

## **EPIC Response to Park and Ride and A40 planning consultation**

EPIC ( Eynsham Planning Improvement Committee) wishes to lodge our objection to the planning application for the Park and Ride and changes to the A40 past Eynsham into Oxford.

We have consulted with our members and with Eynsham residents more widely and we attended the public meeting on Friday 12th July. These have confirmed our belief that these changes are totally inadequate to deal with the traffic problems of today... let alone in the future.

At the meeting it was acknowledged by OCC that these proposals seek to deal only with the current congestion. Questions about the impact of the Garden Village and new developments that will feed in to the A40 throughout West Oxfordshire were not seen as part of the discussion. Councillor Constance referred to these plans as a first step. We believe it is a first step in the wrong direction which will cause disruption in the short term and fail to provide a solution in the long term. It is a huge waste of taxpayers money which should be put towards lasting improvements. It is simply not acceptable to blame the lack of strategy on other departments, budget cycles, funding pots etc when what is required is a joined up approach across central and local governments to tackle a complicated issue.

At last there is increasing recognition that the whole of society must take action to tackle the climate crisis and this has now been acknowledged by central government and the local authorities involved. But this scheme is based on road "improvements" to ease commuter congestion with nothing included to provide alternatives to the A40, to change expectations, change behaviour, provide incentives for increasing occupancy, add school buses etc. The climate emergency requires that this must be the overriding consideration for our society. We are ideally placed to make that a reality by replacing this proposal with a truly contemporary solution building on the research recently published by Oxford University's internationally recognised CRED "Shifting the Focus"

The proposals for a bus route part of the way into Oxford were drawn up to deal with the existing stresses on the road as now acknowledged. The A40 is already at gridlock at key times and these delays have knock on effects in terms of loss of working time, hidden costs to businesses and the economy, air pollution and health, personal stress and mental health. A radical solution is needed to restore sanity to our local journeys and these paltry solutions go nowhere near enough. A bus lane alone will not get traffic off the road. The time spent parking, waiting for a bus when that has limited priority three miles up the road and rejoins a traffic jam is a completely inadequate incentive to get people out of their cars. The siting of the huge Park and Ride in Eynsham actively encourages more people to use their cars to get from Witney. The much needed extension of bus services to Headington and Cowley is only stage two... which may never happen as it gets overtaken by the urgent requirements of building 10000 more homes. The proposal creates a new bottleneck at Dukes Cut and has serious consequences for Wolvercote and the Pear Tree Roundabout

We are faced with a massive challenge which requires a massive and imaginative response. The current proposals merely tinker with the existing infrastructure. We need to be looking for long term solutions, harnessing the opportunities of new technologies. For example the predicted move towards driverless cars in place of individually owned cars may well make the Park and Ride redundant within a decade. EPIC and our many partners agree that the only solution to a problem on this scale is for a light railway or tram from Carterton running parallel to the A40 from Witney to Oxford. We were encouraged to hear Cllr Matthews supporting this.

Action taken now must address the challenges of huge house building planned all along the A40 into West Oxfordshire and into Gloucestershire... many of them already agreed in the Local Plan. The A40 is a major East West route, and tinkering with a few kilometres at Eynsham will make no difference.

The current proposals totally ignore the plans for a total of 3200 houses in Eynsham, with a Garden Village to the north which will require a number of crossing points between the new development and the existing village. It also fails to recognise the impact of the 1,000 houses to the west of Eynsham which will need access to the A40, and a road around the west of Eynsham to prevent the traffic going through the village to the toll bridge, which itself cannot cope with more volume. The current proposals give no recognition of the huge additional pressure on the road. The regular traffic will increase exponentially as the various developments come online.

This proposal will divert even more traffic over the toll bridge. Although lip service is paid to cycling, the well researched and popular proposal for the cycle lane on the B4044 has recently been taken off the table. The distance between Eynsham and Oxford along the A40 means that relatively few people can realistically use that for commuting.

There is no recognition of the access off the A40 to cope with the massive practicalities of building of the Garden Village. The master planning for the Garden Village is considering appropriate access points between Eynsham and the new development. Meanwhile four pedestrian crossings will be put in place that take no notice of the plans for layout of the roads or housing to the north.

As you will be aware the local opposition to the Garden Village understandably focuses largely around fears about the road and the quality of life for anyone who works in Oxford or beyond. It is one of the key principles of a Garden Village that there should be good transport infrastructure. That principle has already been ignored and the Garden Village should not go ahead without properly addressing the problems of the A40. These proposals do not do that.

These proposals represent old thinking when new solutions are urgently required and the application should be rejected as unfit for purpose.

Sue Raikes

Eynsham Planning Improvement Committee

On behalf of our members and the residents of Eynsham