



EYNESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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Robert Courts MP
Witney & West Oxfordshire Constituency
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Sent by email - robert@robertcourts.co.uk

23 September

Dear Mr Courts

Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP)

It is regrettable that this letter requires drafting to raise concern that West Oxfordshire residents demand better on climate emergency policy! This letter is sent on behalf of GreenTEA (Green Transition Eynsham Area), EPIC (Eynsham Planning Improvement Campaign) with the Parish Council.

We refer you to the examination of the Salt Cross Garden Village AAP by Mr Darren McCreery MA BA (Hons) MRTPI in June/July 2021 during which arguments were presented on West Oxfordshire District Council's (WODC) Policy 2 Net Zero Carbon. In Mr McCreery's Main Modifications and Reporting response to WODC dated 26 May 2022, it is noted that, '...at this stage we are not satisfied that Policy 2 is either consistent with national policy or justified. As such, we are unable to conclude that the policy is sound. Our fuller reasoning on this matter will be set out in our report.'

On referring back to the examination recordings (General Matters and Close) Mr McCreery advises that he would raise any '...showstoppers, evidence or issues' with the Council, however this has not occurred in relation to Policy 2 that allows for any meaningful information to be gleaned. Eynsham Parish Council wrote to the Inspector on 18 July 2022 requesting that the fuller reasoning, in accordance with 6.4 of the Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations¹, is provided to enable his finding to be properly understood before the Main Modifications consultation commenced. But instead, Mr McCreery feels that by providing his reasoning would pre-empt the result of the public consultation on the Main Modifications.

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¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examining-local-plans-procedural-practice>

We are therefore left not knowing the full reasons behind the exemplar Policy 2 on Net Zero Carbon Development being considered non-compliant which doesn't allow for a transparent, proper and engaging process.

As concluded by the Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA)², it is clear that the Net Zero Carbon policy is wholeheartedly compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework at sections 148 and 149 (and more lately sections 152 to 154 of the 2021 NPPF). In striking out most of Policy 2, the Inspector has sanctioned a policy that is ineffective, something that plans should avoid.

In addition to ample evidence submitted to the Inspector, we know that the government's last Climate Change Committee report concluded that 'Current programmes will not deliver Net Zero' and a High Court judgement on the Climate Change Act ruled that proposals for achieving Net Zero approved by the Secretary of State were too vague to enable him to be satisfied that the statutory targets would be met and that the report placed before Parliament lacked the specificity necessary to meet the Secretary of State's duty to inform Parliament and the public of his plans. So large scale demonstrator projects that meet the climate challenge by delivering the required targets and provide cheap to heat, comfortable houses are urgently needed in the face of accelerating extreme weather.

Assuming the AAP is adopted with the modified Policy 2 following the Public Consultation (which is running for six weeks from 23 September), one wonders what legacy will prevail once the Garden Village is built. A legacy of energy, planning and legal experts plus communities, local authorities and Salt Cross Garden Village residents left in utter disbelief that the Planning Inspectorate got it so badly wrong? It seems extraordinary that the 'exemplar' homes will be built in such a way that will require upgrading soon after residents move in to achieve the government's target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels, as part of its sixth carbon budget, to the cost and inconvenience of all involved.

Ignoring climate change is a 'show-stopper' for Eynsham, West Oxfordshire and beyond and we ask that you intervene to help rectify these matters without delay. The District Council has now opened a public consultation on the modified plans and your input in the process would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Katherine Doughty
Clerk to the Council

² <https://tcpa.org.uk/pins-assault-on-an-exemplary-net-zero-planning-policy/>