However, concern is raised with regards to true separation and independence from Eynsham.
- A definition of what constitutes separation is necessary. The A40 alone is not considered sufficient separation between two stand-alone settlements. A landscape buffer and/or woodland belt is also considered ineffective as this is only visual (if that) and a token physical separation. A larger tract of land in the form of countryside / Country Park is considered more appropriate and would genuinely nurture a separate identity of OCGV.
- The total housing number needs to be limited for disproportionate future growth in this area.
- Transport from Witney to Oxford has to be resolved before large scale development takes place.
- Extensive community engagement in the plans going forward for the Garden Village is expected.
- Provision for social housing as well as affordable housing within the Garden Village needs to be made. This is not only for OUHN but also for people in the locality.
- It only recently came to light during public consultation, that the organic City Farm which is part of the Garden Village site has more biodiversity than any other farmland in West Oxfordshire, as well as, European recognition for arable wildflowers. This land should be protected from development.
- The danger of urban sprawl if two GVs go ahead as well as development on the west, is felt keenly by residents. They fear that this will open the door to continuous development in the future between the Oxford Green Belt and Witney.

Barnard Gate Garden Village in South Leigh Parish

Gladman Developments Ltd recently (Dec. 2016) published proposals for a 2,000-home Garden Village on land off the A40 north of South Leigh, called Barnard Gate Garden Village. A small proportion of this site is within Eynsham Parish. The vision contains all the same features as the Garden Village north of Eynsham, including a Park and Ride and Science Park. Gladman have put this Garden Village forward as an alternative to Oxfordshire Cotswold Garden Village.

The submission of the vision document to WODC comes before the adoption of the Local Plan and seeks the opportunity to help deliver on the strategic housing need.

The ENP has noted this settlement as a potential alternative to the Oxfordshire Cotswold Garden Village and consequently presents two scenarios for the development of the land north of the A40 in ENP16: If the Barnard Gate Garden Village is favoured over the one to the north of Eynsham, a smaller site north of Eynsham is proposed to be developed as an integrated expansion of Eynsham.

Summary of resident's comments on alternative locations for development.

- Most prominent alternative site for delivering on the strategic housing need is the Barnard Gate Garden Village Vision submitted by Gladman Developments Ltd. in January 2017. Reasons given include a more complete location separation from all surrounding villages, less attractive landscape and the likelihood of less biodiversity loss than at City Farm.
- A full concise study on alternative sites considered within West Oxfordshire District and Oxford City should be made public for comment.
- Brownfield sites are suggested to be regenerated for development, not only within Eynsham Parish but also within Oxford City to reduce the apportionment for WODC's housing number. There is a strong wish that WODC should continue to seek opportunities for alternative sites.

Eynsham's response towards connected, integrated strategies

The planned allocation of 3,200 homes to both the west and north of Eynsham, either separate or integrated, has created most concern to the community of Eynsham with regards to infrastructure, employment, and preservation of Eynsham as a relatively compact village with a strong sense of community. However, the community is not opposed to larger expansions and sees potential benefit in infrastructure improvements, and bringing in business, as long as the scale of developments in and around Eynsham are proportionate to the size of existing settlements within West Oxfordshire District.

The people of Eynsham welcome growth in a structured, co-ordinated way to enhance the current vibrant community on all levels (e.g., sustainable housing and infrastructure, connectivity that is less reliant on the car, restrictive parking, health and education provision, mixed housing (including social housing), green spaces, community spaces, local employment). They have concerns about the disproportionate growth of housing in Eynsham Parish in relation to size of Eynsham and the neighbouring villages north of the parish.

There are two factors at play. First, this growth, which includes other developments in West Oxfordshire, puts an unsustainable strain on the A40 from Witney to Oxford which is already at breaking point during rush hours. They fear that the current lack of joined up, visionary, long-term thinking by Local Planning Authorities, will create a transport crisis for the whole of West Oxfordshire and result in huge negative outcomes for our community. The A40 at Eynsham is vital for local employment opportunities and is also the gateway to the Cotswolds. Residents do not think OCC's current and future plans for the A40 improvements are likely to work.

Second, the proposed Oxfordshire Cotswold Garden Village location is not seen by the community as

entirely stand-alone because the separation from Eynsham is physically too small. Related to this, they recommend that a full concise study on alternative sites considered within West Oxfordshire District and Oxford City should be made public for comment. Brownfield sites are suggested to be regenerated for development, not only within Eynsham Parish, but also within Oxford City to reduce the apportionment for WODC's housing number. There is a strong wish that WODC should continue to seek opportunities for alternative sites. The danger of urban sprawl if two Garden Villages go ahead, as well as development on the west, is felt keenly by residents. They fear that this will open the door to continuous development in the future between the Oxford Green Belt and Witney.

They pose the question, "Why don't Local Planning Authorities work together and with local communities to develop a future-oriented, state of the art, sustainable and joined up development plan for West Oxfordshire?"

Summary of resident's comments on locations for development within Eynsham Parish.

- A preference of northern development over western expansion of Eynsham is mostly expressed.
- Larger separate development to the north as a Garden Village and limiting an integrated western expansion is largely seen as a better option to the point that it would be better to allocate the entire strategic housing need within the Garden Village in order to exclude expansion to the west.
- At the same time, it is noted that the landscape and countryside to the north is more valued than the flat plains of the Thames Valley to west and therefore a western development is considered to be a better option.
- Developments planned to come forward to both west and north are received with alarm.
- The already approved development sites to the west of Eynsham need to be integrated with a possible western expansion of Eynsham with regards to road infrastructure to avoid more traffic through the village.
- There is a strong demand for Eynsham to remain a place that can be accessed by foot, cycle or motorised buggy, as well as creating cycle paths with surrounding settlements.

Proposed employment area, generally referred to as a Science Park.

Part of the Garden Village project is an employment area with a general agreement that it should be a campus-style Science Park, rather than a Retail or Warehouse Park, offering a mix of job types with buildings in keeping with a countryside location.

Summary of resident's comments on a Science Park.

- The support / opposition to the proposed Science Park is ambiguous and more evidence for its need should be validated by WODC.
- There is concern that whilst creating more jobs, the Science Park would increase the housing need over and above OUHN and additional housing would be needed to accommodate employees.
- Consideration could be given to develop a smaller Science Park on the Southern Industrial Estate in Eynsham to avoid building on greenfield.

Other ideas and wishes expressed for transport links to the Garden Village

- Rail link (tunnel, electric train, tram or otherwise) running from P&R to Hanborough Station, linking with Oxford Parkway would be welcomed.
- Dualling and diverting the A40, although this is inconclusive as there is concern that in time the dualled A40 be at capacity in the near future.