

# District Councillors Report, 2020-21

## Introduction

The District Councillors this year have been Carl Rylett, Dan Levy and Ed James.

Ed's term of office was due to end in May 2020, but the postponement of elections because of the Covid-19 outbreak means that he will remain in place until May 2021. We are expecting elections for the District Council post and for the County Council to go ahead in May.

The major planning applications relating to the village have continued to edge nearer to being approved or rejected. The District Councillors have continued to make the point that doubling the size of Eynsham is not in the interests of the existing or future residents, but we are hamstrung by the adoption of the Local Plan by WODC. We have repeatedly pointed out that the infrastructure which is required to support the expansion of Eynsham will not be put in place, and the result will be additional traffic congestion, inadequate provision for active travel (including getting from Eynsham to the Garden Village, Salt Cross) and more flooding and more sewage ending up untreated in the Thames.

Covid 19 has made this a strange year in many ways. One of them is that it has slowed up WODC responses to the major developments, as officers have focussed on Covid related support for the community. Alert readers will note a lot of what follows is similar to what was written a year ago.

## 1. Cotswold Garden Village

**This has now been officially called Salt Cross.**

The District Council's Area Action Plan will guide the planning, development and delivery of the Garden Village and describe a framework by which any planning application must adhere to, e.g. amount and type of affordable housing, environmental and design standards, services, drainage and biodiversity. This has finally gone to the Planning Inspectorate for approval. While it would be better if Salt Cross wasn't going to be built at all, and while there are still a number of flaws in the AAP, particularly relating to the crossings of the A40, nonetheless what has been submitted outlines a development that we can be proud of, with a genuine commitment to biodiversity, green space, active travel, zero carbon property and other "garden village" principles.

Meanwhile the developer, Grosvenor, has, we understand, objected to some of the AAP on viability grounds. It has also lodged a planning application with WODC, which ought not to be considered until the AAP has been adopted.

The two District Councillors who will continue to be in post after elections, and we trust the newly elected third councillor, will continue to insist on Salt Cross being a proper garden village, and continue to press for cycling, walking and public transport facilities to be delivered sufficient to allow proper connections between Salt Cross and Eynsham.

## 2. West Eynsham

WODC plan to submit its Supplementary Planning Document (SPD, similar to an Area Action Plan but less detailed) for about 1,000 houses in West Eynsham. This has been delayed – indeed we wrote this same thing 12 months ago.

It is apparent there are differences of opinion between the 3 (or 4 if you include Taylor Wimpey on Thornbury Green) developers involved. We believe the District Council is best placed to put together a master plan for the development for the benefit of current and future residents. While more attention has been paid to the Garden Village thanks to the various consultation events, this development will also have a very significant impact on Eynsham. Like the Garden Village this development was part of the adopted Local Plan in September 2018 and whether we agree with that decision or not, we are pushing for the highest standards possible

One of the developers, Jansens, has put in a planning application for the area adjacent to the A40. It is unfortunate that it has done so prior to the SPD. There have been a number of objections to this planning application, including one from the Parish Council. Among many concerns are the impact on flooding and the nature and route of the service (or spine) road serving the new properties.

### **3. Aurora Solar Farm.**

This is the solar farm proposed between Eynsham and South Leigh. It was supported by some villagers and opposed by others, including Dan. Planning permission was granted in March 2020, and although there have been initial archaeological explorations, nothing seems to have happened yet. Dan wrote to the developer asking for the bridleway to the south of the site to be upgraded to make it a viable cycling route between Eynsham and South Leigh. The developer has not said no to this.

### **4. Minerals and Waste Plan**

In early 2020 Oxfordshire County Council submitted a Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2031 which indicated a strong preference for choosing a site on Eynsham's western border for extracting minerals. We made sure the District Council objected to this suggestion. There is now a second round of assessment going on, which is unfortunate, as we had hoped that Eynsham would have been dropped from the list.

### **5. Refuse**

The Back Lane Bring Site was shut by WODC. This was at the request of the Parish Council. There has been both positive and negative reactions.

### **6. Committees**

Much of the work at WODC takes place via scrutiny and development committees. Carl is Vice Chair of the Lowlands Planning Committee and a member of the Economic and Social Scrutiny Committee and sits on the Climate Action Working Group.

Dan is on the Finance and Management scrutiny committee. He is the Cycling Champion for West Oxfordshire.

## **7. Community activity.**

Eynsham is a fantastically active community. Among other things that volunteers have achieved are a foodbank for people who need it, active sets of litter pickers, and a well-organised nature recovery network.

Among other things, we have been offering encouragement to the Witney Oxford Transport Group, who are lobbying for a rail line between Carterton and Oxford, via Eynsham. Dan proposed a motion, agreed by WODC, that it work with the County Council to explore this in more detail. It is clear that the OCC changes to the A40 won't be sufficient or adequate for residents of West Oxfordshire.

If there is anything that the District Council can do to help, the councillors are always around to assist. They are also available to discuss housing, planning, refuse and other topics.