



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 16 MARCH 2022
Report Number	Agenda Item 11
Subject	WEST EYNHAM STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREA (SDA) MASTERPLAN
Wards affected	Eynsham
Accountable member	Cllr Jeff Haine, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning Email: jeff.haine@westoxon.gov.uk
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Summary/Purpose	To consider the masterplan document which has been prepared on behalf of the main landowners/developers to guide the future development of the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA).
Annexes	Annex A – West Eynsham SDA Masterplan
Recommendation/s	That Cabinet: <i>a) Notes the content of the report; and</i> <i>b) Agrees to approve the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan attached at Annex A as a material planning consideration for any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.</i>
Corporate priorities	Successful delivery of the West Eynsham SDA, guided by the masterplan attached at Annex A, supports a number of key objectives set out in the Council Plan 2020 – 2024 including housing land supply and delivery, the provision of a range of new housing opportunities to meet identified needs including affordable housing, healthy place-shaping, net biodiversity gain, economic growth and high-quality place-making.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The West Eynsham SDA Masterplan attached at Annex A has been subject to stakeholder engagement as set out in the masterplan itself and summarised in this report.

I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1.** Members will be aware that land to the west of Eynsham is allocated as one of five strategic housing sites in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. The site, which is formally known as the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) is allocated under Local Plan Policy EW2 for the provision of about 1,000 homes as a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Eynsham.
- I.2.** Importantly, Policy EW1 stipulates that the development of the SDA should be comprehensive and led by an agreed masterplan. A similar requirement for comprehensive and co-ordinated development is imposed by Policy ENPI4a of the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan.
- I.3.** In light of the above, the main land controlling interests of the West Eynsham SDA have recently prepared an overall masterplan for the site. The primary purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the masterplan and the process it has gone through to reach this stage, with a view to it being formally agreed as a material planning consideration for any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1.** As outlined above, the West Eynsham SDA is allocated in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 for the provision of about 1,000 homes. It is one of two strategic sites at Eynsham, the other being Salt Cross Garden Village to the north of the A40 which will provide about 2,200 homes, along with a new science and technology park. Both sites were identified in response to an increase in the District's overall housing requirement, including a proportion of unmet housing need from Oxford City.
- 2.2.** Given the scale of the West Eynsham SDA, it is imperative that it is brought forward in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner. This is a requirement of both the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan and is particularly important for the West Eynsham SDA which falls into a number of separate land ownerships and is expected to come forward via a number of separate planning applications.
- 2.3.** Whilst the District Council has made it clear that a single outline planning application for the whole site would be preferable, there is no legal requirement for this. Indeed, two parts of the SDA already have planning permission, including 160 homes at Thornbury Green which is nearing completion by Taylor Wimpey and 77 homes on the former Eynsham Plant and Nursery Centre which is under construction by Thomas Homes. A further part of the SDA, land at Derrymerrye Farm, is the subject of a current outline planning application for 180 homes.
- 2.4.** The fact that the SDA has and is likely to continue to come forward via a number of separate planning applications, reinforces the need to have an agreed, over-arching masterplan in place, in order to ensure that development is comprehensive and co-ordinated in accordance with the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan.

3. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1. In May 2021, Cabinet approved an update of the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) with the covering report explaining that instead of preparing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) for the Local Plan SDAs, Officers would work with the relevant site promoters in order to agree a comprehensive masterplan for each site as soon as possible.
- 3.2. Subsequently, in June 2021, the various land controlling interests at West Eynsham, in addition to their own respective technical experts, appointed an extensive consultant team including Lichfields, Turley (masterplanners) and I-Transport, with stakeholder engagement being co-ordinated by Curtin & Co (now known as Chess Engage).
- 3.3. Work on the masterplan has been ongoing since then with the final version (see Annex A) having been received by the District Council on 25th February 2022.

4. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. The masterplan has been the subject of stakeholder engagement since August 2021, building on previous consultation undertaken in relation to the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan and the District Council's previously proposed SPD.
- 4.2. A dedicated liaison group, comprising a range of different interests and individuals was established in August 2021 and met a number of times through to January 2022, acting as a sounding-board to help shape the structure and content of the masterplan as it was developed.
- 4.3. In addition, a community newsletter was delivered to all households in Eynsham and a dedicated website was created <https://www.masterplan4westeynsham.co.uk/>
- 4.4. Working with the Liaison Group, the developers/landowners organised both a virtual exhibition and a face to face event which were both held in November 2021.
- 4.5. Subsequently an initial draft version of the masterplan was provided to the District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and the liaison group in December 2021, with comments fed back accordingly.
- 4.6. Appendix 4 of the masterplan provides an overview of comments raised and how these have been taken into account in the final version. Where no change has been made, the document explains why.

5. THE WEST EYNSHAM SDA MASTERPLAN

- 5.1. There is no singular definition of what a masterplan is but the Government's planning practice guidance on design provides the following useful overview:

'Masterplans set the vision and implementation strategy for a development. They are distinct from local design guides by focusing on site specific proposals such as the scale and layout of development, mix of uses, transport and green infrastructure. Depending on the level of detail, the masterplan may indicate the intended arrangement of buildings, streets and the public realm.'

- 5.2. It is important to note from the outset that a masterplan cannot create or impose additional policy requirements over and above a local plan or neighbourhood plan. In this instance, the West Eynsham SDA masterplan (Annex A) has been prepared in response to both the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 and the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan and as explained in the masterplan itself, is intended as a 'stepping stone' between those plans and any subsequent planning applications that come forward for the site.
- 5.3. The masterplan document follows a logical structure, with the first two sections establishing an overall vision for the SDA, setting out the purpose of the masterplan, a description of the site, including land ownerships and the relevant planning context within which the masterplan has been prepared.
- 5.4. Section 3 outlines the main constraints and development opportunities associated with the site, focusing on topography, flooding and drainage, ecology, landscape and visual impact, heritage, access and movement. These constraints and opportunities are usefully summarised on pages 36 and 37 of the masterplan and illustrated in plan form on pages 38/39 and 46/47.
- 5.5. Flowing on from the key constraints and opportunities, the masterplan establishes a number of key design principles which place a particular emphasis on effective integration with the existing village of Eynsham under the following main themes:
- Integrated landscape network
 - Blue infrastructure
 - Access and movement
 - Land use and amenities
- 5.6. Drawing on these key design principles, Section 4 sets out an overall indicative masterplan for the site (pages 54 and 55) which as stated, *'has been designed to provide a comprehensive strategy to support the delivery of the development of about a 1,000 homes, a primary school and local centre, complemented by a robust landscape structure to create a new neighbourhood that integrates into Eynsham'*.
- 5.7. Primary access is proposed to be achieved via a new junction onto the A40 to the north and a new junction to the B4449 Stanton Harcourt Road to the south. These will be linked by a central residential boulevard running through the centre of the development.
- 5.8. Additional permeability is proposed to be created through a number of secondary routes, public rights of way and other pedestrian routes with an emphasis on providing connections to local community facilities, linking to Eynsham village centre and also to the surrounding countryside.
- 5.9. A mix of land uses are proposed across the SDA, the intention being to create active neighbourhoods with access to education, community and retail facilities within easy walking and cycling distance of new and existing residents of Eynsham.
- 5.10. Two key 'hubs' are proposed including a new primary school, located centrally on the flattest part of the site and a new local centre to the south at the junction of the central residential boulevard and Chilbridge Road.
- 5.11. Underpinning the overall masterplan are a series of more detailed strategies on land use, landscape, drainage, ecology, movement, parking, building heights, density, housing mix and sustainable homes.

5.12. These are not repeated in detail here but key points to note are as follows:

- The creation of a high-quality landscape framework based around five landscape types including a western edge to help transition development into the surrounding countryside, a multi-functional linear park running along the Chil Brook, the retention and enhancement of existing woodland, the provision of active open spaces and creation of a series of formal greens along the central residential boulevard.
- All new homes and community buildings will be located outside of flood zones 2 & 3, with a finished floor level to be set above the 1 in 100 year + climate change flood level.
- Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to be used across the site to reduce surface-water flood risk. These will be designed to mimic natural flows, work with natural topography and include 20% and 40% allowances on rainfall rates for climate change.
- A net gain in biodiversity will be achieved through the retention and enhancement of existing woodland, additional tree planting including orchards, bat and bird boxes, bee hives, log piles and bug hotels, edible and wild meadow planting, enhancement of retained ditches and the creation of new water features.
- Development based around a sustainable movement strategy designed to minimise trips and encourage a modal shift, with the retention of existing public rights of way and the creation of new pedestrian and cycle routes, supported by low vehicle speeds to help ensure more vulnerable road users feel safe.
- All households to be provided with access to a smart electric vehicle charging point (EVCP).
- A 2.2 ha site to be provided for a new primary school which is large enough to accommodate up to 2-forms of entry and has been designed to respond to Oxfordshire County Council's Key Design Criteria for Primary School Sites (October 2020).
- The provision of a new local centre to provide a mixture of community and small-scale commercial uses including a mixed-use, multi-functional community centre. Potential uses could include a café, library, nursery and day-care as well as small-scale community shopping.
- Provision to be made for around 40 hectares of green infrastructure including natural and semi-natural green space, amenity green space, formal parks and gardens, sustainable urban drainage, allotments, community orchards, play areas and other outdoor provision.
- Building heights and densities to be varied to help create character and legibility, with taller buildings and greater density of development along the central residential boulevard, transitioning to lower buildings and densities along the development edges.
- A range of housing types and tenures to be provided including new affordable homes based on the indicative housing mix set out in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 but taking account of market demand and identified needs.
- Accessible and adaptable dwellings including wheelchair adaptable dwellings and provision for self and custom-build opportunities in line with the requirements of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.
- All new homes to be delivered to the Government's Future Homes Standard interim uplift (i.e. 31% less carbon emissions compared to current standards) with any homes built after 2025 anticipated to comply with the Government's further uplift of the Future Homes Standard at that time (i.e. 75% less carbon emissions compared to current standards).

- Indicative phasing arrangements, which, broadly speaking anticipate development coming forward from north to south, although with some flexibility for phases to potentially run concurrently.
- The masterplan includes an indicative schedule of infrastructure requirements based on the categories of infrastructure set out in the Eynsham Area Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).
- This will be the subject of further discussion and negotiation as part of any subsequent planning applications and associated planning obligations, based on the general principle that the total cost of the infrastructure required will be shared equitably and on a proportionate basis having regard to the amount of residential development in each phase.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1. Subject to approval by Members, the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan will become a material planning consideration to be taken into account in relation to any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.
- 6.2. This would be consistent with the Council's current 5-year housing land supply position statement (December 2021) which anticipates the masterplan being in place by spring 2022.
- 6.3. It is anticipated that the approach taken in relation to the West Eynsham SDA will also provide a useful template for masterplans to come forward in relation to the other SDAs.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The report raises no direct financial implications.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The report raises no specific legal implications.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1. In the absence of a comprehensive agreed masterplan for the SDA, there is a risk of piecemeal development taking place in an uncoordinated manner. This could affect the overall delivery of the SDA including the key infrastructure which is required to support it.
- 9.2. Failure to agree the masterplan is also likely to hold up progress with any current and future planning applications for the SDA which creates an additional risk in terms of 5-year housing land supply.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1. The report raises no direct implications with regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

11. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1.** The masterplan document addresses a number of issues regarding climate change and includes a sustainability charter which commits the land controlling interests to incorporating in a range of sustainable design measures to ensure the development is future proofed, safe and sustainable.

12. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 12.1.** Alternative options have been considered in relation to a number of matters such as the southern alignment of the central residential boulevard and the location of the proposed primary school site as set out in the masterplan.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1.** None.