

eynsham futures

INITIAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS AUGUST 2015

In March, 2015, Eynsham Parish Council and the newly formed Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group of volunteers invited Eynsham residents to be part of developing the Plan. This was done by sending out a leaflet to every household and business in the Parish explaining what the Plan was about and inviting people to say what they like and dislike about Eynsham and what they would like to change. Written comments could be posted at a number of boxes positioned in public places around the village and everyone was invited to come to a workshop-style Launch at Eynsham village hall. So on Friday afternoon and evening, March 20th and all day Saturday, March 21st, residents came and shared their views at small conversation tables, created a collage and contributed to a Wall of post-it stickers of Likes, Dislikes and Big Ideas that, by the end of the event, extended around the whole room.



The Steering Group deliberately designed a very informal engagement day, so that everyone would feel that they could have their say in a friendly and non-threatening environment and in a way that suited them. It was the job of the volunteers on the conversation tables to ask open questions and help people to talk about and then write their ideas briefly on the post-it notes and not seek to influence or direct them in any way. The one thing we did do was put lots of colourful photos, maps, drawings of Eynsham and surrounds and few prompt questions around the room to help people get their conversations started. A free tea, provided by the Parish Council, was beautifully served by members of the Country Market.



The day was a huge success with 186 residents attending. Some said as they left that they had really enjoyed the event; “fantastic”, “up-lifting”, “a real buzz” and “full of energy” were oft repeated words. A number mentioned that they felt that their views had been really heard. We

therefore ran similar, but smaller events over the summer at the Eynsham Community Day where 85 people came to our stall and at the Carnival where 127 came to have their say.



At the Primary School, we left on display, for two weeks, flipchart paper, post-it notes and pens, again inviting people to add their likes, dislikes and big ideas. The Eynsham Brownies contributed too at one of their meetings. A display the Library window showed the process we were using.

In total, over 400 people who had their say, produced 1,747 post-it note responses at the events (including the responses in the 64 returned householder questionnaires). A visual collage and responses in 70 returned history and heritage questionnaires added more views.

Theming (i.e., putting like things with like) began at the Launch to give residents the opportunity to contribute to the theme development. Then over the summer, the Eynsham Future volunteer team typed up every single response and continued theming the results. The aim of this analysis was to capture and re-present people's views faithfully in the themes. The team took huge measures to ensure that their own interpretations and ideas did not distort what people had actually written. To do this, we constantly checked out with other members of the team that we were staying true to what people had written. This took a long time, but using this checking process increases the trustworthiness and credibility of the themes that we present here. You can check out for yourself if we have put your words into a theme or themes that feels right to you. If we haven't, let us know please and we will put it where it is right. These documents with your words are on the Eynsham Futures site – <http://eynshamfutures.org.uk/> Moreover, you will be able to see everyone's actual views and suggestions in these documents.



FINDINGS

The findings fall into seven areas: Housing; Transport and Infrastructure; Environment, Green Issues and Sustainability; Health and Families; Education; Business; History and Heritage.

HOUSING

Five key areas were mentioned by Eynsham residents: Need for all kinds of new housing and industrial facilities; Don't spoil Eynsham's character versus adding value; Eynsham's infrastructure can't cope; Suggestions for development sites and; Design.¹

Need for all kinds of new housing and industrial facilities

Residents are aware of the need to build genuinely affordable and a wider range of housing, from starter homes, social housing for essential workers in the village, life-time homes for



families and housing for retired and older people. People consider that a range of facilities for retired people is required to enable them to downsize and free up larger houses for big families. Facilities include smaller homes and small blocks of retirement housing. Suggestions for older people are bungalows, sheltered housing and, so that they can move more easily into residential care if necessary, owned units in grounds of a residential home. Community or co-housing schemes which allow privacy, but also sharing of facilities should be

considered. Plots should be made available to self-builders and travellers.

Don't spoil Eynsham's character versus adding value

Residents advise that any housing permissions should add value to the community and that expanding industry in the village has huge potential of work for young people and opportunities for living near workplaces. However, there is a concern that too much development, with an expanding sprawl of houses and galloping urbanisation will destroy Eynsham's character. People feel that there has already been over-intensive development of restricted space in the village resulting in high density, cramped housing. It is considered that if housing was less commercially driven, then density and quality could be better controlled. In addition, people do not want large estates of cheaply designed houses that are expensive to buy.

Eynsham's infrastructure can't cope

Residents state that new housing needs infrastructure, but they are concerned about this provision based on their experience of recent developments. They say that there are new housing plans in place without thought for infrastructure and that planning applications continue to be made without considering infrastructure. There are strong views that Eynsham cannot cope with any more development until the necessary infrastructure is put into place. This is associated with roads, congestion, parking, drainage, sewage, school and health facilities and village amenities.

Suggestions for development sites – *Please note, these are resident suggestions only. Everyone in Eynsham will have the opportunity to decide which options for development sites will be put forward to the WODC in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan.*

¹ This link will show you what people said about housing design:
http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/documents/housing_design_theming_final.pdf

Residents suggested that new housing development location **could**: use up sites within the village envelope before permitting expansion; be on greenfield sites to the west of the village although some people do not want new houses on open green land; along the Stanton Harcourt road and a bit further down Chilbridge Lane; on brownfield sites as infill by relocating the primary school and freeing up the site for down-sizing and retirement homes or using redundant buildings on the industrial estate or; providing mixed housing/starter business units. New housing to the west should be managed to maintain a rural aspect, for example, residents do not want housing on the Fruitlands wood site.

Design

Building design: Whatever the building, residents consider that it should be good quality (unlike the poor quality and standard, according to one resident, of his/her recent new build in Eynsham). It should also be affordable, eco-friendly and low/zero carbon and preferably use local materials and with stone predominating. Regarding building styles, creative post-modern styles and not boring repetitions of the past are suggested. On the other hand, it is advised the any development reflects the village style.

Village design: Residents want to retain the large village feel of Eynsham (see Environment section) and its integrity, i.e., they do not want it split by the A40. They would like mixed size developments with lots of green space around them, more small housing developments and a central space for a park-like green square. Good examples of both mixed and small are the recent developments of the old Vicarage site and Merton Close which is an affordable, small scale development built on a "village green" design, [built on a Rural Exception Site for local people²]. Also mentioned by residents is the juxtaposition of different spaces and things in interesting ways, for example, small-scale, "clean" industry and historical buildings. Competing priorities for village services are noted, for example, "A rest home before a new school?" Particular types of housing development are not favoured, for instance, rental property expansion and gated communities.

Suggestions are made for whole village design include developing design codes for new housing and new housing plots and for expansion of the conservation area to limit the impact of any development on the spirit and atmosphere of Eynsham.

TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Five themes emerged: Road congestion; Road developments; Public transport; Car parking; Cyclists and pedestrians. Residents made many suggestions and comments on these areas.³

Road Congestion

Congestion is a problem through the centre of Eynsham during "rush hours" and occasionally during the day. Central village congestion is caused by "rat run" traffic interacting with village traffic and parked vehicles. Morning congestion from the toll bridge causes delays on the toll bridge roundabout. A40 congestion can also feedback into the village.



Problems and questions identified by residents are: Traffic flow/delays over Toll Bridge in rush hours, exhaust fumes, pollution (x 16); Traffic jams through village, Acre End Street etc (x 9); Too many cars at night; (Too much) Traffic (x 9); Village being used as "Rat Run"; Large vehicles in village centre, Weight Limit through village not policed (x 10); Buses arrive together and cause jam; Spareacre Lane, too much traffic; Co-op lorries in Church st parking in front

² Bracketed explanatory note by Eynsham Futures team

³ This link will show you what people said about transport and infrastructure:
http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/documents/infrastructure_theming_final.pdf

of windows in church; Stock Co-op by drone?; Stop large Spar lorry delivering during school run, blocks pavement and makes junction dangerous; Air Quality - Exhaust fumes in rush hour and; Traffic/noise/congestion on A40 (x 3).



Road developments

With the layout of central Eynsham unable to handle more traffic at peak times, future housing developments need to result in improvements to the free flow of traffic and reduced volume in the village.

Problems areas identified by residents are: Western ring road required before any more development; A40 congestion; Cassington Road; Clover Place; Traffic calming in Oxford Road; Co-op crossing; Bus delays; Traffic calming and; Road maintenance – pot holes, dirty streets, gutters never cleaned.

Public Transport

Eynsham benefits from an excellent bus service to Oxford via Botley Road, but service via Woodstock Road is often delayed due to congestion at Woodstock Road Roundabout. Buses to JR and Long Harborough Station, although welcome, offer poor service. Introduction of Eynsham Park and Ride/Rapid Transit Hub will bring changes, yet to be quantified.

Problems areas identified by residents are: Bus improvement; Bus route 18 - not down Queens St (x2), keep it (x1); Bus route 7; Bus stops; Too many buses down Clover Place; No railway to Eynsham; Trams; Water bus and; Car sharing (x7).

Car Parking

Parking in central Eynsham is seen as a problem by residents because it causes congestion and obstruction of pavements and kerbs. Residents are unable to park close to their homes and shoppers cannot park close to shops. Also when the Clover Place car park is full disabled patients cannot park close to surgery. Part of the problem is caused by commuters, some work in Eynsham and some catch buses to Oxford.



Problems and questions identified by residents are: Inconsiderate parking, mainly in Acre End St, the Square and Oxford Road, blocking roads, driveways and pedestrian routes, a major problem for disabled, causing congestion, and problems for households without drive (x 28); Where should cars park?; Primary school access/parking needs improving; Parking near Primary School; People using Eynsham as Park and Ride (x17) and; Parking in John Lopes Road blocking residents' houses.

Cyclists and Pedestrians

As residents get older, the condition of the pavements becomes more important. Lack of maintenance has resulted in many uneven surfaces. Although there is a good cycle path to north Oxford, there is no path along the A4449 to Botley. The Bus lane along the A40 proposed by OCC will be in place of one cycle path.

Problems areas identified by residents are: Cycle routes; Uneven pavements – dangerous for pedestrians, especially with impaired vision and electric buggies (x14); Dips for wheelchair users sometimes too steep/difficult camber and can buckle footplates; Not enough Zebra Crossings; Lack of pavement in Church Street; Hedges need to be cut to keep paths clear.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN ISSUES INCLUDING SUSTAINABILITY

Three themes emerged: Social environment; Natural environment; and Environmentally friendly future.⁴

Social environment

Residents highly prize the supportive community spirit and sense of real community in Eynsham, as well as the friendliness of the people. They also like the good social mix and appreciate the wealth of activities and community facilities the village has to offer, like exercise classes, a gym, coffee groups, clubs and societies. Some new activities and facilities are suggested, for example, a swimming pool, tennis courts, an arts space, a therapeutic community, more volunteering, a museum and more restaurants. However, there is a concern that facilities and amenities are being overstretched by the new housing developments. Young people like the primary and high school. Many people like the village atmosphere and feel that people care for, talk to and notice each other. They love Eynsham's traditional events. The size and compact layout of the village plays a part in creating and sustaining Eynsham's social environment. Suggestions are made concerning social links with nearby villages and virtual linking within Eynsham and with nearby towns. Fears about antisocial behaviour occasionally surface.

Natural environment



Residents value the beauty of the natural environment, the rural feel and green, open spaces and footpaths in the village and connection with, and easy access to, nearby fields, woodlands, streams and the river Thames. They enjoy walking and cycling in the surrounding countryside and want to see eco-friendly footpaths and cycle paths maintained and improved in new development to encourage more and safer walking and cycling and well-being. But there is a concern that green space in the village is disappearing quickly and people want all these things and particular areas protected, like the Fishponds and the Fruitlands wood, as well as views of the surrounding countryside protected. They want nature in the village further

encouraged by, for example, allocating space for a park, planting hedges and trees to preserve, maintain and increase wildlife like birds and wild flowers. People also feel that new development should provide more natural, open spaces, support wildlife in the village itself and maintain green connections between these spaces and the countryside. Community projects are also mentioned as a way of maintaining, for example, dry-stone walls. People want the arrival points into, and edges of, the village to remain rural and defined.

Environmentally friendly future

Residents suggest that, in the future, Eynsham requires better energy conservation and a sustainable, affordable low carbon transport system. Aware of the need to respond to climate change, people suggest energy efficient housing and street lighting and a reduced number of

⁴ This document will show you what people said:

http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/documents/environment_green_issues_theming_final.doc

cars per household. They draw attention to the air and noise pollution caused by car fumes from road congestion during the rush hour in the centre of the village, on the Toll Bridge and A40. To promote future greener living, in relation to local food production (thus reducing road transportation of fresh food), suggestions are made to use the rural edges of the village for co-operative allotments, a community-owned farm producing food for local people and a local food café. Suggestions for greener living in relation to transport include a reduction of car journeys and instead walking and cycling, providing attractive bus shelters and looking at “books at bus stops” idea, a tramline, using the river Thames and bringing back the railway. Sustainable village design is seen as important in relation to, for example, eco-building, flood prevention, expansion of the conservation area, industry providing work opportunities near home, a community solar farm, biomass production and making Eynsham a small market “town”. There is a desire for a new cemetery and a preference for a natural burial site where woodland & wild flower meadows are planted instead of memorials.

Many people are unhappy with the amount of littering or fly tipping and measures are suggested, such as, more recycling bins & surveillance cameras in the car park and a screen fencing off the bins. Messy areas and especially dog fouling (60 comments) are mentioned, as well as light and noise pollution and possible solutions are suggested.

Proposed gravel extraction poses challenges and a resident suggestion is made to allow extraction, but with provisos, for example, a buffer zone and provision of natural wildlife corridors.

HEALTH AND FAMILIES

There are three themes concerning health: Outlets, activities and facilities for young people; Healthy living & leisure; and The Health Centre.⁵



Outlets, activities and facilities for young people

Residents are concerned that children and young people are engaging in unhealthy and undesirable social behaviours, such as smoking, causing nuisance and dealing in drugs at lunchtime. It is considered that they need safer, more engaging outlets and activities, as well as suitable facilities. Suggestions include positive outlets for teenage energy and creativity, an increase in the size of the skate park, a new large park and playground and a swimming pool.

Healthy living & leisure

People associate healthy living with sport and recreation, working allotments, having local, healthy food, walking and cycling and easy access to all these things. A lack of sports fields for girls was noted. There was support for the building of new leisure facilities including a swimming pool, spa and tennis courts, as well as more places, like a craft group for disabled people to go. Residents want

more allotments on both sides of the village and local, healthy food. The health benefits of getting out of the car and walking and cycling are reflected in the many suggestions made by residents for maintaining and improving footpaths and cycle paths (see Environment theme). The health risks of dog fouling are recognised by Eynsham residents.

Safe spaces for people with learning difficulties are needed in the village and disabled access along our pavements and walkways needs attention. For example a resident reports that “dips in the kerbs for wheelchair users are sometimes too steep and can buckle the footplates. Also

⁵ This link will show you what people said:

http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/documents/health_families_theming_final.pdf

some are on a difficult camber". Others report difficult wheelchair, pedestrian, buggy access to Eynsham Lock. An "Adopt a Granny/Grandpa" scheme for families with problems is considered to be good for both the young and the active old.

The Health Centre

People like Eynsham's current health centre and access to excellent specialist NHS services, but they are already feeling the strain of recent development in the village. The resulting increase in population has made it harder to get a doctor's appointment and has increased the time people have to wait for it. Transport to appointments outside Eynsham is problematic for some due to traffic congestion and some appointments for Eynsham residents being made in branch surgeries. The feeling is that health care services need to increase in line with population growth and that expansion of the existing surgery, as well as an additional surgery and local branch surgeries, will be required. Changing roles for the health centre are also seen as essential, such as, more minor medical issues being attended to the Health Centre and more health care delivered in the home. In relation to Eynsham's ageing population, it is considered that medical facilities need to take account of aging population – now and for the future.

EDUCATION

There are four themes: Eynsham schools; Walking to school; Use of school facilities and; Other views.⁶

Eynsham schools

Eynsham's schools and teachers are valued by Eynsham residents. Residents are concerned, however, that the current insufficient provision of school places will be exacerbated when new houses are built. It was felt that with expansion of the village both schools, but especially the Primary School, would need to grow or be rebuilt. A second primary school is also suggested given the large size of the current school and the idea of possibly building on a new site to west near Bartholomew with developer contributions is put forward. Some people stress that local children should be given priority in allocation of school places. There are also concerns about the current provision of classrooms and mixed classes and the need for bigger classrooms.



Walking to school

Residents expressed a strong desire to promote walking to school as opposed to driving children by car, but where driving was inevitable, car parking around the primary school was mentioned as problematic.

Use of the school facilities

School playing fields are seen as necessary because sport is considered to be good and there are health benefits (see Healthy living theme above). It is questioned whether more community use of school facilities could be made, such as open work-

shops for adults learning basic skills, such as woodworking, pottery and house and car maintenance.

Other views

Other views concerned including Eynsham's future into the curriculum and supporting the new children's home (OCC Assessment Centre) given that Eynsham is a great community for children and thus a good location for a children's home.

⁶ This document will show you what people said:

http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/documents/education_theming_final.doc

BUSINESS

The WODC Local Plan identifies Eynsham as a key employment development site. Development needs to be encouraged, but planned so that the village benefits and local congestion is not made worse. Village shops, pubs and restaurants are greatly valued by Eynsham residents⁷.

Problems and questions raised by residents include: Rents for business premises are SO high. I would love to start an art studio/teaching space, but having looked into the rent cost I am totally discouraged. And so many properties remain empty (Jantys etc); Empty business properties. Develop Brownfield sites; Work for young people huge potential; Is Eynsham attractive for new businesses? What would make it more attractive? (x2); If mixed business-residential there's a risk that the ££ in housing will squeeze out industry; Encourage independent shops – not enough food providers and; Pubs/Restaurants – lack of decent pub grub.



HISTORY AND HERITAGE



The five themes in this area: Natural & historic environment; Particular buildings that enhance, or detract from, the character of the village; Valued Eynsham landscapes/views; A local exhibition centre or museum? and; Ways to ensure that new developments in Eynsham fit in with existing buildings. These themes were created differently from those above. At the Neighbourhood Plan launch in the village hall, people were invited to fill in a history and heritage questionnaire. These themes, therefore, are responses to specific questions. In contrast, all the views in the areas above were collected more openly by asking people what they liked, disliked and any big ideas they had. It can be noted that many of the same issues arose here as in the rest of the evidence collected. This duplication strengthens the credibility of our evidence⁸.

Natural & Historic Environment

The historic character of the village is important to residents and in particular the sympathetically preserved historic core with characteristic stone walls. People feel that the historic environment enhances a feeling of continuity in the community. The special quality of the centre is greatly valued and people want it enhanced and protected. People enjoy Eynsham's historic associations, especially the site of the abbey and its fishponds and enjoy the village's history and traditions – particularly the Eynsham Morris. The mix of old & new that has grown up over the years is much appreciated. They value the easy access via good

⁷ This link will show you what people said about business:
http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/documents/business_theming_final.pdf

⁸ This link will show you what people said about history and heritage:
http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/documents/history_theming_final.pdf

footpaths to attractive countryside and the river for nice walks. People appreciate the natural heritage of the village's green spaces and trees – Millennium Wood, Fish Ponds, Fruitlands. Village information boards are appreciated and, in relation to our tree heritage, it is suggested that a trail around the very old trees in Eynsham could be created.

Particular buildings that enhance, or detract from, the character of the village

The old historic buildings in Eynsham's centre/Conservation Area are valued by residents. The Church & all the buildings around the Market Square and the buildings in Newland Street are mentioned the most. People approve of the recent conversions/renovations of the old buildings such as the Vicarage and 2 Barns sites and enjoy many of the collections of houses in the streets in the Conservation Area. On top of the list of places that people find unattractive are the SPAR area and the Mill Street Block of shops and flats including the Post Office. Design densities and standards on new build estates are also frequently criticized and it is recommended that there should be greater provision of open space in future. The traffic problems reported above also detract from the conservation area. Possible planning issues are highlighted with great support for conservation measures such as reduction car parking in the Square and replacement with grass, as well as sympathetic design for any new builds such as those at Abbey Farm, near the Fishponds, and in the Vicarage garden.

Valued Eynsham landscapes/views

Residents are attached to and enjoy Eynsham's surrounding rural landscapes. They enjoy a range of views. Most popular is the landscape to the south– the Fishponds and the former Abbey site, closely followed by (and complementary to the former) the view from the churchyard of Wytham Hill. Many people also love the area to the west & southwest around Chilbridge Road towards Twelve Acre Farm and the area around the Thames and the Thames lock. There is a strong sense of the need to give protected status to some of the best loved/used rural areas around Eynsham.



A local exhibition centre or museum?

There is strong support for the idea of an Eynsham Museum. There are 65 in favour (including 8 from post-it stickers on the Big Idea wall), 8 against and 2 maybe (e.g. Temporary exhibitions). A Big Idea includes a 'virtual museum'.

Ways to ensure that new developments in Eynsham fit in with existing buildings

There is a strong consensus that new developments should be designed to blend or complement the existing older buildings, in the historic centre in particular. They should be sympathetic with traditional building styles – most people favour traditional building styles/materials to mirror the old historic houses. Unsympathetic building styles that residents hope can be avoided in future are the 60s, and 70s styles which grate badly with the historic core of the village. They recommend that new developments need to bridge the gap and adhere to high standards of design irrespective of style.

Compiled by Angie Titchen for the Eynsham Futures Task Groups (particularly Richard Andrews, Jane Baldwin, Eleanor Chance, Sue Chapman, Les Day, Richard Higgins, Posy Parrinder, Steve Parrinder, George Smith, Jane Thompson and Sharon Williams).

Thanks too to Lucy Dickinson for member checking early themes, also to the Eynsham Village Hall and Carnival committees for letting us have accommodation free of charge for our events; to Siemens for lending us their flipchart stands and other equipment for the Launch and; Eynsham Library for giving us space for our display.

31st August 2015