

Briefing Note

Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village

Current Status

The Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village was announced as part of the Government's Garden Village programme in January 2017. This followed an Expression of Interest submitted by West Oxfordshire in July 2016.

West Oxfordshire published changes to its emerging Local Plan to take forward the Garden Village in November 2016. An independent Planning Inspector is currently considering this proposal through the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Examination (EiP). He will consider all of the representations that have been made on the Garden Village proposal.

The Oxfordshire Garden Village concept is at a relatively early stage and no planning application has yet been submitted.

Key to the deliverability of the Garden Village is the positive progress to assemble land in this location. The seven landowners who have control over the area, including Corpus Christi College and Oxfordshire County Council, have formed a Consortium and appointed Grosvenor Developments Ltd (Grosvenor) to promote the site and bring forward a planning application once the allocation is crystallised.

In preparation for the EiP stage, Grosvenor has advanced technical and capacity assessments in order to demonstrate deliverability in key areas such as transport, heritage, ecology and landscape.

In advance of and in preparation for the planning application, Grosvenor and the Landowners will engage extensively with the local communities and stakeholders to develop key design and development principles before the masterplanning process begins.

West Oxfordshire will continue to work closely the local community, the landowners and Grosvenor to develop the Garden Village concept further, including the refinement of the long term vision beyond 2031. If the Garden Village proceeds, then the first houses would be completed in 2021.

Response to Questions Raised at Public Meeting

Question 1 - What is happening to David Einig Contracting site and the associated HGV traffic?

There is no need for David Einig Contractors to relocate for the short to medium term at least. The first phases of the Garden Village site are not likely to be adjacent to the David Einig site and the Garden Village site is a large site. Current site capacity work indicates that housing and employment numbers can be accommodated without encroachment onto the David Einig site, therefore the allocation is deliverable with the recycling centre remaining operational and unaffected by

development, as long as appropriate design measures are put in place. The future master plan for the Garden Village can look at the long term issues in detail.

WODC will meet David Einig to discuss these issues in the context of the recent planning approval to expand their operation.

At the same time, the landowners are continuing dialogue with Mr Einig to provide reassurance on the opportunities for co-existence and engagement on technical, environmental and design matters at design stage.

Question 2 - Why did the Expression of Interest not recognise

1. The Grade II listed buildings on City Farm

2. The Flood Zone 3 area

3. The European Importance for Arable Plants area, and

4. The Tilgarsley Village archaeological site and the Roman Salt Road both of which are recognised by OCC. These four matters were skated over on the night by the statement that the plan was only indicative.

The Expression of Interest was a bid to Government seeking Garden Village status for the proposed Garden Village. The Garden Village will need to go through the formal Local Plan process and a planning application process before development can start. The Local Plan is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal which assesses a wide range of possible environment impacts, and the future planning application will be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment which will identify key areas for detailed assessment, where there is a need for bespoke design approach and, if necessary, mitigations.

WODC has access to records of all listed buildings in the District and OCC holds detailed information on archaeology. There are strong national and local policies to protect heritage assets. These will need to be followed as the future master plan is developed. However the Garden Village site is a large site and it can be planned in an appropriate way while safeguarding important assets. Policy EH7 of the Draft Local Plan provides that "All development proposals should conserve or enhance the special character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire's historic environment, and preserve or enhance the District's heritage assets, and their significance and settings."

Only a small part of the site is in Flood Zone 3, the vast majority of the site is not affected (see attached map). National planning policies on managing flood risk will need to be complied with, and West Oxfordshire District Council will work closely with the Environment Agency, relevant stakeholders and Grosvenor on these issues.

Parts of the site have been recognised as important for arable plants. National planning policy aims at minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity. The Government encourages Councils to take opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around development.

These issues will need to be carefully considered as the design concept and the master plan are developed, with biodiversity and mitigation measures as appropriate.

Recognising the Tilgarsley Village archaeological site and Roman Salt Road, Draft Local Plan Policy EW1a outlines the requirement for archaeological considerations to be investigated and taken into account in the design of development. This is likely to require mapping and monitoring as part of any further policy development and planning application (including conditions attached to any permission). This will further help the understanding of the site.

Question 3 - The A40 questions were asked but between OCC & WODC were never answered and this has only been reinforced by matters raised at the Local Plan sessions.

Congestion on the A40 between Witney and Oxford is among Oxfordshire's most severe transport problems. Oxfordshire County Council has developed a package of measures to address this. Improvements have already been made to Wolvercote and Cutteslowe roundabouts.

The County Council has secured funding for a new Park and Ride on the Garden Village site, together with bus priority including an eastbound bus lane. A public consultation was held between the 1 December 2016 and the 12 of January 2017. Further technical work is ongoing and a planning application is expected for the Park and Ride in 2018.

A proposed A40-A44 link will provide a new strategic linkage from the A40 corridor to the A34 and M40. Then, in the longer term the County Council propose a west-bound bus lane together with additional dualling of the A40 between Witney and Eynsham.

Funding will need to be identified for the longer term improvements. Strategic developments along the A40 corridor in West Oxfordshire can contribute significant funds from West Oxfordshire District Council's proposed Community Infrastructure Levy. The proposed development along the A40 corridor and around public transport hubs, such as the committed Park and Ride, also strengthens the business case for matching Government investment.

Question 4 - How will air quality be maintained?

Air quality issues will need to be considered through the future planning application which will be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment. The need for air quality monitoring and mitigation measures to maintain an appropriate level of air quality will be considered as part of these processes. The promotion of effective public transport and opportunities for walking and cycling will reduce reliance on private motor vehicles for travel, and this will complement the improvements in emissions predicted from the use of alternative fuels/ technologies in vehicles.

The A40 is not a designated Air Quality Management Area, and therefore there is no evidence that national air quality objectives cannot be achieved along the route.

Question 5 - How will WODC ensure exemplar design standards opposed to the developer led dormitory solutions? Will a design competition be considered?

WODC's ambition for the Garden Village is for a high quality, distinctive, imaginative design with an integrated approach to sustainability. As part of the Government's Garden Village programme it is expected to meet Garden Village principles. The approach required is set out in the Expression of Interest and in the proposed West Oxfordshire Local Plan.

A 40 hectare Science/ Business park is a key part of the proposed Garden Village. It will deliver significant new employment opportunities for West Oxfordshire residents.

WODC will work closely with Grosvenor, as the appointed promoter and master developer, to make sure this ambition is translated into reality. Grosvenor has a strong track record in planning, designing and delivering places through good masterplanning and a thorough process of stakeholder and community engagement. Grosvenor's current projects include new sustainable communities at Barton Park in Oxford and Trumpington Meadows in Cambridge.

Mechanisms ensuring high quality for the development will be established early on in the process, through design parameters and principles, with a Design Code as a means of controlling quality throughout, from planning to implementation.

The potential to use design competitions as part of the overall design process to test the master plan concept will be considered, in consultation with the local community and the Parish Council.

Question 6 - What robust evidence is there for the unmet housing need? I think again this has been challenged during the last two weeks.

Government policy calls for a significant boost in the supply of housing across the country. This is in recognition of the long running under-delivery of houses, and issues of housing affordability which are seen to be undermining the national economy.

Oxfordshire has some of the highest house prices in the Country, and housing affordability is a major local issue both for residents and for businesses. The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014) provides key evidence on housing need in Oxfordshire and underpins the preparation of Local Plans in Oxfordshire. Overall 100,000 new homes are needed between 2011 and 2031. The conclusions of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment were accepted by Planning Inspectors through the Cherwell and Vale of White Horse Local Plan Examinations.

The Growth Board decision on the apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing need (2016) recognises that not all of Oxford's housing need can be met within its own boundaries. Therefore the surrounding Districts, like West Oxfordshire, have a role to play in helping meet this need. Public bodies like West Oxfordshire District Council have a legal duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries. The West Oxfordshire Local Plan has to make provision for some of the unmet need of Oxford. The Growth Board figure of 2,750 additional homes for West Oxfordshire to help meet Oxford's needs reflects an extensive evidence base which can be seen on the Growth

Board page of Oxfordshire County Council's website, or in the Local Plan Examination Library on the West Oxfordshire website.

Question 7 - The alternative sites have not been properly assessed or the infrastructure implications considered.

Alternative options have been considered through two key processes. Firstly, reasonable alternatives have been appraised in an iterative, on-going way through the Sustainability Appraisal reports prepared alongside the Local Plan.

Secondly, the Garden Village was assessed in detail alongside 35 other Strategic Options in Oxfordshire as part of the Growth Board work programme to address Oxford City's unmet housing needs.

The Garden Village at North Eynsham scores well because of its strategic location, the committed and funded Park and Ride and A40 improvements, which will enhance the already close relationship with Oxford, and the lack of fundamental environmental constraints that cannot be resolved through sensitive design. Details of the alternative Gladman's Garden Village proposal were only formally submitted in December 2016, very late in the process. This developer/planning application led alternative proposal is not considered to be a reasonable alternative. It is further from Oxford, and doesn't relate well to existing social infrastructure and proposed transport improvements, including the committed Park and Ride.

Question 8 - New residents will depend on Eynsham services. How will they be assisted to meet demand?

A high level assessment of future infrastructure requirements is set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Framework that accompanies the Local Plan. West Oxfordshire District Council will prepare a more detailed assessment of the infrastructure needs generated by growth in the Eynsham area in order to assess how best to meet these. This will involve close liaison with existing service providers, the local community, and developers to choose the best solutions to meet the increased needs and to identify funding sources.

The future planning application will also be supported by more detailed work on infrastructure. Funding from developer contributions will expand/relocate and add to existing services where necessary and in order to mitigate any impact from the development and the new residents. This detailed infrastructure work will be approached and developed in consultation with the local community. The precise mix of future housing will be understood as master planning proceeds and this will help service providers, such as education and healthcare, plan their services effectively.

Question 9 - There were a number of questions about the buffer zone and the separation between the two settlements. Most were dismissed as the plan was only indicative. I am now slightly clearer as the Inspector has been told they will not be separate but distinct. Most residents will not know this major change of position.

There is no major change in position. The Garden Village has always been intended to be a distinct settlement in its own right. This approach is set out in the Expression of Interest. However, the plan in the Expression of Interest is indicative only. Further work will be done through the design process for the Garden Village to explore the relationship between the Garden Village and Eynsham, and how we can ensure that they have separate identities.

There is an opportunity to build a new sustainable community of a scale and nature that supports its own community and physical infrastructure, without being a burden on the existing village. This doesn't mean that it should not be integrated with the existing community or fail to complement the services and amenities already provided in the existing settlement. Architecturally and in design terms, the new village should have regard to the existing village and be respectful of the local rural setting, while maintaining a distinctive nature. It should not try to become an extension to Eynsham itself.

The A40 already acts as a significant buffer to the north of Eynsham, but this will be supplemented by additional areas of landscaping as part of the design of the Garden Village, and one of the main challenges will be how to provide the appropriate connections across the A40.

The above are important but detailed design issues that need to be worked through after the principle of the Garden Village is determined through the EIP. They will be discussed and resolved through a thorough process of consultation with the local community that will start in earnest if the Local Plan Inspector judges that the Garden Village proposal is sound.

West Oxfordshire District Council

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