

Supplementary Papers

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FOR THE MEETING OF

Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel

held in the The Long Room, Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford

on Wednesday 4 March 2020 at 6.30 pm

3. Written response to public question from Need Not Green Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 4 March

Item 3: Public Participation

1. Julia Benning on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire

We welcome the papers on Zero Carbon Housing and Affordable Housing and in that context would also wish to draw the Panel's attention to the fact that the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has become the first region in the UK to introduce its own localised definition of affordable housing, linking the definition to the real world incomes of people in the area rather than to local house prices.

Meanwhile, the Housing & Growth Deal Progress Report (Item 7b) says (Para 42): 'To ensure that the wealth of local knowledge and expertise available within the councils (and partner organisations) is used to its full potential, a series of informal steering groups and working groups have been established to oversee specialist topic workstreams, such as health, transport and natural capital. Each technical commission is being carried out with the involvement of all the authority partners, via one of these steering groups to oversee the commission.' [our emphasis]

Our understanding is that this also includes a group overseeing the commissioning of an assessment of housing numbers - a new SHMA in all but name. Does the Scrutiny Panel have sufficient confidence that they know:

- a) Who is on the steering/working groups, how they have been selected, what their brief is and in turn what brief they have given to consultants?
- b) How this work is being reported to local authority members and/or the public?
- c) Whether the Growth Board can demonstrate that the environment is being taken adequately into account in each case i.e. embedded in the process?
- d) What consideration, if any, is being given to a localised definition of affordable housing?

Response to public question 4 March Scrutiny Panel / 11 March 2020 Growth Board

This document has been drafted at the request of the Scrutiny Panel and the Growth Board to provide further background and technical information in relation to a public question asked on 4 March and 11 March 2020 respectively by Need Not Greed Oxfordshire. This will be published on the Growth Board's website and a copy sent to the speaker.

Response

The assessment of growth needs commission is not a "SHMA". The Government guidance has moved on since the Oxfordshire SHMA was undertaken in 2014, and the brief for the current commission reflects the latest guidance and national policy position.

- a) *Who is on the steering/working groups, how they have been selected, what their brief is and in turn what brief they have given to consultants?*

The Steering Group consists of nominated senior planning policy officers from each authority. Their role is specifically operational in overseeing the technical and professional elements of developmental work. They are charged with day-to-day management of the commission at every stage, and all councils were involved in agreeing the brief, appointing consultants, and overseeing the commission. Decisions on policy and recommendations for progress are a matter for elected members.

The brief sets out that in terms of calculating housing needs for Oxfordshire, there were questions about the appropriateness of taking the Local Housing Need number from the Government's Standard Methodology calculations and simply rolling it forwards to 2050, when the Government's methodology is designed on the basis of 10-15 year local plans. Therefore, in addition to applying the Standard Methodology, the brief also seeks a more in-depth analysis of growth needs specific to Oxfordshire, to inform the preparation of the Plan and to satisfy the soundness requirements for Examination.

- b) *How this work is being reported to local authority members and/or the public?*

Progress of the work is being overseen by all of the councils via the Steering Group, along with regular progress reports to the Heads of Planning officer group. The study will be published publicly at the next formal consultation (Regulation 18) as part of the supporting evidence base, along with other studies.

The Study will be part of the technical evidence base, so it won't make policy decisions. Senior officers will in due course make recommendations to members, informed by all of the evidence base including the Growth Needs Study, so that Members can make policy decisions about the content of the Plan.

- c) *Whether the Growth Board can demonstrate that the environment is being taken adequately into account in each case i.e. embedded in the process?*

Environmental considerations are a key element throughout all planning judgements, and there are a number of studies and assessments underway which focus on environmental

elements, as well as the Sustainability Appraisal throughout the development of the Oxfordshire Plan.

It will be for officers and members to consider the outputs of studies and consider the balance of all the planning issues in developing the Plan.

d) What consideration, if any, is being given to a localised definition of affordable housing?

This commission is to identify overall growth needs, reflecting the strategic high level nature of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Detail about housing mix, including affordable housing, is anticipated to follow later through the local plans.