



Please reply to:

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Dear Sirs

WEST EYNHAM STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREA PROPOSALS

I am writing on behalf of Railfuture* Thames Valley and wish to comment on the WODC proposals relating to the West Eynsham SDA.

In general we give conditional support to the proposals as, compared with Witney and Chipping Norton, it will locate new housing closer to much of the employment in the County. However, without proper safeguarding of future fixed public transport links the proposals are unacceptable.

As set out the scheme is less sustainable than the Cotswold Garden Village as it is even further away from Hanborough railway station. In this West Eynsham scheme there is no specific mention of public transport other than comments about coordination with the proposed P&R site. As proposed, the Spine Road will do nothing for public transport; indeed it is likely to increase car traffic. Bus services along the A40 will always suffer from congestion within Oxford and the obstacles of Wolvercote Roundabout.

It is generally recognised that the only way to solve the problems of the A40, which both Eynsham proposals will exacerbate, is to create a fixed public transport link from Witney into Oxford via Eynsham. The mode used, whether rail, light rail/tram or guided electric bus, must be the subject of a full technical evaluation, but development proposals need to be future proofed so that such a scheme can be easily implemented.

The trackbed of the old railway line between Yarnton and south Witney is still free of development over much of its length. At its southern edge the West Eynsham scheme crosses the old track. It is vital that this old trackbed is safeguarded at this point and, in addition, land is set aside for a potential station or boarding point including car and bicycle parking. In this way it would be potentially possible for passengers, irrespective of the final mode that is chosen, to be in Oxford in 10 to 15 minutes, avoiding the congestion for buses negotiating the Wolvercote Roundabout or the Swinford toll bridge. It would also make better use of the proposed Spine Road and improve access to employment in Witney as well as Oxford.

We naturally welcome the proposals in §5.7 to prepare an Infrastructure Development Plan for Eynsham as a whole. However, it is vital that this Plan includes the necessary safeguarding of a new fixed link and station/boarding point in West Eynsham (as well as better access to Hanborough station from the Garden Village we referred to in our previous letter of 20th July).

We should be pleased if you would make the necessary changes to your proposals for the West Eynsham SDA to deliver the important improvements to public transport services and other aspects of transport connectivity along with the necessary safeguarding.

Please come back to us if you need further clarification on the points we have raised.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Stow, Chairman

** Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation, campaigning for improved rail services and promotion of the contribution rail can make to sustainable transport. In the Thames Valley we have several hundred members, including the affiliation of most local Rail User Groups. We are independent of the industry, political parties and trades unions, and always seek to put rail users first, be they freight or passengers.*