

# WODC West Eynsham Strategic Development Area Planning Issues Paper – ideas for answering 10 questions posed

**Note: The a, b, c etc here do not correspond with those in the WODC consultation document. They are used here to make the ideas clearer.**

## **1. Question 1: Comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to development**

Infrastructure, especially commuter arrangements, and a low carbon transport network for the whole area should be in place before any houses are built. Improved primary school provision for the whole village, a convenience shop and a branch surgery would be welcome. The potential of a high capacity, energy efficient, segregated bus way, tram or light railway linking Oxford, Eynsham and Witney should be pursued as an alternative to the polluting and congested A40.

## **2. Question 2: Character & form of development**

- a. High density housing close to the village will reduce land take and car use by encouraging walking and cycling in the SDA (and Eynsham).
- b. We support:
  - i. ENP's aims: 'High quality modern design is to be encouraged, especially low or zero net energy buildings' and 'new development designed and built using sustainable construction techniques as part of the transition to a low-carbon future and incorporating such features as safe bike storage and electricity charging points.'
  - ii. Development of a design code to require the highest standards in construction and performance. However, these should not be so prescriptive that they prevent innovative and distinctive design and technology.
  - iii. High density modern design, using sustainable materials, which responds to its context in a creative way, and is structured by natural features such as the field, boundary hedgerows, native trees, routes and Chilbrook valley.
- c. It should not be an Eynsham pastiche or endless characterless suburbia as surrounds Witney and is threatening the character of Eynsham. Character areas may help in planning, but there need to be unifying design elements, particularly cycle and pedestrian routes, treatment of roads and greenspace eg requiring roads to be tree lined with forest scale trees.
- d. It is essential that new housing is built to the same innovative high standards as the Garden Village: Passivhaus, zero carbon with the lowest possible embodied energy and net energy generation to the benefit as Eynsham as a whole. The approach to Zero carbon construction should be 'cradle-to-grave' from construction and the lifetime of the building, with measures delivered on site.
- e. Consideration should be given to local, low energy or renewable materials, but without encouraging a pastiche of traditional Oxfordshire design. Due to the high value of housing in this area, such measures would be a relatively low part of the cost and would benefit occupants and the country's commitment to the Climate Act. The (withdrawn) Code for Sustainable Homes Level 6 (the highest standard) is a useful point of reference.
  - i. We support the Local Plan requirements of *FMM 2 – Policy EW1b – West Eynsham Strategic Development Area: demonstrate the use of*

*renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.*

*ii. n) the developer will be required to set aside 5% of the developable plots for those wishing to undertake custom/self-build.*

But it should go beyond the requirement for an 'Energy and Sustainability statement' or 'energy feasibility assessment' (as draft Policy EH4 of the Local Plan) and require an integrated strategy to deliver renewable and decentralised energy. Eynsham was host to the Low Carbon Hub's first community owned PV installations as part of the Peoples' Power Station and there is the opportunity to build on this, drawing on local world class expertise in delivering renewable or decentralized energy system, together with the GV, with on-site storage and a local grid. If these measures were fundamental to the concept of all anew development in the Eynsham area, in conjunction with attractive, green transport infrastructure, there would be an opportunity to make it a show case for carbon neutral, and healthy, development.

### **3. Question 3: Effective integration with Eynsham**

The physical layout and connectivity network should be designed to reduce the desire for car access to and from Eynsham, that is, it is quicker to walk or cycle than drive and park - which is the case in Eynsham now.

- a. Given that two vehicular accesses are already permitted into the village from and to the SDA through Thornbury Road and Old Witney Road, there should be no further direct accesses built between Eynsham and the SDA as set out in the ENP. Additional vehicular access should be to and from a distributor road and the A40,
- b. We recognise that:
  - i. If people want to use cars, they will (and it may just mean that they drive round the houses - pardon the pun) - to get where they need to go, or, even go onto the A40 and then back into the village and
  - ii. Making car travel difficult doesn't reduce usage of cars or the desire of people to use them,
- c. However, we agree with the ENP's policy that direct access should be by foot, cycle, mobility vehicles because we know from our own experience of living in Eynsham that if that is quicker for everyday activities like shopping or social events, people will not get in their cars.
- d. A non-car network within the new housing area, and access to the village centre, should be maximised and green.
- e. Chilbridge Road (bridleway) is an important recreational and amenity resource for the village, as well as providing a safe convenient access to the countryside. These roles should be protected. The corridor should be planned as a recreational and amenity corridor without car traffic (except for existing residents living on Chilbridge Road).
- f. The proposed open space along the stream's flood plain gives village access in the wrong place.

### **4. Question 4: Linear Park**

Local people have always walked, cycled and run south of the Chil Brook for their health and well-being, given that Eynsham has no village green or park. This area is the lungs of Eynsham, so its amenities should be safe-guarded. Obstruction of

people's free access to the Chilbridge bridleway and public footpaths to the south and west by a busy new road is unacceptable.

#### **5. Question 5: Retention of key**

We support the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan identification of the views that Eynsham people enjoy and find restorative, especially those views in the southern half of the site. They are significant because, seen at a distance, they create a feeling of belonging to a close, friendly community in tune with its natural place in the world. These are aspects important to our emotional and mental health and well-being and if they are protected could lessen Eynsham residents' anger, as well as sadness and sense of loss. They would also be some recompense for the natural environment we are losing.

These particular views can be seen from Chilbridge Road over what locals call the "dog-walking" field. This field is owned by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and for decades, the fallow meadow has been criss-crossed with footpaths from countless feet over that time. Local people have sighted barn owls, bats, kingfishers, cuckoos, red kites, moles, many different types of flower and grasses, butterflies and moths.

#### **6. QUESTION 6: School Provision**

The existing Primary school is expected to be at capacity once the sites at Old Witney Road and Thornbury Road are built. It is essential that the new school is built before the homes on the rest of the SDA are first occupied. If a 1.5 form entry school is built in West Eynsham it should be on a site large enough to enable expansion to 2 form entry in the future if needed.

In terms of proximity to Bartholomew School the west of Eynsham is undoubtedly a better location for a separate Sixth Form building than the proposed Garden Village (GV). Access could be more safely provided avoiding major A40 road crossings and time saved for staff and pupils commuting between the 2 sites. Locating the facility in the GV would undoubtedly foster greater and undesirable use of cars.

#### **7. QUESTION 7: Potential Provision of a 'Local Centre'**

It would be good to see infrastructure for local centre for new residents, so they too can walk to the shops and services as well as develop a sense of community and belonging. This infrastructure could consist of a convenience store with a bakery (very popular concept in Eynsham), a multi-purpose community space that could be used for the usual community meeting, social and group functions, but also as a market for produce from their community gardens or allotments, an outpost of the Eynsham Health Centre and a popup café/wine bar/community pub, for example.

#### **8. Question 8: Western Spine Road**

On balance, should the proposal for 1,000 homes be approved, the outer Spine Road is preferable to a single vehicular access because this would result in too many dwellings being served by one access (according to national and Oxfordshire County Council's highway standards). This outer spine road should be residential in nature, have a 20mph speed limit and pedestrian crossings to avoid it becoming a rat run from the A40 to the Toll Bridge and making new residents' lives a misery. It would also ease walking, cycling, horse-riding and mobility vehicular access from Eynsham and the SDA to the countryside beyond

- a. Such a spine Road will keep more traffic out of the village centre which is currently heavily congested at peak times

- b. It would provide a defensible edge to the enlarged village
- c. The developer would challenge a single cul de sac access with the high risk of getting a direct connection into the village after planning appeal
- d. Safe crossing points on the Spine Road are essential to allow and encourage pedestrian, mobility vehicular, horse and cycling access to the countryside.
- e. A 'spinal road' linking the A40 with the B4449 should be safeguarded with a 20mph limit and with numerous safe crossings. Chilbridge Lane should be left as it is, as far as possible, providing pedestrian and cycle access to the countryside.
- f. Any new access road to the SDA should be in keeping with the country lanes surrounding Eynsham.
- g. Any Spine Road should not destroy the field south of Chilbridge Road and the former railway line, both rich in biodiversity, nor affect the Scheduled Ancient Monuments to the South.

#### **9. Question 9 - Supporting infrastructure**

- a. The development should be a net exporter of energy and require an integrated strategy to deliver renewable and decentralised energy e.g. photovoltaic tiles, groundpumps etc but not wind generation as the site is too small. This could offer benefits to existing Eynsham residents, which encourage greener behaviour, eg providing free electricity to electric car and bicycle users and other desirable behaviour changes.
- b. Sports facilities (including tennis courts, and a play area) alongside a multi-purpose community space that could be used for the usual community meeting, social and group functions, but also as a market for produce from their community gardens or allotments, an outpost of the Eynsham Health Centre and a popup café/wine bar/community pub.

#### **10. Meeting identified housing needs**

The proposed allocation of 550 houses to meet Oxford's 'unmet need' is totally inappropriate. Commuters would cause further unnecessary congestion, pollution and carbon emissions on the A40 trunk road. We must not contribute to further climate change! These houses, if indeed still needed, should be built either within the Oxford boundary, or close to an Oxford-commuter rail or tram station.

- a) We do not object to the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP's) estimate of 750 affordable houses to the west of the village for local workers. We would urge that these houses are planned holistically, in conjunction with the Garden Village (GV) if adopted, and to the same enforceable architectural and environmental high standards. There should be no building of houses to the south of Chilbridge Lane which is regularly used for country walks in the absence of a park or 'green' within the village. Instead building the primary school there plus allotments, community gardens for example would retain more of a countryside feel and protect key views.
- b) Construction could be in accordance with Town & Country Planning Association Garden City principles including community ownership of land, low energy use and zero carbon status. We suggest that housing be built to Passivhaus standards with the lowest possible embodied energy in all construction. Zero carbon should be 'cradle-to-grave' from construction throughout the lifetime of the buildings.