

**West Eynsham Strategic Development Area  
Supplementary Planning Document  
Issues Paper  
Response by Eynsham Planning Improvement Campaign (EPIC)**

EPIC welcomes WODC's recognition of the physical and policy constraints affecting the development of West Eynsham and offers a constructive critique of the implications for the SPD discussed in this paper. However, we wish to make the point that Eynsham residents are concerned about the slow and insufficient consultation from WODC on this part of the Local Plan that has led to an ill thought out 'solution'. The strength of this concern is shown by the numbers of residents who turned out to our two demonstrations on the A40 (100+ in April and 300+ in July). These events were well covered in the local press, TV and radio. Our [online petition](#) has attracted nearly 1,200 signatures and, in addition, 80+ residents, primarily young families and their children, picnicked in a field, much treasured for its amenity value, that is under threat of development.

*Error.*

Please note:- Para 4.10 on page 13 and subsequent pages has an important error which needs correcting. Eynsham's church tower, seen in significant views from the site, is not called "St Peter and St Paul". It is St Leonard's and is Grade 2\* Listed.

*Paras 4.10 to 4.16*

This document places insufficient emphasis on the heritage assets affected by the development. It completely omits a very important one – the Abbey Fishponds- and does not deal with the need to protect the setting of all the assets including the Ancient Monument site.

The Eynsham Abbey Fishponds are a non-designated heritage asset as confirmed by the Planning Inspector, Wenda Fabian, in her decision in May 2016 to refuse an appeal against WODC's refusal of planning permission for 49 homes on land west of Station Road. The Fishponds adjoin the West Eynsham SDA. The water meadows (Chilbrook) west of Station Road immediately adjoin them. The setting of the Fishponds needs protecting.

This and the other heritage assets are dealt with more extensively at Question 5.

**Strategic Comments**

We propose that the adoption of one overall Area Action Plan for both the North and West should be pursued, with the same statutory powers to ensure high standards are achieved throughout and to avoid disorganised development policy, quality and phasing .

This proposal (1000 + dwellings) could potentially cause greater damage to Eynsham than the Garden Village ( GV) proposal because it would be part of the village and not separated by the barrier of the A40.

The Strategic Development Area (SDA) could significantly increase car traffic along existing village roads, overwhelm the village facilities (schools, medical, etc.) and separate the village from the countryside along Chilbridge Road.

The huge scale of this proposal will irrevocably and adversely change the strongly supported character and cohesion of the village unless the extension were sensitively designed, programmed and managed. Whatever the good intentions of the local planning authority, a beneficial outcome is unlikely because of, inter alia:

- current state of planning legislation, for example, the capture and deployment of enhanced land value to finance on and off site infrastructure;

- WODC's constrained professional capacity and technical resources;
- the financial imperatives of the landowners to maximise and appropriate the enhanced land value; and
- the power, practice and nature of residential developers.

More high quality affordable housing (rent, shared equity and buy) is needed in West Oxfordshire. We therefore support the principle of meeting local housing need and demand.

The Council's strategic option appraisal for sites is flawed. Given the accepted need for a sustainable, resilient low carbon future, the potential of clustering around or near Hanborough station has not been given sufficient weight.

All other things being equal, the SDA should be for local need. The Oxford Overspill element should logically be built close to where it is needed- in or around Oxford or a public transport node- and where low carbon travel can be provided.

The A40 is a local commuter road, and an inter- and intra-regional route, which makes improved sustainable travel more difficult to achieve by remedial infrastructure investment. Any road capacity released by the park and ride and bus lane is likely to be filled after a few years by more traffic. The inter-regional traffic and traffic to places other than Oxford city has been completely ignored, most A40 traffic is heading towards motorway links and the A34.

Any development must demonstrate that it will enhance the area as a whole, and address existing issues, notably poor transport infrastructure, traffic noise and pollution, lack of public greenspace, lack of interconnected cycle routes and lack of burial provision. We expect an overall improvement in Eynsham, rather than just accommodating and suffering the impacts of vast change. People will be more supportive if they see positive improvements early in the process.

***CONSULTATION QUESTION 1: Comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to development***

***1a) Do you agree that a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to development is needed to bring forward the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) and achieve the best outcomes for the local community? If not, why not?***

Yes obviously so. The SDA should be planned comprehensively with the GV. It should not become, by default, the lower quality sibling of the GV. The same high quality policies and proposals should apply to both proposals: for illustration, passive house standards, local sustainable energy generation, smart public transport, inhibited car use and more walking/cycling/public transport.

The comprehensive approach should have the necessary power to manage and mitigate the adverse desires of landowners and developers, and to enhance the beneficial effects. Without this control, the physical and social outcome would be a low quality development that had significant and undesirable effects on the village and future residents of the SDA.

In addition, given the proximity of the developments on the north of the A40 and on the A40 itself, we do not consider that commissioning a separate Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the Eynsham area will be sufficient.

Instead, we propose that the adoption of one overall Area Action Plan for both the North and West should be pursued to avoid disorganised development policy, quality and phasing.

This proposal is strengthened by the Inspector's Report (2018) in which he has required, in his non-technical report, a Major Modification involving a "stepped" approach to meeting the housing requirement need during the plan period ending in 2031. There is nowhere else in West Oxfordshire that needs this approach more badly than Eynsham.

Residents of Eynsham will be faced with a tumultuous storm of major development that will require an extraordinary level of coordination:

1. Construction of a 'garden village' immediately to the north
2. Construction of an SDA immediately to the west
3. Dualling of the A40
4. Construction of first one bus lane and later another
5. Construction of a Park & Ride, followed by a business park.
6. A new quarry or quarries potentially being dug (there are nominated mineral sites directly to the east of Eynsham, another site north-east of Eynsham that straddles the A40 and a site that runs northwards along Lower Road towards Church Hanborough on top of the currently worked sites also on the east (Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 2 – Site Allocations' (August 2018)

What this means is years, if not decades, of simultaneous and consecutive construction and congestion misery with associated potential ill health, both physical and mental, for the people of Eynsham. We have to ask why the Councils that represent us and the officials, whose salaries we help to pay, have so arbitrarily inflicted this misery on this historic village and community. We also have to ask why the Inspector does not articulate his concern about the cumulative effect of this development on the people of Eynsham, although we could conclude that his "stepped" approach shows that he is aware of it.

Moreover, this misery is on top of the current stress levels and reduced well-being experienced right now by Eynsham residents caused by traffic congestion on the A40 for many of their journeys, air pollution for those who live alongside the A40 and on the over-congested village roads running from the A40 through the centre of the village to the Toll Bridge, as well as, the cumulative impact of building projects in surrounding villages. All this without mentioning high house prices, current 'in-fill' developers building more and more high cost executive homes in the village and the extra stress of endless 'consultation' which has been requested too late for the views of Eynsham residents to be taken into account and to which WODC appears not to listen!

To lessen the huge impact of numerous construction projects on top of this, a properly thought out phase plan for Eynsham has to be co-ordinated with all the other developments to minimise disruption. Thus we welcome the Inspector's requirement for a "stepped" approach to be developed by the District Council. We urge the Council therefore to recognise the enormous strain that the cumulative effect of the developments listed above will put on the people of Eynsham, local businesses and surrounding villages and design a "stepped" approach that will alleviate it somewhat.

The advantage of an Area Action Plan (AAP) over a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is that the former has legal powers whilst the latter does not. We foresee that developers will find ways to get around the requirements of the SPD to maximise their profits and own convenience rather than work in a co-ordinated way with the other developers and deliver the sort of housing Eynsham really needs. Thus the "stepped" approach could be seriously compromised if there is no legal requirement in the Plan to do so. We are not sure if a site-wide masterplan or an Infrastructure Delivery Plan would have legal status, but we suspect not. We recommend therefore, in order to ensure a well-co-ordinated development at Eynsham that there should be one overall Area Action Plan for West Eynsham and the Garden Village north of Eynsham.

Our argument is supplemented by our reading of the Inspector's Report (August 2018) in which he states in relation to Policy EW1b - West Eynsham Strategic Development Area, paragraph 179:

'Given its close proximity to the location of the garden village there is an argument that the West Eynsham SDA should also be the subject of the forthcoming Area Action Plan. Whilst there could be some benefit in this, I conclude that it is not necessary to the soundness of the allocation and it would also have the potential to delay the delivery of housing at West Eynsham. Nonetheless, the presence and emerging detailed design of the West Eynsham development will need to be an important influence on the Area Action Plan for the garden village.'

Nevertheless, we urge WODC to consider the importance of the emerging detailed design of the Garden Village as having a significant influence on the development of West Eynsham, as well as on the quality of life of Eynsham residents during construction of both developments and transport infrastructure simultaneously. The Inspector's recognition of some benefit accruing to a combined AAP should be considered by WODC, as well as thinking through the potential for delay due to poor co-ordination of the separate plans they propose.

***1b) Do you think that the development of the West Eynsham SDA should be infrastructure-led?***

Yes, again obviously so as shown in (1a) above. Infrastructure should be phased comprehensively and provided at the optimum time (roads, footways, school, retail, etc). The current facilities are already over-subscribed and should not have to accommodate the needs of new residents as well as struggling to cope with the village as it stands today. This is not in the best interests of either sector.

***1c) Aside from the preparation of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) a site-wide masterplan and constructive and ongoing engagement of key parties, are there any other ways in which the Council can ensure the West Eynsham SDA is brought forward in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner?***

See (1a), for our views.

Also, set up a community organisation representing formal and informal organisations as a key part of the executive function of the local planning authority.

***1d) Do you have any other general comments or observations on this issue?***

Any development must demonstrate that it will enhance the area as a whole, and address existing issues, notably poor transport infrastructure, traffic noise and pollution, lack of public greenspace, lack of interconnected cycle routes and lack of burial provision. We expect an overall improvement in Eynsham, rather than just accommodating and suffering the impacts of vast change. People will be more supportive if they see positive improvements early in the process.

The track record of WODC's collaboration during the Local Plan preparation with the people of Eynsham and its Parish Council is extremely poor and has been very late in the process, so we are not convinced of their capacity to engage in constructive and ongoing engagement and consultation of the key parties. There are initial signs that they intend to be more collaborative in the future which we welcome, for example, the style in which this Issues Paper has been prepared, but whether this is an indication of genuine involvement of the community in decision-making remains to be seen.

This is going to be a huge project and we know that WODC is inadequately resourced to undertake this work. We understand at present there are only two planners employed and we would need to be reassured that the Planning Department is sufficiently resourced to undertake this enormously complicated planning work.

We would also like reassurance that WODC and OCC have thoroughly thought through the consequences of their decisions. For instance, how are they going to manage and maintain traffic flow to, through and from West Oxfordshire without causing intolerable gridlock on the A40 at Eynsham; on the Eynsham bypasses; and in the centre of the village, thereby imprisoning the people of Eynsham and potentially damaging their mental, emotional and physical health and well-being? It is already becoming difficult to navigate the centre of Eynsham (especially at peak times, such as school pick-up and drop off) as a result of the increased size and volume of through-traffic, as well as non-resident parking at the side of the roads.

In terms of the development being infrastructure-led, it must be mandatory, before building houses, to construct a genuinely sustainable transport network first, then the primary school/s and other infrastructure for a local centre.

### ***CONSULTATION QUESTION 2: Character and Form of Development***

***2a) Do you think the West Eynsham SDA should aim to be 'locally inspired' seeking to draw upon the distinctive aspects and features of Eynsham?***

***2b) Or, should the emphasis be on creating a place with a new and strongly defined character and identity of its own?***

Whether locally inspired or with a separate identity, the density, permeability, quality and nature of design is more important (see 2d). Historic Eynsham is characterised by continual street facades and high density. This character is a suitable meta narrative for the new development rather than a slavish design pastiche. High quality carbon neutral design and high density should be the theme of the development.

A residential estate of suburban sprawl must be avoided. Volume builders have a poor design and layout reputation in the county. Identikit houses and an internal network privileging the car discourage public transport, walking and cycling and, thereby, inhibit community formation. Healthy living should be designed in to reduce morbidity and mortality by making mobility on foot, cycle and horse more attractive. This could be an exemplar development to match the best examples of European sustainable non-car housing.

***2c) Do you support the idea of the West Eynsham site being sub-divided into a number of different character areas to help ensure variety and enhance legibility and ease of navigation?***

In principle, yes, provided there is mixed development of affordable and market housing with the optimum density for sustainable living. 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.

**2d) Do you have any other general comments or observations on this issue?**

We support the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan'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.' Therefore, we propose:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

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 should be to the benefit as Eynsham as a whole.

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.

It is extremely disappointing that energy issues are not covered in the SDP paper, unlike the Garden Village AAP- reinforcing our concern that it will be built to lower standards. The fact that the Thornbury Road development (as available for consultation) was recently granted planning permission without any apparent renewables and with fake glass reinforced plastic chimneys does not inspire confidence.

The development should be designed and built for the long-term, not just for the short-term gain of developers and for WODC to be seen to be 'filling their quota' of housing.

**CONSULTATION QUESTION 3: Effective integration with Eynsham**

**3a Do you agree that the following locations are important in terms of providing effective connections between the West Eynsham SDA and Eynsham?**

- **Chilbridge Road**
- **Thornbury Road**
- **Station Road**
- **Merton Court/Merton Close**
- **Old Witney Road**

This is one of the major concerns for the village. Wherever possible, car access along existing village roads should be physically prevented by road engineering and network design. The design of the SDA and its movement network should, conversely, encourage walking and cycling within the SDA and to and from Eynsham.

Vehicular access to the SDA should be from the A40 by the Spine Road (alternatively, by a single vehicular access to a smaller development of 400 dwellings).

Vehicular access should not be via existing residential roads, except for emergency vehicles and mobility vehicles.

***3b Should these connections be for walking, cycling and motor vehicles?***

Chilbridge Road is the most important access to the countryside and an amenity is its own right with a rich variety of animal and plant life including species not seen in the rest of the Eynsham area. It is valued and well used by residents for walking, cycling and horse riding. It is also most at risk of becoming the vehicular access to the village from the SDA and a rat run for commuters.

It should be protected and enhanced as the main pedestrian and cycling access between the SDA and village, and as the amenity corridor to the countryside for the village and SDA.

Thornbury Road already has permission for vehicular access. No further residential development should be served off this road. Pedestrian access should be provided and encouraged from the SDA through the permitted development.

Station Road is already part of the network linking the southern by pass and Stanton Harcourt *et al.* If a full-length Spine Road were built, traffic would have a more direct and less damaging route to the west. Traffic along Station Road would therefore be reduced. There should be no new road access directly on to Station Road as the area is subject to severe floods and the approach to the roundabout is very narrow and congested with parked cars.

In extremis, Merton Close/Court could accept a small increase in traffic from the small parcel of land in the SDA that could not be further developed or connected to the SDA and the Spine Road because of the brook and flood plan.

Old Witney Road: additional residential vehicular access should, if possible, be confined to the existing residential permission.

***3c Are there any other key points at which effective connections could be provided between the West Eynsham SDA and Eynsham?***

Vehicular access to Eynsham from the SDA should be designed (and managed) to use the Spine Road, A40 junction/ roundabout and the eastern and southern connections from the bypass. External traffic should be kept out of the village. The eastern and southern bypasses and an outer spine road should help protect the village from traffic.

***3d Do you have any other general comments or observations on this issue?***

Sustainable travel and enhanced amenity for the SDA and Eynsham should be designed into the layout, character, density and movement network of the SDA. Residential density should be sufficiently high to encourage walking and cycling from the SDA to Eynsham's facilities, and to the local facilities of the SDA. A maximum walking and cycling distance to facilities in the SDA should be a residential design criterion. Therefore, housing should be of sufficiently high density located close to the edge of the village to enhance integration and sustainable access. Open space and low density land use should be located on the outer edge of the SDA.

**CONSULTATION QUESTION 4: Linear Park**

**4a) Do you support the submission draft Neighbourhood Plan concept of a linear park being provided as part of the proposed development of the land west of Eynsham?**

As the flood plain cannot be developed, then a linear park is the obvious use of the land.

The park should be integrated into the SDA layout with pedestrian and cycling access.

**4b) If a linear park were to be brought forward what sort of uses or activities would be suitable within the park (e.g. natural/informal space, formal space, walking, cycling routes etc)?**

Informal recreation to foster healthy living which should include walking and cycle routes.

**4c) Are there any additional or alternative ways in which additional greenspace should be provided as part of the West Eynsham SDA?**

Residential density should be as high as possible to avoid suburban sprawl and useless pockets of grass, subject to meeting high amenity standards of privacy and supervised public space. There should be Greenspace along the Chilbridge Road corridor into the countryside. Otherwise, accessible Greenspace should be on the outer parts of the SDA, in particular, in the field, south of Chilbridge Road (that locals call the “dog-walking” field.). This field is much valued by residents and should not be built on. Rather it should be left open as a country park in recompense for losing so much of our countryside given we have no village green or park (see 5a & 9c). This would also mean that the route of the spine road, as indicatively marked in the Issues Paper, would be unacceptable through the “dog-walking” field or the disused railway line (see 4c9).



*Footpath along the disused railway line from Station Road to the “dog-walking” field. Along this stretch there is a remarkable diversity of wild flowers, butterflies and notably the six spot burnet moth. Photo by Sue Chapman*

It is good to see that this paper is exploring the linear park concept put forward in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (2017). We would like to see this concept maximised based on numerous rigorous studies (e.g. Barton & Pretty, 2010; van den Bosch, 2017) that demonstrate that being in nature provides an important mental and physical health service. WHO research shows that trees reduce depression and the Japanese government carried out 'extensive scientific research which found that a two-hour forest-bathing session [no water involved!] could reduce blood pressure, lower cortisol levels and improve concentration and memory. These findings went beyond the usual correlations between fresh air, exercise and wellbeing. Researchers found that the chemicals released by trees, known as phytoncides, could have an anti-microbial effect on our bodies, boosting the immune system. As a result of this research, forest bathing, or shinrin-yoku, was introduced as a national health programme.'

(<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2018/may/06/japanese-art-of-forest-bathing-comes-to-england-holidays>)

Evidence of the importance of nature in built up environments in health terms can be found here:

<http://environmentalscience.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199389414.001.0001/acrefore-9780199389414-e-333>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/mar/21/access-nature-reduces-depression-obesity-european-report>

Planners and developers should be mindful of this research, as well as the importance of nature and natural landscapes in the development of children and young people to foster curiosity about, and a love of, the natural world. Along with growing up more healthily and having more fun, being in nature helps them to learn through play to understand and respect nature and become more aware of the need to take care of our planet and avoid its further destruction. Developers do not necessarily care about these things, mitigating climate change or the health and well-being of future generations. Rather they seem more interested in making huge profits now by destroying the natural environment. It is our local Councils who should curb this greed for the greater good.

Currently, except for the small area of the Fishponds, Eynsham has very little green space in its centre, partly as a result of the excessive in-fill that has occurred over the last decade, residents therefore use Chilbridge Road as easy and quick access to the open countryside. They use the bridleway and footpaths off it to the west and east for cycling, running, walking and exercising dogs. This access to nature is treasured by residents for its physical, emotional, and mental health benefits, for its peace and quiet (silence is becoming one of the rarest resources in the world), as well as providing space for social interaction, play, contemplation and creative thinking. This particular space helps to create the 'feel' of Eynsham that you ask us to tell you about. For us, Eynsham feels like a rural, vibrant, friendly, walkable community with easy countryside access. This 'feel' is likely to be severely compromised by the proposed development, so we welcome the concept of a linear park and offer some suggestions for its creation and for the whole site.

NB: Whilst we note the Inspector's recognition in his August 2018 report (paragraph 181) that losing countryside is regrettable, we go further. It is regrettable, at such a crucial time nationally, to lose countryside that is valuable farmland. In post-Brexit Britain, as a nation, we will need to become more self-sufficient on producing our own food as well as internationally mindful of the impact on Climate Change of developing natural land.



*Summer along Chilbridge Road*

1. The linear park should follow the course of the Chilbrook in its entirety through the site and connect with the Fishponds as set out in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (2017). A paved cycle, mobility vehicle and horseriding path and a separate unpaved pedestrian path should follow the brook with a network of paths connecting Eynsham with the new development and through to the park. This would also provide a fantastic cycle route for those cycling from Witney to the Toll Bridge that avoids the village centre and eastern bypass.
2. There could be formal spaces, eg., gardens with park benches, but it would be preferable for the main space to be informal and natural spaces, eg., for children to run, play, climb trees and explore wildlife and young people to have natural space for meeting (hanging out) and creating dens for example, with their peer groups as we have seen over the years in the Fruitlands Orchard. Your example of a linear park is too urban in design for this site and we would wish to see a minimal and preferably no use of concrete as shown in your photograph on p.27.
3. A formal playground should only be included in the park beyond Flood Zones 2 & 3. Perhaps an adventure playground could be considered.
4. The park should connect with the Sustainable Underground Drainage System to create interesting, non-uniform wildlife spaces into the development and access to the park
5. All the trees, hedgerows that edge the Chil Brook and Chilbridge Road should be left in place and arrangements for their maintenance in the future secured.
6. For its entire length, pedestrian, walking, running, cycling paths and open natural space should extend beyond Flood zones 2 (medium risk) & 3 (high risk), so that the park can be used when the brook does flood.
7. The width of the open space on each side of the Chil Brook should be at least 40-50 metres from Flood zone 2
8. The cycle, mobility vehicular and pedestrian paths should link with active travel paths within the new development and existing footpaths and bridleway

9. As stated in the Eynsham Neighbourhood plan documents, the disused railway line especially is remarkable for its biodiversity of wild flowers and insects and should be included in the linear park. This will also connect the park directly with the Fishponds at Station Road beside the old railway station. It is therefore unacceptable that the spine road as indicated on the map in the Issues Paper should run along the disused railway line.
10. The whole of the well-used field south of the Chil Brook should remain as a natural open space and be contiguous with the linear park on the entirety of its eastern boundary; with Chilbridge Road on its northern and western borders and; the public footpath on its southern border. As already stated, the spine road should not be routed through this field.

Additionally in relation to the whole site (4c):

11. As much of the natural landscape, trees and hedgerows should be maintained as wildlife corridors and for both active travel and recreation as well as designing new green infrastructure
12. We strongly support tree lined streets tree/hedge lined paths and cycle routes, using forest scale trees rather than small ornamentals, with native trees extending into countryside to improve connectivity and integration, as well as flower rich meadows and edge habitats.
13. Existing trees should be preserved in the housing areas and new trees planted along the streets
14. Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan Policy 4a Enhancing Biodiversity and evidence-based standards on retaining biodiversity, natural countryside and creating new green infrastructure should be used for master-planning.

## References

Barton J & Pretty J (2010) What is the Best Dose of Nature and Green Exercise for Improving Mental Health? A Multi-Study Analysis..Environ. Sci. Technol., 2010, 44 (10), pp 3947–3955

van den Bosch M, Ode Sang A (2017) Urban natural environments as nature-based solutions for improved public health - A systematic review of reviews. Environmental Research 8:373-384. doi: 10.1016/j.envres.2017.05.040. Epub 2017 Jul 4.

### ***CONSULTATION QUESTION 5: Retention of key views***

***5a) Do you agree that the key views mentioned in the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (i.e. to the west into open countryside and to the east towards the Parish Church and Wytham Hill) are of significant importance and should be retained and enhanced as far possible through the West Eynsham development?***

We support the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (2017) identification of the views that Eynsham people enjoy and find restorative, especially those views in the southern half of the site mentioned in (4.10). 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 meadow has been criss-crossed with footpaths from countless feet over that time. Local people have sighted

barn owls, bats, kingfishers, skylarks, cuckoos, red kites, moles, deer, many different types of flower and grasses, butterflies and moths. This field in particular, along with the bridleway and footpaths, provide places for local people to get out and enjoy the countryside nature and open spaces.

We support the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan's recognition of the valuable nature of this "dog-walking" field in terms of its amenity and recreational value.. We support this idea because the open space also necessary for children to play and learn could go some way towards protecting these key views.

Given that this field, has Agricultural Land Classification Grade 3a soil (West Oxfordshire Local Plan ODC- semi-detailed survey) - a grade for which there is a legal requirement not to develop such land because the soil is too good - it would make sense for allotments and community gardens to be sited here.

We support your point 5.49 (p.29) in relation to retaining these important views and enhancing them by drawing the eye towards a particular location through the layout and form of development.

In addition, they form a green setting for Eynsham's heritage: -

1. The Conservation Area with St Leonards church tower (Listed grade2\*) is important when viewed from the higher ground.
2. The Chilbrook fields to the east of the SDA, adjoining Station Road, form part of the water meadow setting of an important non-designated Heritage Asset that is omitted by the SPD- the Eynsham Abbey Fishponds. A development of 49 homes on Land off Station Road, Eynsham was refused at Appeal in 2016 because it was part of the setting of heritage assets including the Abbey Fishponds. That field lies immediately adjacent to these Chilbrook fields. They must be part of the setting as well and must be protected from development. NB they also form part of the setting of the Conservation Area with its many Listed buildings- the nearest being the Listed Grade 2 Barn at Abbey Farm, Station Road.
3. The Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) near Foxley Farm is of national importance. It lies immediately to the south of the SDA. It has featured in numerous Newspaper and TV articles recently because of the significance of the crop marks revealed by the recent drought.  
<https://www.economist.com/britain/2018/07/14/dry-weather-is-helping-archaeologists-discover-ancient-sites>



The “dog walking field” and the old railway line field are adjacent to the SAM. It is entirely feasible that the settlement may have continued on the land included in the West Eynsham SDA. The setting here needs protecting and requirements for extensive archaeological investigations must be included as part of any planning consents.

4. The setting of the Listed Grade 2 Chilbridge must be preserved.

As previously stated all of the “dog walking field” should remain open space connected to the proposed “Linear Park”. It should only be accessible to pedestrians, bikes and mobility scooters. This would protect the important views and the setting of all the above heritage assets. The open space around the park could accommodate allotments, a natural burial site.

***5b) Are there any other key views not mentioned in the draft neighbourhood plan that should be taken into account?***

The views in all directions as one walks along Chilbridge Road heading southwest. These will be most impaired by development on the more prominent and landscape sensitive fields to the southeast.

***5c) Do you have any other general comments or observations on this issue?***

Planners and council members should be mindful that they are having a huge impact on the lives of others – this is often forgotten in the need for profits and ‘box ticking’. A little more consideration on how people’s lives will change forever as a result of their plans may help them to understand the strength of feeling from village residents on this issue.

**CONSULTATION QUESTION 6: School Provision**

**6a) Do you support the emerging policy approach set out in the draft Local Plan which is to provide one 1.5 form entry primary school at West Eynsham and up to two 2 form entry primary schools at the garden village? If not, why not?**

Yes.

The provision of a new school is essential as the Eynsham Primary is too distant from the new houses.

If, as is rumored, the existing school proves to have more capacity than expected as a result of recent falling pupil numbers, there should still be a new school on the West Eynsham SDA. The fall in pupil numbers is sure to be a temporary issue.

If the 1000 homes are built on the west, Eynsham will be too large a settlement for just the one school.

In addition, primary pupils will be unlikely to walk approx. 2 km to school. A massive increase in car use and inappropriate on-street parking near the existing school will be inevitable. Traffic congestion in Beech Road and surrounding streets at school delivery/pick-up times is already unacceptable.

Without a new primary school fewer homes should be built in the West Eynsham SDA and a site should be safeguarded for future school needs. However, if a 1.5 form entry school is built it should be on a site large enough to enable expansion to 2 form entry in the future if needed. Anything larger than 2 form entry at Nursery and Primary school age could be intimidating for small children. Hence this school and potentially 2 x 2-form entry schools on the Garden Village are preferable.

**6b) In terms of potential locations for a new primary school within the West Eynsham SDA, do you have any views on the merits/disadvantages of the possible locations identified above including:**

- Corlan Farm
- The existing Bartholomew School Playing Fields (subject to their relocation)
- Land south of Chilbridge Road
- Land west of Chilbridge Road

Corlan Farm has the merit of being central but the site is in the less open part of the SDA.

Moving the existing Bartholomew School Playing fields to the land south of Chilbridge Road (to allow the existing playing fields to be used for the new primary school) may be considered a better use of that open land than residential. However, it is not practical! It would inevitably involve a 10 to 15-minute walk for Bartholmew students to get there in all weathers.

Curriculum pressures could make 30 minutes travel time added to every sports lesson impractical and ultimately lead to reduced physical activity added into timetables.

Land west of Chilbridge Road is the most remote site from both the new and existing residential areas. It would mean fewer journeys on foot/bike and more use of cars which should be discouraged on grounds of health, well-being and impacts on climate change.

Land adjacent to Merton Close, east of the Chilbrook and to the south of Chilbridge Road (excepting the "dog-walking" field) is a suitable location if the building is kept to single storey only. It would be a low-density land use in this sensitive landscape and if sited near Chilbridge Road would have good pedestrian/cycle access from the west and south of Eynsham as well as the new development. It could connect to the proposed "Linear Park".

**6c) Do you have any comments regarding existing primary school provision in Eynsham?**

The existing primary school facilities are not ideal. Its open plan design has in a past OFSTED inspection been said to impact adversely on teaching and learning. It has very limited space to expand and little scope to improve the open plan layout. We understand that Oxfordshire County Council are currently thinking about extending the existing school and making it big enough to take all the children from West Eynsham. Whilst we welcome the intention to bring about badly needed improvements in the existing school building, we still consider that a small primary school on the west is needed as set out in 6a).

**6d) Subject to further consideration of site size requirements, suitability and viability, do you think further consideration should be given to the potential provision of a secondary facility for Bartholomew School at West Eynsham or should this be located at the garden village?**

Just in terms of proximity to Bartholomew School the west of Eynsham is 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. The loss of space for residential in the SDA could be compensated for by building a few more homes on the GV site instead.

**6e) Do you have any other general comments or observations on this issue?**

No

**CONSULTATION QUESTION 7: Potential Provision of a 'Local Centre'**

**7a) Do you support the concept of a small 'local centre' being provided as part of the West Eynsham SDA? Or, if not what are the concerns it raises for you?**

Yes. The local centre must be conveniently accessible on foot and cycle. Hence a central location in a high density layout with a permeable network and specific road design that inhibits car use.

**7b) If a small local centre were to be provided within the development are there any specific uses you would like to see included e.g. convenience retail, public house, other forms of small-scale commercial development?**

Yes, provided they are viable and high quality. A mixed development of affordable and market housing would enhance viability and vitality.

Given the connection between a walkable village design and creation of a strong community spirit that Eynsham enjoys now, it would be good to see infrastructure for a local centre so new residents could also walk to their 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 pop up café/wine bar/community pub, for example. It would also be vital to restore services to Eynsham that have recently been closed, such as a family centre to support the huge population increase.

**7c) Do you think there is a need for additional community space as part of the development or should it rely on existing facilities in Eynsham?**

This needs more thought because of the costs and benefits are evenly balanced. Space should be reserved for a community centre.

**7d) Do you have any other general comments or observations on this issue?**

No

**CONSULTATION QUESTION 8: Western Spine Road**

**8a) Do you have any comments on the indicative alignment of the proposed spine road shown in the plan above?**

The Spine Road should be the main access into the SDA by car. The alignment should be convenient for cars and safe for other users. It should protect Eynsham and existing roads from traffic and should be designed to reduce vehicle movements in the SDA and village.

The alignment and network connections should stop rat running through the SDA and village. An outer distributor (a defensible physical edge to the SDA) would be more effective in stopping through traffic in the SDA and village as well as protecting the sensitive “dog-walking” with its key views, wildlife and amenity value and the disused railway line with its biodiversity asset. .

If the Spine Road is not to be an outer distributor, its design and alignment would have to balance safety and amenity, multi-use (cyclists, vehicles and pedestrians) and vehicular speed/capacity.

The Spine Road should not restrict cycling, walking and riding access to the countryside. Safe crossing points should be part of the road design. We would prefer a design more in keeping with the country roads surrounding Eynsham, rather than a straight, fast bypass like the current eastern or southern bypasses which are difficult and dangerous to cross on foot, especially for older people (<https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/use-data/data-in-use/case-study/?id=162>)

**8b) Do you support in principle the provision of two new roundabouts on the A40? What, if any concerns would you have about this?**

One roundabout is preferable, subject to a technical assessment of traffic flow, pollution, land take, safety and alignment of the legs serving the park and ride, GV and SDA. The current Eynsham roundabout does cause significant traffic congestion in both directions so a second could increase this further (especially with the huge increase in car numbers) unless it is well planned, researched and scoped.

**8c) Should each roundabout facilitate access to both the garden village and the West Eynsham SDA?**

See 8b)

**8d) What do you think are the key considerations to be taken into account in working up the design of the West Eynsham spine road in more detail? (e.g. speed restrictions, signage, provision for pedestrians and cyclists, relationship with adjoining buildings and spaces, landscaping/tree planting etc.)**

The Spine Road should be designed with the residential and open space layout to minimise adverse environmental impact (visual, noise, air pollution) and to enhance user safety. See 8a) comments about its role as the main vehicular link for the SDA, countryside access, etc.

The Spine Road should be sufficiently attractive for vehicle users to discourage travel through Eynsham and the SDA to and from, inter alia, the Toll Bridge, the southern business area and villages south of Eynsham.

If the Spine Road is an outer distributor, speed could be reduced for safe crossing by a country road layout (see 8a) and warning signs for multiple pedestrian, mobility scooter and horse crossings. There should be a thick barrier of trees and vegetation to separate it from the houses and reduce air and noise pollution.

If the Spine Road goes through residential areas, the speed limit should be 20mph and there should be traffic calming measures. The road should be tree-lined (see 4c, 10-12).

**8e) Do you have any other general comments or observations on this issue?**

The SDA should be fully provided with electric charging points for cars.

The GV, SDA and Eynsham should have a regular bus feeder service to Long Hanborough Station.

Chilbridge Lane should be left as it is providing pedestrian and cycle access to the countryside.

#### **CONSULTATION QUESTION 9: Supporting Infrastructure**

**9a) Do you agree with the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan that further consideration should be given to the potential provision of a cemetery, allotments, sports facilities and play areas as part of the West Eynsham SDA?**

Yes, the cemetery and allotments could be on the outer part of the SDA so merging the new development more seamlessly into the countryside.

**9b) Is there any other supporting infrastructure that you consider should be provided within or by the West Eynsham SDA?**

The development should be a net exporter of energy and require an integrated strategy to deliver renewable and decentralised energy eg 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.

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.

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

However the proposed 'Infrastructure Delivery Plan' 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 new 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.

Infrastructure, especially impact on traffic but also schools and medical service, burial space and drainage, is most people's number one issue. These services are already under enormous strain and we need to see a plan in pace and implemented in advance of large-scale housing development.

The SDA would affect the local road network and should help fund off site infrastructure on the A 40, Toll Bridge and B4044 Community Path. .

***9c) Do you have any other general comments or observations on this issue?***

As shown in our response to Question 4, we support the creation of the linear park that not only protects the natural features of the site, i.e., the Chil Brook, its flood zones and the trees and hedges of the Chibridge Road and field boundaries, but also provides connectivity infrastructure for current and new residents to the open countryside. We have also suggested that key views could be preserved by leaving the "dog-walking" field open, as well as siting allotments and maybe the cemetery here.

Sports facilities, including tennis courts, and a play area nearer the centre of the new development would also be an asset. Current Eynsham residents are very keen too for tennis courts as the village does not have any, so this would be an added bonus.

Given the connection between a walkable village design and creation of a strong community spirit that Eynsham enjoys now, it would be good to see infrastructure for local centre for new residents, so they too 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. It would also be vital to restore services to Eynsham that have recently been closed, such as a family centre to support to huge population increase.

**CONSULTATION QUESTION 10: Meeting identified housing needs**

**10a) Do you agree that the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should provide an indicative range of dwelling sizes (market and affordable) to avoid being overly prescriptive?**

Giving quite a large range, sometimes as much as 10%, on the mix of dwelling sizes gives too much freedom to developers who will tend to go for the mix that maximizes profits rather than addresses most need. It is better to narrow the range to reflect the needs identified in ENP (more 1 and 2 beds) and those of Oxford city. This development is after all meant to address both local and Oxford needs.

**10b) Do you think we should be looking to focus on any particular size of property in particular? If so, why?**

It is very important that the type of homes and tenures chosen truly help people on lower incomes-affordable rents, shared ownership, self-build. Smaller semi-detached and terraced homes are required more in Eynsham than large detached properties, according to the needs addressed by the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP).

ENP identified a need here for affordable smaller compact units for younger small households, such as studio apartments and smaller but more spacious market homes for older downsizers. This combined with some supported retirement provision could free up family homes. This need was found to be higher than in the rest of West Oxfordshire.

**10c) Do you agree that the SPD should be flexible in seeking a good, overall balanced mix of dwelling types rather than setting a specific requirement for certain dwelling types?**

There should not be too much flexibility for developers. They will prefer to make more profits by building large detached, expensive, executive homes. The SPD should set out specific requirements.

**10d) Do you have any other views on the type of new homes that should be built at West Eynsham?**

Design should reflect Eynsham's character blending more naturally into the environment as a result. Continuing the styles of Eynsham's nucleic settlement with more terraced and semi-detached and fewer large detached would allow easy walking or cycling to shops and services. Higher densities could be achieved with lower land take. More open green space could be provided for the Linear Park and around the countryside edge of the development. It would give residents readier access to open countryside.

Flats should be kept low rise and to a minimum in a semi-rural setting. Those built at Merton Court or Hazeldene Close, for example, blend well with the surrounding houses.

Innovative, eco-friendly design could make better use of valuable land without increasing heights such as incorporating basement accommodation and use of modular design built off site.

More space should be reserved for self-build, co-housing and homes designed specifically for older people.

**10e) Do you have a view on the type of affordable homes that should be provided? Should there be a particular focus or should there be a more balanced mix of different affordable housing types?**

It is very important that the SPD secures 50% of West Eynsham new homes as genuinely affordable.

High priority should go to affordable rented and shared ownership. The 2:1 ratio in favour of affordable rented is a good one. Oxford City can aim for a higher ratio as prices there are much higher. At this out of town location lower prices should make it possible for more people to aspire to buying a small starter home.

Preferably the age restriction for starter homes should be removed. In our changing society many people find themselves starting on the housing ladder later in life.

Affordable housing should be mixed in with the market housing to avoid stigma and a “ghetto culture”.

**10f) Do you support the requirement to provide 5% of housing for the purposes of custom/self-build housing?**

The provision of 5% community or self-build plots is a good one. It could offer another route to affordable home ownership.

**10g) Do you support the requirement to provide 25% of new homes as accessible and adaptable properties which could also include 5% wheelchair adaptable homes?**

The 25%/5% accessible and adaptable/ wheelchair adaptable homes is sensible.

**10h) Do you think we should be looking to provide specialist accommodation for the elderly and/or those with a disability as part of the overall housing mix at West Eynsham?**

The mix of residential accommodation for older/disability groups is sound. ENP identified a higher than average West Oxon need for this.

The Eynsham area needs purpose-built elderly/disabled/extra care/sheltered homes close to local facilities.

**10i) How can the type of new homes provided best meet the needs of young people and households with children?**

This should be based on evidence. New forms of ownership and provision should be considered. Affordability should be protected in perpetuity by the legal terms of occupancy. The affordable housing stock should be managed by a community trust to meet both current and future need.

Affordable purchase should not be neglected so as to achieve a mix of tenures in the SDA and the existing adjacent estates of south west Eynsham

**10j) Should there be a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of essential local workers (i.e. those who provide frontline services in areas including health, education and community safety)? How can this best be achieved?**

Yes, there should be an emphasis on helping essential local workers with affordable rented and shared ownership homes. They are often low paid and much in need of homes close to work.

**10k) Do you think West Eynsham is a good opportunity to address the needs of the travelling community?**

No. Better located on the GV.

Provision of a traveller site is needed but it will need careful siting and design. Perhaps close to the existing Cuckoowood Farm site north of the GV.

**10l) Do you have any other general comments or observations on this matter?**

All new residential building developments should be undertaken with the conservation of precious natural resources as a high priority. A particular local concern is the Oxfordshire County Council plans for hugely increased amounts of sand and gravel extraction in the nearby countryside. The environmental damage this will wreak upon the area is extremely worrying to local residents and the wider population.

Building methods that reduce reliance on sand and gravel as aggregates should be encouraged in this development. Modular prefabricated designs that require less use of aggregates should be encouraged provided that their scale is small and design in keeping with the semi-rural landscape and older vernacular buildings nearby. They can also have high insulation values and energy saving measures built in more easily.

This could lead to more varied and interesting designs which could be mixed in with more conventional "stone" and brick. If this type of building is the predominant design on the SDA and in the GV it could save much of the charming countryside to the east of Eynsham and east and west of Lower Road from being pillaged for gravel.

Can the SPD set minimum space standards? A lot of speculative developments in recent times have very poor space standards especially for Affordable housing.

Extra consideration should be given to outdoor storage too for bicycles, mobility scooters, prams/buggies, clothes drying areas and provision of electric car charging points.

The SPD needs to include social housing providers and community cooperatives or non-commercial builders in the mix.



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