

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Urgent action needed as critical net zero targets are removed from exemplar 'green' development in Oxfordshire

Eynsham Parish Council and local environmental organisations call for urgent re-instatement of key net zero targets removed from plans as new 'testbed' housing development enters consultation

EYNSHAM, OXFORDSHIRE, 26 SEPTEMBER 2022: [Eynsham Parish Council](#), the [Town & Country Planning Association](#) and local environmental organisations [EPIC](#) (Eynsham Planning Improvement Campaign) and [GreenTEA](#) (Green Transition Eynsham Area) are among many local stakeholders and national organisations (such as Friends of the Earth and CPRE Oxfordshire) calling for the urgent re-instatement of critical net zero targets that were removed from the planning documents for Salt Cross Garden Village (SCGV) without clear justification.

The SCGV development was originally positioned by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) as an exemplar development in tackling the climate emergency. The intention has now been undermined by the recent removal of net zero requirements from the plans by the Planning Inspectorate, without comprehensive justification. Eynsham Parish Council has called for a re-instatement of the targets as the plans [go to consultation](#) and has written to local MP Robert Courts for support.

This follows a recent [Climate Change Committee report](#) which 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 are too vague. If the plans for SCGV are approved as they now stand, the new homes could be built to inadequate standards, be costlier to heat and create more emissions than necessary, undermining the [Government's target](#) to reduce carbon emissions by 78% by 2035. This would also provide a national 'test-case', paving the way for future developments to meet only minimum standards rather than ambitious targets around net zero.

WODC has now opened a [Public Consultation](#) into the modified plans; this will run for six weeks until 4 November 2022. Eynsham Parish Council and others are urging all those with concerns about climate change to submit a comment in the consultation, lending their support to the demand that key net zero targets are re-instated into the SCGV plans.

This decision could impact future developments nationwide. Concerned citizens are encouraged to contact local MPs for support and to draw attention to the contradictory approach of the planning system to the critical climate targets of national Government and the imperative for rapid change to ensure our planet remains habitable.

About Salt Cross Garden Village

SCGV, a 2,200-home development near Eynsham in West Oxfordshire, was originally intended to demonstrate best practice and showcase net zero development for WODC. [WODC's draft Area Action Plan \(AAP\) had a clear policy](#) – Policy 2 – around net zero carbon development requirements for new housing developments. More notably, [the draft AAP \(August 2020\) stated](#): '*the most important, overarching influence on the AAP is....climate change*' with SCGV intended to be '*an important 'testbed' where new ideas can be piloted and rolled out to other areas of development in the District.*'

However, the Planning Inspectorate recently reported they were "not satisfied" that the net zero aspects of the AAP were "consistent with national policy or justified" and has issued a list of modifications. These will remove requirements to make new homes highly energy-efficient, to rely

100% on renewable energy generation and to reduce ‘embodied’ carbon (the carbon used in construction).

The rural Eynsham Parish of around 5,000 residents faces a number of developments in the coming years. The 2,200-home SCGV will be joined by the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area of around 1,000 new homes. This has raised concerns of an increase in traffic, pollution, pressure on local infrastructure and loss of or damage to green spaces and biodiversity at a time when responding to the climate crisis has become more pressing.

Ross Macken, Chair of Eynsham Parish Council, said: *“It’s deeply frustrating that, even with the support of the District Council on the importance of ambitious climate change targets, the Inspector has seen fit to remove them and turn what would have been an inspiring and innovative new development into just another housing estate that will need to be ‘fixed’ in the coming years to meet the Government’s targets around net zero.”*

Carl Rylett, West Oxfordshire District Councillor, said: *“We are very disappointed the Inspector did not approve the net zero carbon homes approach we proposed. However, the Council is absolutely committed to doing whatever it can to tackle the Climate Change Emergency, and we will be looking at what other options are available to us to minimise any ongoing impact to the climate.”*

Angie Titchen, representative of EPIC said: *“Hundreds of residents in Eynsham and surrounding villages have fought hard over five years to ensure that the SCGV would be our community’s response to climate change. This includes submitting responses to every public SCGV consultation, protesting on the streets and developing collaborative relationships with the developers and our councillors while also demonstrating the beauty and assets of the site. Together, we have created potential for a net zero showcase. But all to no avail - by a stroke of one pen!”*

Sarah Couch, representative of GreenTEA, said: *“This could be a huge, missed opportunity just when we most need examples which provide hope for a better future. It is shocking that the Planning Inspectorate is trying to overturn the aspirations of the District and Parish Councils as well as the local community to build the comfortable, future-proofed, resilient communities we need. This decision also undermines work on our Zero Carbon Energy Action Plan as part of our Smart and Fair Futures project, a Project LEO national innovation project with significant public funding.”*

Town & Country Planning Association said in a statement on their website: *“The main modifications to the West Oxfordshire Area Action Plan are badly misjudged and unjustified. The plan’s net zero objective is clearly in line with Government policy, supported by the Sixth Carbon Budget which is itself enshrined in law and entirely consistent with the climate duty in the 2004 Planning Act and the powerful enabling law in the Energy Act.”*

POETS said: *“The POETS group was astonished by the Inspector’s Modifications of the draft AAP for the SCGV which are explicitly contrary to POET’s principles for the planning of Oxfordshire’s future, including the imperative of giving priority to the climate emergency, providing well designed, affordable and energy efficient housing for all and the need to set clear planning targets such as measures to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.”*

END RELEASE

Salt Cross Garden Village details and planning documents can be found on the [West Oxfordshire District Council website](#) and on the [dedicated site](#) from the developers.

[**Eynsham Parish Council**](#) is the first tier of local government which represents the interests of approximately 5,000 residents of Eynsham and Barnard Gate (Oxfordshire). The Parish Council is consulted on issues such as planning, public transport, road improvements, mineral policy, tourism and crime prevention.

[**GreenTEA**](#) (Green Transition Eynsham Area) is about helping people to make the transition to a more sustainable lifestyle, one which is independent of fossil fuels. The emphasis is on grassroots action and building a more resilient community, enabling us to live within the planet's resources.

[**EPIC**](#) (Eynsham Planning Improvement Campaign) is an independent and non-political initiative of local citizens who have come together to voice concerns about recent development plans for Eynsham. The group aims to challenge the assumptions on which these plans were made; and campaign to ensure that any development is appropriate and answers local needs.

[**Town & Country Planning Association**](#) is an independent charity that seeks to improve the art and science of town and country planning, campaigning for the reform of the UK's planning system to make it more responsive to peoples' needs and to promote sustainability.

[**POETS**](#) (Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably) is a group of local professionals and academics with experience in planning, environment and transport. The group believe that a number of key principles should be apply when planning Oxfordshire's future, including giving priority to the climate emergency, producing well-designed, affordable and energy-efficient housing and protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

IMAGES

EricWhiteArtwork: One artwork in a series entitled Garden Village which celebrates the natural beauty of the site identified for the housing development. CREDIT Eric White [Eric John White Art - ericjohnwhite-art](#)

JuliaLoken_Art_SCGV: Painting by Eynsham resident Julia Loken of the site to be used for the Garden Village. CREDIT: Julia Loken

SaltCrossSite_KD: Photograph of the Garden Village site CREDIT Katherine Doughty

SueChapman_GardenVillageland: Photograph of the Garden Village site CREDIT: Sue Chapman

Angie_Ross_Sarah_SCGV_1: L-R Angie Titchen, representative of EPIC, Ross Macken, Chair of Eynsham Parish Council, and Sarah Couch, representative of GreenTEA, who all live locally and feel strongly about the need for Salt Cross to be exemplar in terms of net zero standards. CREDIT: Hywel Edwards

Angie_Ross_Sarah_SCGV_2: L-R Angie Titchen, representative of EPIC, Ross Macken, Chair of Eynsham Parish Council, and Sarah Couch, representative of GreenTEA, who all live locally and feel strongly about the need for Salt Cross to be exemplar in terms of net zero standards. CREDIT: Hywel Edwards

For more details, please contact Sarah Rees, Communications Officer, Eynsham Parish Council, epc.comms@eynsham-pc.gov.uk or Katherine Doughty, Clerk, Eynsham Parish Council, epc.clerk@eynsham-pc.gov.uk. Media interviews can be arranged with the named spokespeople as required.