

WEST EYNESHAM STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREA

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

January 2019

*Issues Paper
Consultation
Summary Report*

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Introduction

Background

Land to the west of Eynsham is allocated in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 for an urban extension of around 1,000 homes together with supporting services and facilities ('the West Eynsham SDA'). To help guide the future development of the site, the District Council intends to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the site in the form of a Development Framework. This will set out the key objectives and development principles that will need to be addressed as the SDA is taken forward and be a material consideration in the determination of any future planning applications for the site.

As a first step in the process, the Council published an initial 'issues paper' for an 8-week period of consultation from 27 July to 21 September 2018. The purpose of the issues paper consultation was to:

- Briefly explain the background to the proposal and how we have arrived at this point;
- Provide an overview of the West Eynsham site;
- Highlight the physical and policy constraints affecting the site; and
- Seek initial views on the key issues and priorities to be addressed through the SPD as the site is taken forward

A total of 122 responses were received to the consultation including from individuals/residents, local authorities, statutory bodies, town and parish councils, developers/landowners/agents, and other organisations as shown in Figure 1 below.

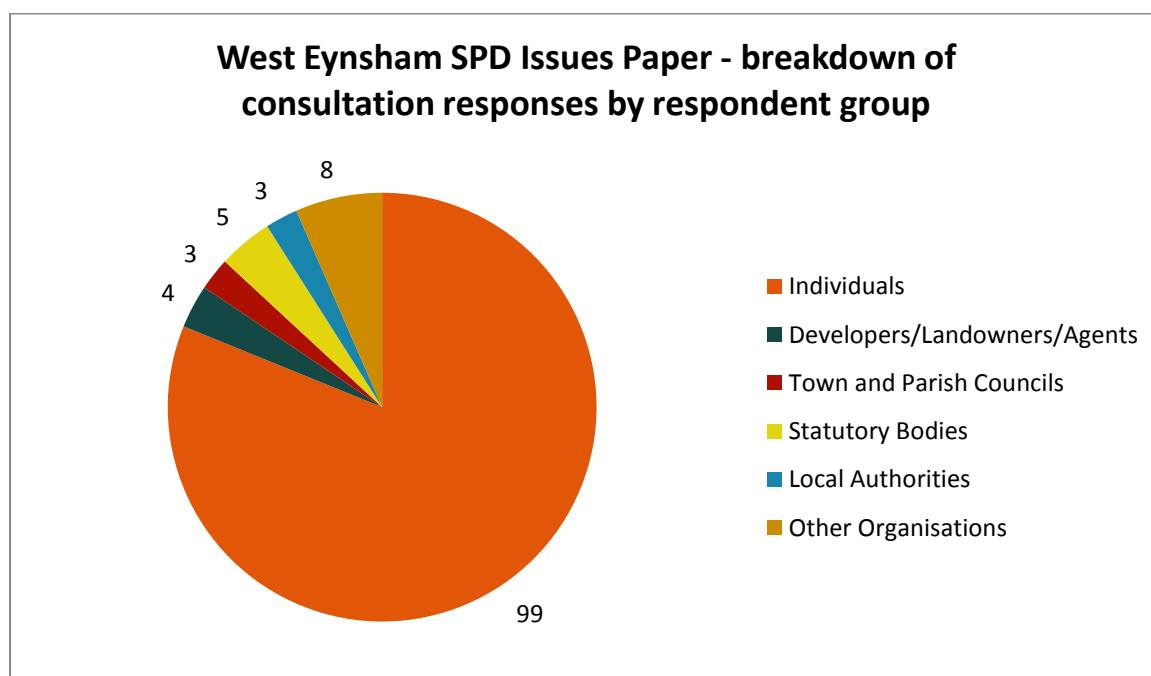


Figure 1 West Eynsham SPD issues paper consultation responses

The representations were submitted by email or post, as either open letters or in direct response to specific sections of the issues paper or consultation questions posed.

The comments received are available online in full¹ but for ease of reference, this summary report provides an overview of the main issues raised.

Report Content and Structure

This summary report distils the key points raised by respondents to the issues paper consultation. It should be noted that the report aims to identify the main issues raised but does not quantify or weigh responses. The points listed are therefore *not* in any hierarchical order. Importantly, the report summarises the responses received and does not include West Oxfordshire District Council's views or responses.

In terms of structure, the consultation summary report mirrors the structure used in the issues paper with each section organised by the following themes: Background Context; Site Constraints; and Key Issues & Priorities for the West Eynsham SDA.

Each section begins with a brief bullet-point summary of the main issues raised by respondents, followed by a longer summary of the key points raised in reference to each sub-section. The consultation responses to the questions that were posed in the issues paper have also been summarised as part of these summaries.

¹ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/1906161/west-eynsham-sda-issues-paper-consultation-schedule-of-responses.pdf>

Background Context

Key points raised

- A co-ordinated and holistic approach to development is needed to ensure that the existing village retains its special character and any new development brings vitality to the area;
- Some concerns expressed that the West Eynsham site allocation was insufficiently justified;
- Argued by some that the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan presents a more acceptable number of new homes for the West Eynsham expansion;
- The SPD should include more emphasis on renewable energy and sustainable design/construction;
- Suggestions that the West Eynsham SDA should be led by an AAP or be subsumed by the Oxfordshire Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP).

Site Selection

Some concerns were expressed about the methods used to both assess the West Eynsham SDA site and subsequently to allocate it for development. Concerns are summarised as follows:

- The extent of site area assessed;
- The justification that the development of West Eynsham would make a western spine road viable is also questioned by some (see comments in more detail under *Key Issues & Priorities: Meeting Identified Housing Needs*).
- Insufficient weight has been given to options at Long Hanborough given the rail station and at the North Oxford Gateway site given Oxford's unmet housing need.

Relationship to the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan

Several representations welcomed the acknowledgement given in the issues paper regarding the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) and overlapping objectives such as the provision of affordable homes; however it was felt by some that several aspects of the draft ENP were overlooked in the issues paper and in the allocation of the land more generally, including:

- The allocation of 1,000 homes in the Local Plan exceeds the ENP's recommendation for 750 homes;
- The need and opportunity for zero carbon building, enforcement of the highest environmental standards and using the latest technology for renewable energy. The western development should be an exemplar for eco-building standards;
- Concerns regarding the implementation of the western spine road.

In addition there were some calls for productive engagement between Eynsham Parish Council and WODC in order to understand community priorities.

Relationship to the Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village

Several representations acknowledge the Oxfordshire Cotswold Garden Village (OCGV) and argue that the proximity of the two sites necessitates that they are interrelated. The extent of this relationship, and its implications for the SPD, are however considered from various viewpoints among respondents.

A number of representations argue that, due to the proximity and scale of both the West Eynsham SDA and OCGV, both sites should be considered together in a single Area Action Plan to ensure the best outcomes for the local community. This is further framed within the context of the statutory status of the AAP and a fear that the ‘weaker’ legal status of the SPD will result in an un-coordinated development of poorer quality.

Beyond the legal status of the SPD, concerns regarding the relationship between the West Eynsham SDA and OCGV are highlighted in the context of shared infrastructure and services, particularly education and healthcare provision. The concurrent development of both sites will necessitate the provision of additional school places at primary and secondary levels, as well as additional capacity for primary healthcare. A co-ordinated approach between the West Eynsham SDA, OCGV and existing Eynsham village is therefore needed to ensure effective provision for new and existing residents.

Alternatively, some respondents argue that the West Eynsham’s housing allocation – or at least the apportionment to help meet Oxford’s unmet housing need – should be absorbed into the Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village in order to preserve the site. Combining delivery of the sites is also suggested as a way to attract further government funding to ensure that adequate infrastructure is delivered.

Finally, some concerns about linking the two sites were expressed as this could potentially risk the delivery of much needed new homes.

Site Constraints

Key points raised

- The countryside surrounding Eynsham village is highly valued among local residents and should be protected. If this is not possible, explicit solutions to mitigate against negative impacts should be identified.
- Access to the countryside is a priority.
- More emphasis should be placed on the Scheduled Monuments and areas of archaeological interest to protect them. The methodology used to mitigate the effect of the development on the historic environment should be reflected in the overall masterplan.
- The Flood Risk Assessment must be very thorough in order to adequately address the implications of an additional 1,000 homes and associated infrastructure within the site and elsewhere especially as there are Zone 2 and Zone 3 areas within the site.
- Land south of the Chil Brook/Chilbridge Road and the Fruitlands Woodland are special areas of biodiversity that merit protection. The development should also include networks of wildlife corridors, edges, grassland and gaps in fences or walls to ensure that species can move freely throughout.
- A net gain in biodiversity may not be possible to achieve. A careful assessment of existing flora and fauna is needed alongside an environmental impact assessment to enable measurable net gain.
- The Bartholomew School playing fields should be retained.
- Congestion on the A40 is a key constraint that must be addressed. Highway improvements must be coupled with improved bus services, cycling infrastructure and access to Hanborough Station.
- There are concerns that the integration of West Eynsham with the existing village will result in increased congestion and parking problems. Access between West Eynsham and the existing village should be for pedestrians and cyclists only.
- The alignment and junctions of the western spine road must not allow the village to become a 'rat run'.

Landscape

The land surrounding Eynsham village is a popular and valued part of the countryside that local people access regularly (see 'existing uses' below). The issues paper identifies the 'unspoilt rural character' of the Eynsham vale, which will require different strategies for management and enhancement', however, the ways that this will be achieved, and to what extent, are questioned in some responses. Therefore, it was requested by some that greater emphasis and detail is placed on either safeguarding the countryside adjacent to the village, or explicitly identifying the ways that negative impacts will be mitigated.

Key Views

In response to the section regarding key views, one resident discusses the personal value that the landscape, views and general setting of Eynsham resonate. While this detailed response is highly subjective, it also speaks to the aspects of the Eynsham area that are less easily quantified but are nonetheless important to acknowledge. The key views are described as 'enjoyable', 'restorative', and able to produce 'a feeling of belonging to a close, friendly community'. Key views, and access to

them/the countryside, are therefore noted as a priority to protect in order to maintain their physical and mental health benefits. This is further discussed in the next section on key issues and priorities. Last, a minor factual error was also noted in paragraph 4.10 (page 13 and subsequent pages) which incorrectly identifies Eynsham’s church tower as St. Peter and St Paul rather than the Grade 2* Listed St. Leonard’s.

Heritage

In addition to the heritage constraints identified in the issues paper, responses also draw attention to heritage assets that merit further acknowledgement. With regards to archaeology, it was stated that an archaeological investigation in advance of a Thames Water pipeline has identified evidence of prehistoric settlement. The extent and character of this has not yet been defined. There is additional evidence of medieval ridge and furrow strip field systems across the site that is relatively undisturbed and may be of archaeological interest.

While the Eynsham Abbey (site of) is mentioned in the issues paper and not considered to be of direct relevance to the SPD due to its distance from the site, some consultation responses argue that this Scheduled Monument and its setting should be given more consideration. Though the Abbey Fishponds are a non-designated heritage asset, it is argued that they should be considered as potentially of equal significance as the Abbey in accordance with Paragraph 194 (footnote 163) of the NPPF (2018).

Overall, the methodology used to mitigate the effect of the development on the historic environment should be reflected in the overall masterplan of the site and conform to the NPPF. With regards to the desk based assessment (DBA), it was recommended that this include all nationally recognised data sources along with Historic Landscape Characterisation data, Lidar, National Mapping Programme (NMP) data and aerial photographic data taken since the completion of the NMP. To ensure the standard of the DBA a written scheme of investigation outlining both the sources and the methodology to be used should be agreed in advance of the study being undertaken.

Flood Risk

Though most of the area is classified as Flood Zone 1 (low risk), some respondents argue that more emphasis and detail is needed around the areas which are classified as Flood Zone 2 (medium risk) and 3 (high risk). In particular, there are a number of concerns raised regarding the impact of the development on flood risk elsewhere, especially south of the Chil Brook, even if areas identified as Flood Zones 2 and 3 are not developed. There is additional concern that the existing flood history of the site suggested that SUDS will not be effective on a site that is already water-logged during wet weather. Other engineering solutions, though possible, may be prohibitively expensive. It was also suggested that, due to the presence of Flood Zones 2 and 3, there is significantly less land available for housing which would imply that where housing is built, it may be at unacceptably high densities. Ultimately, the proposed Flood Risk Assessment must be very thorough in order to adequately address the implications of an additional 1,000 homes and associated infrastructure.

Public Rights of Way

A number of responses to the consultation make it clear that the network of existing public rights of ways (PRoWs) are of special significance to residence of Eynsham. Access to the countryside is relatively good to the west and north of the village and these paths play a significant role in the health and well-being of many. These vital links to the countryside give access to equally well-used fields and there are concerns that the West Eynsham SDA would make it much harder for existing

residents to access the fields and footpaths they love. The role of the new linear park was considered within many of the responses received and these comments are summarised later in this report.

Biodiversity

As with themes related to key views and public rights of ways, comments regarding the SDA's biodiversity were impassioned and personal, underscoring the importance of these assets to the local community.

Two areas are repeatedly identified as special areas of biodiversity that merit protection. The first is land south of the Chil Brook/Chilbridge Road, which is a site of significant and protected wildlife including the red crested newt, bats and barn owls and it is edged by an ancient hedge (Chilbridge road side) from medieval times. The area is also an important recreational area for locals.

The second site is the Fruitlands Woodland which includes areas covered by tree preservation orders and is an important space for both wildlife and the community. In addition to the countryside in general, the PRoWs mentioned above also provide ecological benefits and are considered to be biodiversity asset rich in wild flowers and butterflies. Thus, as much of the rural land to the west of Eynsham should be retained as possible. Alternatively, the discussion of the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation was regarded as less relevant by some than other more immediate sites of local biodiversity.

Some concerns expressed as to whether or not a net gain in biodiversity can be achieved with some calls for a careful assessment of existing flora and fauna alongside an environmental impact assessment to enable measureable net gain. Further, it was also suggested that if building must occur, it should be built in consultation with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and designed so animals can move freely throughout the residential areas connected by green wildlife corridors of hedges, strips of wildflower grassland or gaps in fences and walls.

Existing Uses

Many responses highlight the need to retain the playing fields related to Bartholomew School on Witney Road/Old Witney Road. Relocating the school's playing fields further west is thought to negatively impact outdoor sport time of students. And, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, Eynsham's surrounding countryside is an invaluable resource for many who use the fields for walking, family exercise, dog-walking, and as general informal community space.

Noise

Few responses were received with regards to noise; however those that were received are unconvinced that construction noise will be minimised based on previous concerns raised by residents for other developments. Moreover, the inclusion of potential noise from the new Western Spine Road as a constraint is interpreted by some as an indication that the road will be used as a bypass.

Transport & Movement

District-wide and Beyond

As outlined in the issues paper, many respondents identify the A40 as a key consideration due to existing congestion, the additional vehicular traffic that will result from the provision of 1,000 new homes, and the proposed improvement schedule. The additional pressures put on roads as a result from developments in Witney and Long Hanborough must also be taken into account.

Several responses identify different ways that current and predicted congestion on the A40 can/should be improved, including:

- Turning the A40 into a dual carriageway;
- Re-routing the A40 to the north with all junctions via flyovers;
- Junction and road improvements around north and west Oxford;
- Inter-regional transportation infrastructure improvements to facilitate traffic movement beyond Oxford.

Though A40 improvements have been identified, only some have been completed and have funding fully secured. Therefore, some responses also argue that there is a need to pause the construction of new homes until funding is secured and/or improvements are not only in place, but also have demonstrated their adequacy for existing and future demand.

Additionally, several responses also identify the need to provide alternative transportation options and to reduce the number of private vehicles on the road rather than just managing their increasing numbers. Suggestions for additional transportation network improvements include:

- Additional rail-based transport options, including light rail along the A40, with consideration given to the provision of new rail stations at Yarnton, Witney and Carterton;
- Seamless cycling connections along the A40 and connecting to the proposed community path to Botley (B4044);
- Relocation of the new Eynsham Park & Ride closer to Witney;
- Additional provision of walking and cycling infrastructure between Eynsham and the new Park & Ride;
- The addition of a dedicated return bus lane from Oxford or a reversible tidal central bus lane;
- Better access to Hanborough Station for cars, cyclists and pedestrians via Lower Road with additional parking capacity, station improvements and track alignment to accommodate additional service capacity;
- Attractive and improved bus services i.e. regular, affordable, efficient services to/from surrounding villages as well as key urban destinations;
- Improved bus infrastructure within Eynsham, including sheltered stops, real-time service information boards, and accessible kerbs for those with mobility aids;
- Bridge improvements at Duke's Cut, the Cotswold Line railway, Oxford Canal and Swinford Toll Bridge to allow for bus priority lanes.

While it was noted that it may not be immediately possible deliver rail-based transportation alternatives, comments also note the need to safeguard areas to deliver these links in the future. Others suggest that improvements should be pushed further and be more radical with costs amortised over a long period of time.

Broadly, there was also a recognised need to not only reduce car dependency, but to minimising the need to travel altogether. This is raised alongside concerns that additional homes will result in additional commuters and thus additional greenhouse gas that will negatively impact air quality and contribute towards climate change. Noise pollution and safety concerns as a result of increasing traffic in and around Eynsham are also raised.

Village Access

Broadly, responses identify the need to control and manage access to Eynsham village, both from the A40 and between the West Eynsham SDA. Concerns that the village is used as a rat run to bypass busy roads especially during school run hours are frequently noted, with concerns that this will become a growing problem if not adequately addressed. Congestion within the village is made worse by this through-traffic as well as non-residents who park on side roads and use the village as an informal park and ride into Oxford. Thus, a number of respondents identified the need for:

- Infrastructure improvements within the village centre;
- Increased parking restriction and traffic enforcement;
- Highly integrated and accessible cycling and pedestrian infrastructure to deter the use of private vehicles; and
- Improved bus services.

It was also stated by some that traffic from West Eynsham should not have direct access onto village roads. Instead, all motor traffic should be funnelled onto the A40 in both directions, leaving paths and bicycle tracks for entry into the village.

Western spine road

Comments regarding the western spine road generally align with the key issues and priorities set out in the issues paper. Comments add further detail by suggesting direct access onto the wider highway network, at the soonest opportunity limiting traffic movements directed through the village. It is further suggested that the proposed spine road should be put in place before the houses are built.

Sand & Gravel

While there are no concerns regarding any potential issues of mineral sterilisation or similar within the SDA site, some respondents identify nominated sites within the 'Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 2 – Site Allocations' (August 2018) directly to the east of Eynsham, north-east of Eynsham that straddles the A40, and along Lower Road towards Church Hanborough. Hence additional information is sought regarding the wider geological context of Eynsham beyond just the SDA site.

Further, though not directly related to sand and gravel, the consultation also raised concerns regarding the agricultural importance of the site. More specifically, the majority of the site is comprised of farmland, some of which is understood to be Grade 3a 'best and most versatile' agricultural land'. It is noted that in the present context of climate change, there is an even greater argument for preserving land that can adapt best to new crops and farming techniques and should therefore be safeguarded from development.

Key Issues & Priorities for the West Eynsham SDA

Summary

- A comprehensive and coordinated approach to development around Eynsham is essential
- The Infrastructure Delivery Plan and a phased approach to development are strongly supported.
- Sustainable design standards should be included in the SPD
- The compact and walkable layout of Eynsham should be replicated in the SDA
- As much of the ‘natural’ and rural character of the local area should be preserved
- Emphasis should be placed on providing pedestrian and cycling links, especially to the countryside, rather than facilitating car traffic through the village. Bus services should also be improved.
- A new ‘linear park’ could provide important recreational, leisure, environmental and ecological value, as well as benefitting mental wellbeing and facilitating community cohesion.
- Access to the countryside must be retained.
- More primary school spaces are needed but there was not a clear consensus on whether this should be delivered through an additional school or expansion of the existing primary school. Additional secondary places will also be needed, but again, there were many differing points of view on how this should be delivered.
- A new local centre is supported but it must not detract from or diminish the local businesses the existing village currently has.
- There was no clear consensus of opinion on whether the western spine road is necessary, what the alignment should look like, or how it relates to the village.
- Additional funding and capacity for healthcare in Eynsham is needed as soon as possible. There are divergent views on how this should be done.
- Public transportation service frequency, network coverage, and waiting facilities need significant improvement. Infrastructure for active forms of transportation also needs to be improved and/or expanded.
- A suite of supporting infrastructure should be delivered as part of the development, including: a multi-purpose community building; burial grounds/crematorium; allotments; playing grounds/sports pitches; a market area; family centre; dog walking park; increased parking provision and enforcement/management and other social infrastructure.
- Green infrastructure and sustainable design standards should be included in the SPD.
- Housing provision must result in truly affordable housing for local people, especially young families, ‘key workers’ and single people. Smaller and more affordable homes with a range of tenure options should be required.
- A retirement home or sheltered housing for older people should be included in the plans near to any local centre.

The need for a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to development

There was a general consensus among respondents that a co-ordinated approach to all of the planned development in the local area is crucial. Particular points raised in support of this approach included the opportunities this would present to:

- rationalise the provision of infrastructure and services to best meet needs of all the communities; and
- enhance the area as a whole, e.g. including the character of the region, the well-being of existing and new residents, biodiversity and local wildlife.

As set out earlier in this report, it was suggested by some that bringing forward both the West Eynsham and OCGV developments as one legally-binding AAP could be most effective in ensuring the most coordinated approach and there was concern that there is currently not sufficient 'joined up' thinking between the two new developments.

Notwithstanding the view of some respondents that the West Eynsham SDA should be planned through an AAP process, others were satisfied that an SPD would be appropriate. In particular, the proposal that the SPD contains a masterplan to achieve comprehensive planning and delivery of the SDA was supported. It was believed that this would provide flexibility for individual planning applications to come forward on parts of the site where they are consistent with the masterplan. It was also thought that there would need to be a measure of independent validation of the masterplan.

By planning the development in a coordinated manner it was considered that there would be a greater opportunity to address traffic constraints and mitigate potential further traffic impacts on the network, particularly the A40 as part of the Major Road Network. Oxfordshire County Council emphasised the 'need for cross-boundary working and an area-wide approach to traffic management'. Also recognised was the importance of the stepped approach to housing delivery as adopted within the Local Plan, thought to be particularly applicable in this area.

There was also strong support for the development of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and that this would enable the timely, equitable, viable and successful delivery of infrastructure to support the development. The importance of phased development was recognised with respondents emphasising the need for early delivery of affordable housing; health-care facilities; other infrastructure for a local centre; and transport infrastructure (notably the spine road). It was also recognised that an IDP would be able to underpin both the West Eynsham SDA and Garden Village developments.

A further comment on this matter was that the construction phase of the development should also be comprehensively planned in order to minimise disruption.

Character and form of development

With regards to the character and form of the West Eynsham SDA, respondents broadly supported higher density in some areas in order to reduce land take, especially south of Chilbridge Road. By increasing the density of the built up areas, walking and cycling would be encouraged while discouraging access by private vehicles. Alternatively, this should also be balanced with the need to complement Eynsham's existing rural character, which also features an eclectic mix of vernacular architecture, walkability and human-scaled development. 'Cotswold pastiche' should be avoided and character areas comprising mixes of architectural styles should be used to avoid the creation of a 'characterless suburbia'. Cumulatively, the character of the whole area – the existing village, the extension to the west, and the garden village to the north – should be somewhat consistent albeit innovative. Policies within the SPD also present an opportunity to enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local area.

Several responses highlight the need to ensure that environmental standards are incorporated into the SPD in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable design. In line with the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan, emphasis should be placed on opportunities for zero-carbon building that meet the highest environmental standards. The latest technologies for renewable energy should also be pursued to make the West Eynsham development an exemplar for eco-building standards. Additional consideration should be given to ensure that environmental harm from construction is minimised. The SPD should also address point m) within Local Plan Policy EW2 that requires development to demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.

Similarly, green areas within should remain as 'natural' as possible, supporting local wildlife and mirroring the countryside and avoiding manicured and constructed parks. Landscaping should also be used to maintain the rural character of the village. Lighting should also be considered to minimise adverse impacts on the landscape and biodiversity. Appropriate tools to measure biodiversity should also be required in the SPD in order to ensure net gain is measurable. Additionally, specific guidance should be provided regarding minimum standards for features that will be beneficial to wildlife within the development, such as a ratio determining the number of bat/bird boxes required per residential unit.

The social landscape is also discussed in some responses and reiterates the strong community spirit that makes the village such an attractive place to live. Existing local business and shops should be supported by the new development rather than threatened by it, and new small local business should aim to be complimentary to those already established in the village.

Furthermore, other respondents suggested that a policy requiring a Health Impact Assessment is included in the SPD, the results of which are used to inform health and wellbeing priorities to ensure that the health and wellbeing of current and new residents, workers and visitors to Eynsham is maintained or improved. Oxfordshire County Council's Walking and Cycling Design Standards should also be required as part of the SPD. Accessibility for wheelchair users should also be addressed.

Achieving effective integration with Eynsham

Respondents felt strongly that the proposed level of development should not have a detrimental impact on the vibrancy and viability of the existing community of Eynsham. It was also deemed important that the existing village should benefit from the development as well as ensuring that new residents are integrated into the existing community.

It is clear that respondents are considering the West Eynsham proposals alongside the interrelated proposed Garden Village development, some even suggesting that both developments should align to the TCPA garden city principles. In particular the importance of land value capture for the local community, and through social and infrastructural provision, has been highlighted. However there was also an element of concern that the ‘power, practice and nature’ of large scale residential development currently makes a beneficial outcome for the village ‘unlikely’.

A number of respondents provided comments on potential access points to/from the new development as follows:

- One-way access onto A40 but not providing a cut through from A40 to B4449 by Oakfield industrial estate / or at least access designed in such a way that deters through traffic.
- A mixed response was received as to whether there should be access from/onto Chilbridge Road – on the one hand this could better join the new housing to the existing centre, but as an alternative to the western spine road. On the other hand there were concerns of impact on the existing green, safe private road/bridleway which is popular for walking, cycling and running.
- Safety concerns regarding the proposed access point at the Old Witney Road as well as capacity concerns of this access point and that onto Acre End Street. Access onto Old Witney Road could potentially only be for pedestrians/cyclists.
- New traffic generated from new housing should not be routed through the village given current issues of on street parking and restricted road width.
- Further transport modelling required, including an estimation of the traffic volumes likely to distribute from the routes into Eynsham village itself.
- It is crucial that access to the public footpaths to the west with their feel of entering open countryside is retained.
- The overall focus should be on providing high quality pedestrian and cycle links, the latter of which has significant potential in this area given the flat land. Attention should also be given to the impact beyond the access points and onward pedestrian and cycle links within the existing village.
- Nevertheless some respondents thought that it would be too far to walk from some areas of the new development to the village centre.
- Provision of public transport should also be a key consideration.
- As set out in the draft neighbourhood plan, the two vehicular access points already permitted should be the only direct accesses built between Eynsham and the SDA.
- Access out of the new development should not exacerbate existing traffic problems in the centre of Eynsham.
- Some support for the new western spine road being the main/only access by car into the development area (see further comments in relation to proposed western spine road later in this report).

It was thought that an Access/Travel Strategy and masterplan should be integral to informing the most appropriate access points to ensure the policy objectives of the site are delivered. It was also suggested that elements of the strategy such as indicative speed limits, broad design specification and requirements of the junctions with the A40 and B4449 would need to be informed by a transport assessment that establishes the amount and type of traffic arising from the development.

A further suggestion included that the West Eynsham development itself could have its own local centre including for example a convenience store, multi-purpose community space, and restoring recently closed services in Eynsham such as a family centre.

Potential provision of a new ‘linear park’

A number of comments express regret concerning the potential loss of existing countryside however recognise that the potential provision of new ‘linear park’ is important in terms of recreational, leisure, environmental and ecological value as well as mental wellbeing and community cohesion. It was also thought that connectivity to the countryside could be improved for both current and new residents with the opportunity to link with existing public walkways and paths recognised. The park needs to be of sufficient width to fully realise this potential.

There was support for development of the linear park along the Chil Brook as proposed given its role in dividing and softening the site as well as protecting the natural environment surrounding the Brook. It was thought that this followed the natural topography and allowed for connection with the Fish Ponds area to the southwest.

On the other hand, there was a degree of concern expressed that development of the linear park will “humanise” a natural area of biodiversity with specific concern of noise, light and chemical pollution that could be generated. The suggestion was also made that “constructed” green space should not replace the fields, footpaths and hedgerows which support native species and wildlife.

It was suggested that preservation of the key views of the conservation area of Eynsham and Wytham Woods should be ensured by retaining the field that is particularly popular among local dog walkers. This would provide a connection to the linear park from the disused rail line towards Station Road.

A further suggestion included the need for the Fruitlands woodland (The Old Orchard) to be incorporated into the linear park, an area recognised for its significant recreational, wildlife, biodiversity and historical value (as covered in more detail within the earlier *Site Constraints (Biodiversity)* section of this report). The development also needs to have regard to the role that trees play in maintaining air quality and absorbing carbon emissions from the A40. It was also thought that there is potential for connection through to the Millennium woodland north of the A40.

Also highlighted was the need for consideration to be given to the wider permeability of the development to wildlife by including green linkages throughout the development and features for wildlife within the built environment for example green roofs and nesting sites. A further respondent emphasised the importance that green infrastructure is planned in the context of linking to the existing settlement.

The retention of key views

Consultation responses with regards to the retention of key views broadly agree with the sightlines identified in the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan and summarised in the issues paper. An additional key view is also identified looking west towards the woodland and from the playing grounds on Old Witney Road.

More so than key views, however, respondents emphasise the need to retain access to the countryside, overlapping with identified areas where key views should be maintained. As mentioned previously, a number of respondents make the case for keeping the land south of Chilbridge Road free from development in order to preserve these key access points to the countryside and rural views out of the village to the south and west. Exceptions to this could be the siting of the burial ground and sports pitches. A soft edge should be maintained through the maintenance of hedgerows, fields and paths. This area could in turn connect to the proposed 'linear park'.

Where the SDA will significantly change view to the countryside, as well as access to it, respondents request that more explicit acknowledgement is made. This is especially true to the west of the existing village and where the western link road will pose as a boundary to access to the countryside. Crossing places should be delivered both to the west over the spine road, and north into Millennium Wood to ensure access is maintained while protecting the Chilbridge Bridleway.

School Provision

Primary School provision

The need for a new primary school was queried by some with the argument made that the existing school already has excess capacity, on the basis of the Neighbourhood Plan's proposal for the site to accommodate 600+ homes. Suggestion was also made that to address capacity issues, the children's centre could be made into an Infant's school with the existing primary school becoming a Junior school. A further suggestion was that the existing school requires capital investment rather than building a new school which could end up being under-funded.

On the contrary, many of the responses received emphasised the necessity that a new primary school is provided as part of the development.

It was generally considered that 1,000 new homes will have a significant impact on existing school capacity which, notwithstanding recent falling pupil numbers (thought to be a temporary issue), is argued not to be capable of taking more pupils, even if expanded. It was also suggested by some that the existing primary school is already too large to be an effective village school. There could also be a potential impact on the performance of Bartholomew School.

The distance of the existing primary school from the West Eynsham development site (c. 2km) was also of particular concern. Primary pupils would not be likely to walk, and cycling very dangerous, therefore there would be subsequent increase in car use and inappropriate on-street parking. Traffic congestion at school delivery/pick-up times is already considered to be unacceptable.

Also suggested was the opportunity for a new school to also provide facilities that could be used by the local community.

It was also considered that, even with the provision of a new school, funding is needed to invest in the existing primary school to bring it to the same modern standard.

In relation to the location of a new primary school, ensuring that pupils are able to cycle or walk to school was again considered important by a number of respondents. It was also highlighted that reference should be made to Oxfordshire County Council's school location and design criteria.

To summarise, an initial judgment of the potential school site options as set out in the issues paper is provided by the County Council as follows:

- Corlan Farm – an area at risk of flooding, contrary to OCC requirements
- Bartholomew School Playing Fields - increasing the distance between Bartholomew School and its playing fields is not supported.
- Land south of Chilbridge Road - an area of flood risk, contrary to OCC requirements.
- West of Chilbridge Road – further assessment necessary and other locations not yet identified may be better. Some concern that this option is at the far edge of the eventual development, which may delay its availability.

As a general observation, OCC highlight that walking and cycling infrastructure should be planned around the new primary school.

OCC also require further information to be provided including, inter alia masterplans with indicative school boundaries, topographical information, geo-environmental desktop study, hydrological and flood risk assessment and a noise survey. Site visits by the County Council's education architects would also be necessary to confirm suitability. Further detailed liaison between West Oxfordshire District Council and OCC is also necessary.

Secondary School provision

Concern has been expressed by some that Bartholomew School does not have the capacity for the level of planned growth, and particularly that it may not be possible to continue to accept students from surrounding villages. Extra provision for this school is therefore considered a necessity.

The argument was also made that the school site should not be split. It was suggested that the West Eynsham development would be a better location than the proposed garden village site for a new separate Sixth Form, with the A40 considered to be a barrier to commuting between the two school sites. Locating the Sixth Form within the garden village was considered likely to foster greater car use.

There was also concern that if a Sixth Form centre was provided as part of the garden village site that this would not be built in time for the anticipated population increase resulting from the West Eynsham expansion. This was a further reason given for it being considered unsuitable to locate the new primary school on the secondary school's playing fields.

Potential creation of a new local centre

Responses regarding the potential creation of new local centre agreed with the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan proposal – that if the West Eynsham SDA were to come forward, the provision of convenience shopping to serve the immediate population would be supported. The new local centre should encourage small-scale commercial and retail uses in keeping with the existing village character. Additional facilities proposed in responses include a multi-use community space, an outpost of the Eynsham Medical Centre, and school. Overall, any new local centre should aim to help restore services to Eynsham that have been recently been reduced, complement or

enhance existing services, and to meet identified needs of both the current and future local population.

Broadly, responses also identify the importance of walkability, mirroring the accessible form of the existing village and encouraging the development of a sense of community and place. Play areas and open spaces should also be included as essential components of the development rather than unintegrated ‘add-ons’.

The nature of the western spine road

A mix of support and opposition to the proposed western spine road was received. Among the opposition was a challenge regarding the need for the spine road among respondents who also challenged the level of growth planned i.e. it was thought by some that the spine road would not be necessary if fewer homes were to be developed.

Another of the concerns expressed was that if the road were to run through the centre of the West Eynsham development, this could become a ‘rat-run’ and, whilst some supported the positioning of the spine road to the outer western edge of the development, others thought this alternative ring-road could form a barrier between the village and the countryside and leave Eynsham being ‘encircled’ by roads.

There was also concern that another junction onto the A40 would exacerbate traffic congestion problems currently experienced on the A40 during peak commuting times, with the potential impact spreading further back into Witney (in the a.m.) and Cassington (in the p.m.). Further concerns of more pollution and carbon emissions on the A40 were also highlighted. Another respondent argued that the congested state of the A40 (and the eastern ring road) in fact highlights the need for an additional car route such as the spine road.

The potential transfer of more A40 traffic towards the toll bridge was also in some respects considered to be a positive outcome but others considered this to be unnecessary. Many however welcomed the role that the spine road could take in reducing the amount of through traffic within the centre of the village.

With regard to funding, the spine road was considered one of the key strategic infrastructure provisions contribution of which should be required from the development by a mechanism in the SPD.

In terms of the form that the spine road takes, it was considered by some that this should be a “village street which happens to connect with the road network at both ends” and “in keeping with the country roads surrounding Eynsham rather than a straight, fast bypass”. Madley Park was highlighted as a successful exemplar and the Local Plan Inspector’s Report was also cited, in particular the requirement that the road should be “designed so as not to encourage through traffic”.

Other suggestions included the need for a 20mph speed restriction and crossing points, allowing safe access to the countryside should be provided for pedestrians, mobility vehicle users, horse-riders and cyclists. The value of Chilbridge Road for such recreational activities as mentioned above should be recognised and not be affected by the spine road proposals.

On the contrary it was also suggested that the spine road would need to be wide enough to accommodate buses in both directions and sufficient on-street parking to avoid a situation that is currently experienced through the centre of Eynsham. Further suggestion included that the SPD should identify buffer distances from the carriageway of the spine road depending on the agreed traffic type and volumes.

Earthworks and drainage issues were also highlighted as key considerations when planning the alignment and width of the spine road.

The avoidance of the road's alignment having an adverse impact on the Scheduled Ancient Monument near the southern boundary of the site was also considered particularly important.

The disruption of the railway line walk was a further concern expressed.

Other supporting infrastructure

In general, the need for infrastructure-led development is prioritised in many responses. Specific pieces of community infrastructure that are mentioned include: play areas; a multi-purpose community building; burial grounds/crematorium; allotments; playing grounds/sports pitches; a market area; family centre; dog walking park; increased parking provision and enforcement/management and the use of s106 contributions pooled into a community fund to deliver the above and/or other social infrastructure.

While these specific pieces of supporting infrastructure are noted as priorities, the majority of responses highlight the need for additional and/or improved healthcare facilities/capacity, public transportation infrastructure upgrades/additions, active transportation networks, sustainable design and construction, and green infrastructure. These are detailed in the following sub-sections below.

Healthcare Facilities

The strained capacity and facilities of the existing medical facilities in Eynsham are well-noted among responses.

The West Eynsham SDA must therefore generate developer contributions to increase and improve the existing Eynsham Medical Centre, deliver a new larger facility within the village, or a small associated practice in West Eynsham while maintaining the existing centre in order to deliver quality care to existing and future residents.

There are concerns that if a single new facility were to be delivered, for example within the garden village north of the A40, access especially for the elderly and those without cars, will be negatively impacted; however this option would also allow for on-site parking and better manage further expansion in the area. Some secondary care facilities or diagnostic services could also be provided in this facility, eliminating the need for patients to travel to Witney or Oxford. Significant concerns were also raised about the possibility of the existing medical centre closing order to move the facilities into one larger, new location. This is unwelcome as many current patients rely on the practice's walkable location within the village centre.

Ultimately, a sustainable approach needs to be undertaken to properly address healthcare provision in the Eynsham area. The Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group have estimated that around £864,000 with proposed housing numbers will need to be contributed by developers to meet the anticipated needs of Eynsham, including West Eynsham and the garden village.

Alongside these local resident responses, a detailed profile of Eynsham’s healthcare services and capacity was given by the Eynsham Medical Group. Current health care provision is split across 2 sites, with approximately 8,500 people served by the Eynsham Medical Centre and another 5,400 served by the Long Hanborough Surgery.

The medical group expressed concern about the lack of reference to primary health care in the issues paper, highlighting that the scale of housing planned for Eynsham is not viable without significant investment in the associated primary health care facilities.

In addition to the concerns raised regarding Eynsham Medical Centre, comments also identify other health-related services and facilities that are needed in the village including a pharmacy, dentist and mental health services.

Water & Sewage infrastructure

In their response to this consultation, Thames Water note that developers will have to work with them early in the planning process to ensure that the correct infrastructure is put in place in a timely manner so as not to impede delivery.

Other respondents to the consultation also expressed concerns regarding water and sewage infrastructure. The appropriate provision of necessary utilities and infrastructure must also be ensured as the West Eynsham SPD is taken forward.

Sustainable design and construction

Respondents note that sustainable design and construction is absent from the West Eynsham SPD Issues Paper. As a result, several responses highlight specific priorities related to the need to implement high sustainability standards to ensure that new development minimises carbon output as much as possible. To do this, residential buildings should be equipped with solar panels, air source heat pumps, solar water generators, and rain run-off tanks in addition to having the highest standards for insulation and deploying innovative construction methods. Additional capacity for renewable energy generation on-site is also noted, specifically the potential for a community scale ground source heat pump within the development. Facilities for electric car charging should also be incorporated into the design to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles, improve air quality and reduce noise pollution.

Public transportation infrastructure

Many responses to this consultation highlight the importance of delivering additional bus services and infrastructure to ensure that these services meet the increased demand generated from the West Eynsham SDA. It is noted that, at present, many bus stop are inadequate for current use – there are only 5 stops in Eynsham and only one has a sheltered waiting area and electronic real time information display. Importantly, many stops are on narrow stretches of pavement with kerbs that are too low for even ‘kneeling buses’ to reach and allow full accessibility. Thus, it is suggested that Section 106 money is used to improve all 5 pairs of bus stops to the highest standard possible within the constraints of the site.

New bus stops should also be provided so that the Department for Transport’s Inclusive Mobility guidelines are achieved and that there is a bus stop within 400m of every home to make bus transportation attractive. New services along the spine road would therefore be desirable. It was also suggested that attractive and accessible footpaths are created to provide direct access between West Eynsham and the bus stops on Witney Road. To service these bus stops, it was also suggested

that the S1 and S2 routes should not be diverted to serve West Eynsham; instead, a new service or diverted Route 11 services with increased frequency could be used to meet needs along the new spine road. Other new route suggestions include a feeder route from Bampton to the proposed Eynsham Park and Ride via Aston, Standlake and Stanton Harcourt; and a new route to link Eynsham with the hospitals in Headington, running via Cassington, Yarnton, and Oxford Parkway. Improved walking, cycling and public transport routes to Hanborough station will be an important destination for some trips arising from the development site.

To ensure the masterplan transportation assessment and travel plan provide adequate public transportation services along with the West Eynsham development, the strategy should include a strong focus on public transport. A defined bus route through the site that supports housing density and which is commercially viable should be included, and the overall site masterplan including the alignment of the spine road should be informed by the public transport strategy.

One representation notes that, ultimately, it is incumbent on both the District and the County Councils that significant efforts are made to make travel on public transport and by active means, particularly cycling, more viable and attractive to encourage as many people as possible to choose travel mechanisms other than the private motor car. This must include ensuring that there is an increase in public transport services and that the connectivity between bus services is improved, and consideration to the construction of cycle lanes to make travelling by bicycle safer and therefore more attractive to local residents. At the same time, more effort must be made to increase the capacity of the roads to deal with the level of both the current and future vehicle demand.

Addressing the congestion along the A40 was also raised as a key priority, namely through the creation of a fixed public transport link between Witney and Oxford via Eynsham. To ensure that develop is future –proofed, land should be safeguarded, especially the trackbed of the old railway line between Yarnton and South Witney as well as station/boarding points.

Active Transport Infrastructure

As the West Eynsham SDA intends to deliver housing to help meet part of Oxford's unmet housing need, investment in links between West Eynsham and Oxford City will be vital. Arguably these links should facilitate active modes of transportation. Support for the B4044 community path between Eynsham and Oxford via Farmoor is therefore noted as a priority.

More locally, there is significant potential for West Eynsham to link to existing Rights of Way and deliver further routes for walking, cycling and riding for both leisure and commuting to work/school. New routes should be attractive and accessible to all to encourage active modes of travel for local journeys and transport interchange points (i.e. bus stops, the new Park and Ride, and Hanborough Station). As a priority, any crossings of existing or proposed public rights of way and accessible open space need to be safe and convenient, and provision for all vulnerable road users including walkers, equestrians and cyclists, as well as both accompanied and unaccompanied children and users with mobility support needs.

It was also suggested that the proposed link road should include a multi-user path running alongside it which is suitable for horse riders. Further, the right of way at station road should also be considered for an upgrade to a bridleway and connect to surrounding settlements via the bridleway network. Additional detail about the routes used by horse riders should also be considered and included in the SPD.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is noted as an additional key priority that should be included in the West Eynsham SPD to ensure that networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure are created, protected, enhanced and managed in line with the NPPF. A co-ordinate approach that includes the garden village for a wider green infrastructure strategy for the area would ensure ecological connectivity across the developments and into the wider countryside. The inclusion of urban green space would also provide multi-functional benefits and contribute to coherent and resilient ecological networks, allowing species to move around within, and between, towns and the countryside with even small patches of habitat benefitting movement.

The multiple benefits of urban green infrastructure should also be included in the SPD through their incorporation into flood risk mitigation strategies, air quality management strategies, natural resource protection plans, water management strategies, urban design plans, public health strategies and improving access to nature/countryside.

Meeting identified housing needs

The district-wide “stepped” approach to meeting housing needs is considered to be particularly relevant to the West Eynsham SDA with emphasis again given to the need for a coordinated approach with nearby developments.

With regards to the provision of a mix of housing sizes, most respondents advocated for a larger proportion of more densely distributed smaller, affordable homes including semi-detached houses, terraces, studios and flats. Alternatively, there was significant objection to the delivery of large 3+ bedroom detached homes.

The emphasis on smaller and more affordable homes reflects both the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan and local housing needs. Respondents note that there is a crucial need to provide more opportunities for young adults leaving home, single people, new and local families needing to up-size, as well as older people who want to remain living in the village but whose accommodation is no longer suitable. An emphasis on locally affordable housing was also evident with one respondent suggesting that a portion of new homes is reserved for local people. Alternatively, another response highlights the need for high quality affordable housing provision in addition to quantity.

The draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan further suggests that in order to meet the needs of the ageing population in Eynsham, housing provision should also include retirement homes/sheltered housing close to local facilities, but also smaller more spacious homes for older downsizers which will, in turn, make larger homes available for families. Another respondent suggested that 15% of homes should be built to Lifetime Homes standard.

Housing for key workers and those with complex needs were also addressed in a number of responses. With regards to key workers, there was also a recurring suggestion to provide eco-homes with green roofs for key workers north of Chilbridge Road and near the A40.

Additionally, the County Council have also noted that there is an increasing need for supported living among all groups, but particularly for those with Learning Disabilities with complex needs and Autism, as well as for the Young Person supported pathway and care leavers. As part of the Autism strategy the County Council aims to provide one specialist scheme per District area. As there is not

yet a site within West Oxfordshire identified, the West Eynsham SDA provides a potential opportunity.

With regards to tenures, a mix was also supported with an emphasis on affordable rented housing, shared ownership, a range of social housing, self-build sites for individuals and groups, and key worker housing. Again, there was a clear and strong emphasis on affordable options that are genuinely affordable to local people and meet local needs. Since a portion of the land is owned by Oxfordshire County Council, it was also suggested that the land should be used to deliver Council housing.

Other General Comments

Principle of Development

Several respondents submitted comments which more generally discussed the principle of development in Eynsham and/or Oxfordshire. Many respondents argue that the proposed development around Eynsham is too much too quickly and without the necessary infrastructure to support it. While some advocate to stop all development until infrastructure is in place, others make the case for only one of the OCGV or West Eynsham SDA to be developed as both are not needed. Otherwise, the development will pose a threat to the economic vitality of the area. Further, housing provision should be delivered through infill development in order to preserve the Greenfields and land surrounding Eynsham.

More generally, respondents also questioned the principle of providing homes to help meet Oxford's unmet housing need and government calculated housing targets. Some argue that the West Eynsham SDA should be used to only meet local need, and that Oxford's unmet housing need should be met within Oxford City, or nearby where there is a transit node with low-carbon travel options to access the city.

Alternatively, others believe that the methodology used to calculate housing need is flawed and overestimates this need, and is also an example of national plans that do not adequately consider local impacts. Others conclude that the growth targets used to justify development are neither appropriate nor correct. Thus, there is significant concern that the resulting development will not result in truly affordable housing for local people and will not meet local needs.

Contrasting these responses, there were also comments that supported the principle of development for various reasons. Development at Eynsham, for some, received support compared to development at Witney and Chipping Norton as this would locate new housing closer to the main employment in the county as long as 'commensurate serious long-term infrastructural adjustment can be realised'.

For one pair of residents, the development around Eynsham represents 'an exciting opportunity to deliver a significant new mixed housing that would satisfy differing community needs whilst enhancing the character of the village and delivering continued community wellbeing'.

Last, another pair of respondents 'feel the recommendations of the Inspector on the Local Plan should be accepted by the WODC and agree with the Inspector that it is likely that these developments will alter the character of the Village; with him, we feel that this may not be a bad thing'. There is recognition that Eynsham is already changing is reflected in the recent successes of local restaurants, markets, and hotels. Ultimately, they conclude that by building up the research intensive and university spin-off economy, a new vitality, can be brought to the area.