

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the  
**Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee**  
Held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB at 4.00 pm on  
**Thursday, 8 June 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Alaa Al-Yousuf (Vice-Chair), Thomas Ashby, Andrew Coles, David Cooper, Julian Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Natalie King, Nick Leverton, Andrew Lyon, Charlie Maynard, Martin McBride, Michele Mead, Rosie Pearson, Sandra Simpson, Ruth Smith, Harry St. John, Tim Sumner, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager) and Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Dan Levy, Alaric Smith and Carl Rylett.

**5 Election of Chair**

Councillor Andrew Coles, Chair of the Council, opened the meeting and asked for nominations to the position of the Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Michele Mead proposed that Councillor Andrew Beaney be appointed Chair of the Joint Committee for the Civic Year 2023/24. This was seconded by Councillor Liam Walker and was put to a vote, as a result of no further nominations. The Vote Carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Councillor Andrew Beaney as Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Civic Year 2023/24.

**6 Election of Vice-Chair**

Councillor Andrew Beaney, Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee, asked for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Michele Mead proposed that Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee for the Civic Year 2023/24. This was seconded by Councillor Liam Walker and was put to a vote, as a result of no further nominations. The Vote Carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf as Vice-Chair of the Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Civic Year 2023/24.

**7 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Colin Dingwall, Hugo Ashton, Alistair Wray and Rizvana Poole.

Councillor Michele Mead Substituted for Councillor Colin Dingwall.

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## **8** Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were received as follows:

- Councillor Harry St John declared that he lived in Eynsham.
- Councillors Andrew Coles, Nick Leverton and Liam Walker declared that they were also elected Members of Oxfordshire County Council.

## **9** Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on Monday 14 March 2022, were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **10** Participation of the Public

Councillor Ross Macken, Chair of Eynsham Parish Council, addressed the Committee and raised the following points;

- The importance of preserving the character of the village of Eynsham;
- A perception that the addition of two new areas of development were ill-judged, and were a quick fix to deal with any potential legal challenges from landowners;
- The Parish Council requested that the term 'about 1000 homes', be modified to read 'maximum of 1000 homes' for the avoidance of doubt.
- Concerns about vehicle access to potential development sites as the addendum would not conform to the previously agreed planned vehicle access;
- How the areas in the addendum would be integrated into the rest of the development.

The Parish Council also raised two additional points;

- Request for the provision of a burial ground in the Masterplan, due to limited capacity with 12 months remaining of the current site.
- Request that the Masterplan should define a form of stewardship of the shared assets and green spaces.

Councillor Macken concluded by requesting that the Committee reject the addendum, and ask that developers prepare a new version addressing the points raised, before conducting a full consultation with the residents of Eynsham.

The Chair invited the Committee to ask any questions for clarification.

Councillor Al-Yousuf asked for clarification on comments regarding integration of spaces in the rest of the development.

Councillor Macken stated it was felt that the Masterplan was well constructed, however the Addendum did not present how the additional spaces would be integrated and felt that the spaces were 'add-ons'. Councillor Al-Yousuf asked if there had been further discussion with the planning department. Councillor Macken stated that the new areas had not been considered and there was no guidance on what could be potentially build on the additional land included in the Addendum.

Councillor Phil Godfrey entered the committee room at 4.09pm.

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Dr Angie Titchen addressed the meeting with comments from EPIC and Green Tea community groups, stating the following points of concern:

- A perceived lack of public consultation following a response from developers on 7 March 2023 there had been no further contact with the community or local groups;
- Vehicle access and active travel – Concerns raised that an extensive use of the spine road and Witney Road would result in potentially long term disruption to residents.
- Phasing – Concerns raised that the access issue was connected to phasing and the addendum had not addressed this point.
- Climate and Biodiversity – Concerns raised that two areas of green space were potential sites for land development. Concerns also raised that the addendum was in conflict with WODC corporate priorities – The response to the climate and ecological emergencies.

Councillor Martin McBride entered the committee room at 4.20pm.

The Chair invited the Committee to ask any questions for clarification.

Councillor Rosie Pearson asked for clarification on the timings of consultation with developers, with focus on the period of late 2022.

Dr Titchen confirmed the only contact with the Parish Council and community groups received from the developers, was a letter dated March 2022 with no further contact.

## **II West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) Masterplan Addendum**

The Chair introduced the Planning Policy Manager, Chris Hargreaves.

The Chair reminded the Committee of the recommendations in the report and suggested the Committee, as the Parish Councillor requested, not accept the Addendum and refer back to the original report.

The Planning Policy Manager started the presentation by responding to the Chair's question, and clarified that there had been extensive consultation to produce the Masterplan. The Masterplan had gone before Cabinet in March 2022 and to the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2022. After the threat of a legal challenge, West Oxfordshire District Council sought legal advice which resulted in the developer being asked to engage with the landowners, including the Parish Councillor, and make any updates accordingly. This resulted in the Addendum document being produced by the developer. The Planning Policy Manager clarified that the Master Plan was not to be reviewed, only focused updates were to be added. These included the following;

- Clarification on points within the Masterplan;
- Factual updates to information, with focus on corrections in Masterplan;
- Visual updates, which included formatting to improve clarity;
- Information updated to include 2 parcels of land as potential development land;
- Clarification on the existing use of the 2 parcels of land; one site was a green space and the other site was garden land. They were now shown on the addendum with hatching as potential development land;

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- Clarification that if landowners requested the development plans be possibly brought forward, any such applications would be in consideration with the policies of the Local Plan and any other policies within planning at that time.

In response to the question if the document were not to be accepted by the Committee, The Planning Policy Manager clarified that the document responds to the discussion points asked when brought to Cabinet in March 2022.

Councillor Wilson entered the committee room at 4.30pm.

The Chair suggested that the committee go through the document page by page to pick up points. Councillors asked if the Planning Policy Manager had a prepared presentation for the committee to refer to, for the benefit of new members of the committee. The Councillors highlighted that this was not an officers' report and asked that points be clarified when planning policy was considered.

The Planning Policy Manager gave a recap on the Masterplan and included the following points;

- The initial consultation stage of the report;
- The criteria of the report;
- After a legal challenge, the Council agreed that the four main developer teams would take on any further strategic planning, which resulted in the Masterplan;
- Masterplan was considered as material consideration planning documentation, and would not supersede the Local Plan and the same principle would apply to the Addendum document;
- For any future planning applications the Masterplan and Addendum would also be considered.

The Committee asked for the two parcels of land to be focused on, as these were the significant changes to the Addendum document. The following points were focused on;

- The Burial Ground – recognition that there was a shortage of sites however there was no policy requirement to include a burial ground by the developers. The Parish Council was in discussion with Oxfordshire County Council to provide a piece of land for a burial ground and discussions had been positive.;
- The Stewardship – The Planning Policy Manager had met with Councillor Ross Macken to discuss this issue, and it was agreed discussion would take place the main landowner team with the West Eynsham Site and the Garden Village Site. The aim would be to find the most suitable model for long term stewardship;
- The Local Plan – Currently under review, enabling issues raised in the meeting to be addressed;
- Potential housing and access to land – Concerns were raised over the potential development of the two parcels for housing, with particular focus on vehicular access to the sites. Although there was no current application for housing on these sites, it was hard to predict what landowners were minded to do in the future.

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Councillor Rosie Pearson proposed that the Committee recommend to Executive that the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan Addendum be rejected and not taken forward.

Councillor Andy Goodwin seconded the proposal, which was put to the vote. There were 10 votes in favour and 9 votes against with 1 abstention (Councillor Charlie Maynard). The vote was carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Recommend to Executive that the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan Addendum be rejected and not taken forward.

**12 Eynsham Parish Council Letter**

The Agenda item was not formally considered at meeting.

The meeting closed at 5.25pm

CHAIR