

Template response letter to the WODC West Eynsham Strategic Development Area Planning Issues Paper – deadline September 21st 2018

Advice for using this template letter

West Oxfordshire District Council is currently in a 'consultation period' for the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area, in fields and farmland directly to the West of the current village.

You may have responded to the Garden Village consultation on August 3rd, however this is a separate and new consultation for a different development, and needs its own separate response. The West Eynsham development has the potential to affect Eynsham village even more than the Garden Village development.

This West Eynsham consultation period ends on Friday, 21st September 2018, and all responses to WODC's plans need to be submitted by that date.

We are aware that many local residents are interested in replying or writing to WODC, but may have difficulty finding the time to read the consultation document in depth.

The Eynsham Planning Improvement Campaign group (EPIC) has compiled the following response letter which takes into consideration feedback from the local community, and addresses most of the major issues raised.

You are welcome to use this letter as-is to send to the Planning Policy group at West Oxfordshire District Council, but we would encourage you to add your own thoughts and views to personalise your reply, as individually crafted letters will likely carry more weight with the council. A [Word version](#) of this document is also available for download and editing.

Also available are the ["7 Key Points"](#) and ["10 Questions Answered"](#) documents if you want more information to help you write your own reply.

When submitting your response to the consultation please be sure to sign and date this as well as include your postal address.

Send your letter as soon as possible to:
Planning Policy, West Oxfordshire District Council, New Yatt Road, Witney, OX28 1PB
– **it must arrive by 5pm on Friday 21 September.**

You may also submit your response by email to planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk

Planning Policy
West Oxfordshire District Council
New Yatt Road
Witney
OX28 1PB

planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk

Dear Sirs/Madams;

This letter is in response to the *West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)* consultation; as you have outlined in the document, “we will accept any form of written correspondence” so I wish to clarify that this is the purpose of this letter.

Due to the complexity and length of the document, and the large number of issues raised, many local residents have spent considerable time assisting with responses to the consultation, therefore many of the points I will raise may be similar to other submissions you will receive.

Because of this I also wish to clarify that the views and opinions expressed in this letter are my own, should be treated as a separate and unique response to this consultation, and given the same weight as any other individual submission.

A comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to development is definitely needed to bring forward the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) and achieve the best outcomes for the local community. Given the proximity of Garden Village (GV) development plans to the north and re-development of the A40, I do not consider the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) you are consulting on here will be sufficient in ensuring a well-coordinated development of the Eynsham area. This is because the SPD will not be legally binding and I am concerned 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.

I feel it is imperative that one overall legally binding Area Action Plan for both the Garden Village (GV) and West Eynsham SDA 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 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.

To lessen the huge impact of numerous construction projects on top of this, a properly thought-out phased plan for Eynsham has to be coordinated 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 above will put on the people of Eynsham and surrounding villages and design a stepped approach that will alleviate it somewhat.

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 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, a multi-purpose community space that could be used for community meeting, social and group functions, as a market for produce from community gardens or allotments, as a café, wine bar, or an outpost of the Eynsham Health Centre. 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.

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. The creation of the linear park does address this to some extent,

and also provides connectivity infrastructure for current and new residents to the open countryside. Key views as set out in this SPD of the conservation area of Eynsham and Wytham Woods to the east and farmland to the south and west could be preserved by keeping open the field where many local people walk their dogs. This “dog-walking” field would connect with the linear park and the disused railway line towards Station Road. Together these spaces would provide great health and recreational amenity and biodiversity assets for residents of the West Eynsham addition, and the rest of the village.

The provision of a new school is essential as the Eynsham Primary is too distant from the new houses. If, as is rumoured, the existing primary school proves to have more capacity than expected as a result of recent falling pupil numbers, there should still be a new school in West Eynsham. The fall in pupil numbers is sure to be a temporary issue; if 1000 homes are built, Eynsham will be too large a settlement for just the one school. In addition, most primary pupils will be unlikely to walk the 2 km to Eynsham Primary 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.

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.

High density housing on the site will reduce land take and car use by encouraging walking and cycling in the SDA (and Eynsham). It should not be an Eynsham pastiche or endless characterless suburbia threatening the existing character of Eynsham. It is also essential that new housing is built to the same innovative high standards as the Garden Village so that the character of the whole area is consistent, and so that the development in West Eynsham is as attractive for new residents as the GV itself.

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 needed more in Eynsham than large detached 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.

High priority should go to affordable rented and shared ownership; the 2:1 ratio in favour of affordable rented is a good one. At this out of town location lower prices should make it possible for more people to aspire to buying a small starter home.

The mix of residential accommodation for older/disability groups presented is welcomed. ENP identified a higher than average West Oxfordshire need for this. The Eynsham area needs purpose-built extra care/sheltered homes for older and disabled people close to local facilities.

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. 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).

Given multiple options for access from the A40, the proposed Spine Road should be the main or only access into the SDA by car and it should run on the outer edge of the development so that through traffic to the Toll bridge and southern industrial estate is not passing through the new houses. This will also keep more traffic out of the village centre which is currently heavily congested at peak times, and it would provide a defensible edge to the enlarged village. Safe crossing points on the Spine Road are essential to allow and encourage pedestrian, mobility vehicular, horse and cycling access to the countryside. For this reason, it should be in keeping more with the country roads surrounding Eynsham rather than a straight, fast bypass like the current

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

This is going to be a huge project and it is known that at present WODC planning department is under-resourced. I would need to be reassured that the Planning Department is sufficiently resourced to undertake this enormously complicated planning work, especially in consideration of the additional demands of the Garden Village development.

I would also like reassurance that WODC and OCC have thoroughly thought through the consequences of their decisions. For instance, how are they are going to manage and maintain traffic flow to, through, and from West Oxfordshire without causing gridlock on the A40 at Eynsham; on the Eynsham bypasses; and the centre of the village? It is already becoming difficult to navigate the centre of Eynsham 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, followed by other infrastructure for a local centre.

I hope you take the above issues into consideration, and would request that the individual points raised here are clearly addressed in WODC's consultation response, in the spirit of transparency and open communication between the district council and its constituents.

Regards,

Signed

Date

Address