

OXFORDSHIRE COTSWOLDS GARDEN VILLAGE – Traffic & Transport Issues

The Eynsham News Group asked our parish, district and county councils, along with the developer, four questions with reference to Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village. You'll find their responses in our latest newsletter – Issue 32. The County Council sent a statement focusing on traffic, which we reproduce alongside our County Councillor's response below.

Oxfordshire County Council – press office

Oxfordshire County Council is working with West Oxfordshire District Council to enable developers to deliver the housing and employment growth set out in the Local Plan, including the proposed Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village and West of Eynsham strategic development sites.

One of our key roles is to assist the district council in the development of key planning documents, such as the Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village Area Action Plan, and we will be working on evidence to support the policy for the infrastructure and services we provide.

Our role involves joint working with a number of key stakeholders including Eynsham Parish Council, Grosvenor Developments Ltd and we regularly meet to discuss key policy and delivery issues as the development begins to be designed.

Alongside education provision, transport and highways infrastructure will be a key issue for both the Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village and West of Eynsham strategic development sites. Congestion on the A40 and its junctions causes daily problems for road users and has been described by business leaders as one of the biggest barriers to economic growth and prosperity in West Oxfordshire.

Congestion impacts all road users, including public transport services that are unable to run to published timetables and causes inefficient use of fleet due to adding time into the timetable.

Since 2016 the county council has been progressing the design for a new park and ride at Eynsham complemented by an eastbound bus lane towards Oxford, with short sections of bus lane westbound on the approach to Cassington signalised junction and Eynsham roundabout.

The Department for Transport has allocated £35m for the scheme from the Local Growth Fund. As is a central government fund, it is subject to the county council producing a robust Full Business Case, which we are progress, alongside the design process, at present. Our aim is for the facility to be open by 2021.

continues overleaf >>>

County Councillor Charles Mathew

I believe that the proposals for a Garden Village north of the A40 (presently 2,200 dwellings) should be viewed in the light of 14,950 new houses in the West Oxfordshire latest Draft Plan (which includes the 1,000 houses west of Eynsham).

Eynsham has at present some 2,000 houses and is an enviable historic community, which feels comfortable within itself. It is difficult to imagine the effect of this doubling of numbers within ten years even if the increase is meant to be separated according to the rules for a garden village. West Oxfordshire District Council has persistently ignored the local views and advice proffered, which is much to be regretted and one cannot help but wish there had been greater cooperation.

However, my main concern lies within the future of the A40 and the access routes, which presently are already heavily crowded during rush hours and increasingly during the day. Eynsham lies at the head of the Lower Windrush Valley, triangled by the Thames, the A40 and the A415. This means that the Grade 1 bridges at Newbridge (Mgr 18 tonnes) and Swinford (narrow and tolled) are already a restriction on movement in the valley.

All the bus plans (Duke's Cut to the dual carriageway), changes to the A40, two new roundabouts (Curbridge on the Witney bypass and the Park & Ride opposite the Evenlode), the two extra crossing lights to promote the bridleways and the Park & Ride – will ensure that progress on the A40 both ways will be in future slower and slower. None of these changes will be effective in solving the problem in the short or longer run but will cost some £200m in taxpayers' money for no end result.

What in my view is needed desperately ...

continues overleaf >>>

OXFORDSHIRE COTSWOLDS GARDEN VILLAGE – Traffic & Transport Issues

The Eynsham News Group asked our parish, district and county councils, along with the developer, four questions with reference to Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village. You'll find their responses in our latest newsletter – Issue 32. The County Council sent a statement focusing on traffic, which we reproduce alongside our County Councillor's response below.

Oxfordshire County Council – press office -- continued

However we know that the proposed park and ride and bus lanes scheme is not enough and further transport infrastructure is required. The A40 strategy will therefore be further developed through 2018/19, putting the council in a strong position to bid for further central government funds, such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).

We have already been successful in progressing the A40 strategy through the first stage of the HIF bidding process and will now be working with Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to develop an Outline Business Case for further A40 investment.

The schemes likely to be included in the bid are upgrading the A40 between Witney and the proposed Eynsham Park and Ride to a dual carriageway to increase capacity; complimenting the eastbound bus lane with westbound bus lanes to provide reliable return journeys for public transport users; and looking at widening the A40 canal and railway bridge to the east of Wolvercote to enable the bus priority to pass over this narrow structure and remove the 'pinch point'.

Improving walking and cycling route infrastructure is also important to providing sustainable options for active travel in the area. We will also bid for funds for the proposed B4044 community path from Eynsham to Botley working with Bike Safe who have been developing this proposal to date.

We will also be working with the district council and the site developers to ensure that their proposals are also positively contributing to strategic infrastructure, and ensuring further infrastructure is also provided both within the developments, but also locally to ensure effective connections to the surrounding areas.

Timing of infrastructure provision is critical, and ensuring that infrastructure is in place to support development at the appropriate time will be a key aspect of our work with West Oxfordshire.

County Councillor Charles Mathew – continued

What in my view is needed desperately is an extension of the A44 from Loop Farm / Peartree as soon as possible, to enable those travelling on the A40 and needing to go north (A34 / A43 / M40 / Bicester) to leave the A40 at Duke's Cut and avoid the Cuttesloe and Wolvercote roundabouts (this should have happened before the recent road changes at these roundabouts); a smart-carding of the toll bridge at Swinford forthwith; and the use of the old railway line to house a new means of accessing Oxford from Carterton, Witney and Eynsham by tram / light railway or other suitable transport.

The latter is the only way that the traffic on the A40 can be lightened – especially in view of present development plans and the extant Gladmans' Planning Application for some 3,000 houses at Barnard Gate – by offering a quicker, more comfortable journey to those presently stuck in traffic today or stationary tomorrow.

As some of you will know, I have tried to persuade Oxfordshire County Council over the last twenty four months to review the various alternatives to their present plans for the A40 'improvements' in the next five years. I have not been listened to and despite pressure to OCC, The Growth Board and the LEP, continuous development on the A40 at the Bartons, Oxford North and in West Oxfordshire, an alternative innovative greenfield approach to this inevitable logjam has not been considered.

I continue to press my case.

CHARLES MATHEW
01865 882205