

WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2031 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

Some points that might help when responding to the WODC Consultation

The main document affecting Eynsham is the refreshed Sustainability Appraisal (SA). For the purposes of the consultation WODC have merged two documents, originally presented to Cabinet on 15 November as Agenda item 6, Appendix 3. These are a short document of 7 pages and a long document of over 450 pages. The first 7 pages of this SA Document are a Non-technical Summary of the main report.

I would not suggest that you need to read the whole of the 480 pages but I would suggest that you read all of the first 7 pages report, then take a look at Chapters 4 and 5, these refer specifically to the two sites in Eynsham, a total of 9 more pages making 16 in all.

In the main document the Sustainability of a site is judged against 16 different parameters to give a score. It is worth looking at these (Page 4/480) to help judge if these have been met by choosing the Eynsham Sites.

Looking at the first of the two sites impacting Eynsham residents the SA compares three possible sites for the proposed GV.

- The Oxford Cotswold Garden Village, The Eynsham site for a GV to the north of the A40
- Gladman Developments South Leigh Garden Village to the south of the A40
- Barnard Gate development area to the north of the A40

The Eynsham site for a GV has always been the choice of WODC, who have been given some funds by Central Government via the Department for Communities and Local Government, whilst the Gladman Barnard Gate Garden Village is a private initiative. It isn't clear where the idea for the Barnard Gate site north of the A40 comes from as there is no promoter – it may have been the invention of a previous assessment of development potential by Land Use Consultants (LUC).

The short version of the SA report confirms the choice of Eynsham for the site of the garden village. It sums up some very complex ranking, 16 individual parameters for sustainability, with a few sentences which seek to confirm that WODC had the decision right.

The SA document sums up the choice of The Eynsham site for a GV over the two alternatives thus:

- The Eynsham site for a GV is closer to Oxford than the other two sites. This is true, but only by about 1 mile
- The Eynsham site for a GV has good links to strategic transport improvements. This refers to the proposed but not yet confirmed Park & Ride (costing £37 million and providing bus lanes and parking for 500 cars @ £74k each); the funding for this is not yet confirmed by the Department of Transport. The SA fails to mention the fact that the other sites are just as close to the main line station at Hanborough as the Eynsham site for a GV.
- The Eynsham site for a GV benefits from 'In principle' support from Government but with no indication in the document what that phrase might mean.

- The support of the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP). The ENP does NOT support the GV, it just points out the features it would need to have – many of which the current Eynsham GV outline fails to meet.

The long version of the SA for The Eynsham site for a GV has been refreshed with minor changes to reflect the historic buildings and the flood risk but it ignores the noise and pollutants of David Einig's minerals re-processing site at New Wintles Farm within the GV site.

The Eynsham site for a GV is in the hands of 12 landowners; of these approximately 10 are 'signed up' to the concept and are willing to sell the land to developers, 2 or more are not which means that WODC would have to rely upon compulsory purchase to complete the project. Compulsory purchase can lead to significant delays and bring the deliverability of the project into question – a far more significant factor overall.

What is clear is that the Garden Village argument is very finely balanced between South Leigh and Eynsham, right across the 16 sustainability parameters. This does allow WODC to use its 'professional judgement' but they should not ignore critical factors not present in the SA, such as deliverability or the relationship between the existing Eynsham Village and the Eynsham Garden Village which contravenes the requirement for a GV NOT to be built onto an existing village but to be a satellite of a nearby town as the Barnard Gate GV would be to Witney.

THE SECOND AREA OF CONCERN IN THE REVISED SA CONCERNS THE EYNHAM SDA – the urban extension to the village of 1000 homes, of which 550 are to meet the Oxford City unmet need.

Three possible sites are considered in the SA document:

- Eynsham SDA 1000 houses
- Hanborough Station 900 houses
- Split site Hanborough 450 and Eynsham 550

The short version of the SA report seeks to confirm the choice by WODC of Eynsham West SDA as the site for 1000 homes regardless of the very strong evidence produced in the main report which clearly shows that the best solution is 450 houses at Hanborough and 550 houses at Eynsham. It even confirms that with fewer houses (than 1000) the spine / link/relief road between the A40 and the A4449 would not be funded and would not be required.

The report confirms that “all options are likely to have a positive effect for housing, employment and community objectives” (Page 6/480, para 15). It goes on to state that “The option for 900 homes adjacent to Hanborough station are likely to have positive effects for transport”. It also mentions that the Eynsham SDA has some Grade 3a soils so development would lead to minor negative effects compared to Long Hanborough that has no high quality soils.

Note that at Page 5/480 Para 14 the presence of Grade 3a soil creates a ‘major negative effect’ for North Barnard Gate (not a WODC supported site) but only a ‘minor negative effect’ for the same soils in (WODC preferred site) the West Eynsham SDA. Indeed, the presence of such high quality soil, mostly to the south of the Eynsham SDA re-enforces the need to follow the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) and to develop only the west of Eynsham to the north of the Chilbridge Lane.

The reasons given by WODC for choosing Eynsham alone?

- The size of the development is sufficient to fund the relief road.
- Proximity to the existing village will assist integration.

The report cites that the Eynsham option would give better integration with the existing community. The facts show a different situation, the Hanborough site is 1.54 KM from the Hanborough village centre (Co-op roundabout), the Eynsham SDA is 1.4 KM from the High Street Co-op. A difference of 104 metres.

The evidence in the long version of SA shows that Hanborough, Eynsham West and the mixed site alternative are all viable. The reasoning behind the selection of Eynsham is poor, logic points towards the split site but that means no ‘relief road’ and that appears to be the clincher for WODC – WHY?

The road itself may become a liability in all of this. About 200-250 houses would need to be built on the wrong side, South of the Chil Brook and they would bear most of the cost of the crossing (of the Chil) and may not be viable – so making the 1000 homes impossible to deliver.

SOME OTHER DETAILS TO CONSIDER:

- The landscape of the two sites at South Leigh and Barnard Gate are described as being the same yet they are completely different. This implies that the Gladman site south of A40 suffers from same de-merits as north of the A40 which is a very different area.
- Continual references to this report – Oxford Spatial Options Assessment Final Report (also known as the LUC) - which did not consider the whole Eynsham sites or Barnard Gate south of A40. The LUC data is therefore seriously flawed.
- Using data (LUC) from one part of a site to justify the whole site – applies to both the Eynsham West SDA and the Eynsham site for a GV where only bit nearest A40 was originally assessed.
- Bias - possibility of a bus to Hanborough Station from the proposed Park & Ride seems more important than building houses next to the station itself.
- Bias - the presence of soil of the very best quality (type 3a) is given as a reason for NOT developing Barnard Gate (Page 5/480, Para 14.) but there is far more soil of this quality on West Eynsham SDA which is ignored.
- Bias – where the PROPOSED Park & Ride is seen as mitigation for the Eynsham site traffic problems but the inclusion of Traffic Improvements by the Gladman development is not given the same weight (page 5/480, para 14.)
- Neighbourhood Plan falsely used to justify GV – in fact GV would fail to meet the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan requirements for transport and connectivity so should be used against rather than for GV proposal.
- Relationship between Eynsham Village and the Eynsham GV site downgraded from 'separate' to 'distinct' at the July hearings but the documents do not reflect this. This downgrading would mean that the Eynsham GV site would fail to meet DCLG Garden Village eligibility rules.
- Western Link Road from A40 to B4449 was also downgraded from 'bypass' to 'village street', designed to discourage through traffic at the last hearing in July – a promise to the Inspector that WODC seem to be back tracking on.