

# Opposing 'Weston Otmoor'

What you need to do **NOW!**

1. Respond to the consultation.
2. Write to your MP.

## Who do I write to:-

[ecotowns@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ecotowns@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

or

**Eco-Towns Team  
Housing & Growth Programmes  
Department for Communities & Local Government  
2/H9 Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW15 5DU**

**All responses need to be received by the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

## What do I say?

The letter should be written in your own words, not a 'pro-forma' type of response and it is suggested that you focus on the areas that you are most comfortable with, or have a personal interest in. Possible suggested points for inclusion within your letter are set out as follows, but you do need to include them all in your response!

### Traffic & Transport Concerns

- The Weston Otmoor eco town will increase traffic on an already stretched road infrastructure.
- The A34 is already overloaded. The M40 cannot cope with the volume of traffic using it between junctions 9 and 10 particularly at peak times.
- 15,000 homes will generate at least 15,000 cars + vehicles associated with employment & schools.
- Daily congestion on the A34 already causes long tailbacks and delays that can last hours. This and frequent accidents on the A34 and M40 force motorists to rely on minor roads through surrounding villages increasing the existing problem of rat-running.
- How will the 'free transport to Oxford for Weston Otmoor residents' promised by the developer be funded in perpetuity? Contained within the DCLG's initial assessment of Eco-towns published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June is the following statement; *"Needs more than 2 trains an hour and would need to be served by a high frequency rail service to be attractive as a 5,000 space Park and Ride site. DfT unlikely to support the proposal to operate an Oxford - Weston Otmoor - Bicester - London Marylebone Chiltern Railways service via new chord line at Bicester as this would duplicate existing Oxford - London Paddington services."*
- Also contained within the DCLG's initial assessment of Eco-towns are the following statements by the various government agencies:-

- Department for Transport (Dft): *“A34/M40 junction overloaded. Assuming no closure of the existing access to the A34, the development could not happen without highly innovative traffic containment measures in line with development control policy.”*
- Highways Agency: *“Developer would need to meet cost of bridge over A34 and examples elsewhere suggest this will be very costly.”*

## Environmental concerns

- This is a special area for wildlife, many species of which their habitat is coming under increased threat, and delicate ecosystems will be destroyed.
- Contrary to the developer’s claims, this area is NOT ecologically mundane.
- Part of the land is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) occupying productive farmland.
- The Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) say land that’s important for local wildlife and birds will be damaged and both agree that this unique environment and habitat would be lost forever.
- The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) says Weston Otmoor is not the right place for an eco-town.
- Rather than enhancing the local environment and winning local people’s support, this will decimate existing communities and countryside.
- 25% of the plan is on land classed as Green Belt. Government said they wouldn’t build on green-belt land and would choose brownfield sites.
- RAF Weston-on-the-Green is not as claimed by the developer a ‘Brownfield’ site comprising as it does only grass runways and limited buildings and infrastructure. Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) states; *“There is no presumption that land that is previously developed is necessarily suitable for housing development..”*
- Building on this greenfield and green-belt land contravenes all established local and national planning policies.
- The area is subject to a flooding. Building more housing will make this worse. The DCLG ‘Eco-towns Living a Greener Future’ publication states; *“The inhabitants and buildings of an eco-town must be safe from flooding for its projected lifetime”*.
- Run off will affect the water levels of Otmoor and the river Ray and Cherwell and exacerbate the flooding problems already experienced by Islip, Kidlington and Oxford.
- Contained within the DCLG’s initial summary published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June are the following comments by Natural England, The Environment Agency & DEFRA:
- *“The existing settlement is connected to a very small sewage treatment works at Weston-on-the-Green. Significant sewage treatment infrastructure will be required. Study is required to determine whether there is sufficient environmental capacity to carry the load from the expanded infrastructure.”*
- *“Main problem (would required major investment) is lack of local sewerage infrastructure; development would require 100x increase in current capacity. May not be deliverable by 2016 even if finance available. Also local water courses do not have capacity to receive the treated effluent, so where would it go?”*
- *“Site falls in SWOX water resources zone where significant new resource is likely to be required to meet cumulative growth, unlikely to be deliverable until 2020s.”*
- *“Flood zone in 3 parts....some development and infrastructure currently proposed in flood zone 3.”*

### **Business concerns**

- Investment in neighbouring towns will have been wasted if this development goes ahead.
- Vast sums of money have been invested in Bicester and Kidlington – 2 towns desperately in need of regeneration. They cannot compete with a new town which means that taxpayers money will have been wasted.
- The Bicester and District Chamber of Commerce says the proposal will exacerbate existing problems of under-investment, limited social and community facilities and the problems associated with a workforce, 70% of whom commutes out of Bicester.

### **The impact on surrounding villages**

- The quality of life in the 11 villages around Weston on the Green will be greatly reduced by the plans.
- Increased traffic on the small village roads in Wendlebury, Little Chesterton, Chesterton, Bletchington, Middleton Stoney, Islip, Kirtlington, Hampton Poyle, Hampton Gay, Stanton St John, Bladon and Woodstock will make life intolerable. All these surrounding settlements are unanimous in their objection to the eco-town proposal.
- Air and noise pollution will be increased in line with traffic volume. Road safety levels will continue to fall as more traffic uses roads which simply weren't built for a high volume of traffic.

### **Health concerns**

- There will be a hugely negative impact on the health of existing communities and residents of the new town.
- Air and noise pollution levels in this area are already high due to the close proximity to major trunk roads. Existing research documents the danger to children's health if they live within 500 metres of a busy road network. Weston Otmoor children will be closer.

### **Planning concerns**

- These proposals make a mockery of the established plan led development and planning policies and laws that have served the country well since the end of the last war. Local planning policy seeks to develop the county towns, eg Bicester, Banbury, Kidlington and not build on greenfield sites.
- Cherwell District Council is against the development claiming that a reliance on free-standing new settlements is not appropriate for this area.
- Cherwell already has plans for 12,000 new houses, sited in areas that will help develop and support existing towns, over the next two decades.
- The proposal contravenes numerous long established national Planning Policies.

**Please remember your response must be received by the DCLG by the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008 when the consultation closes.**