

Supplementary Papers



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FOR THE MEETING OF

Oxfordshire Growth Board

held in the Fountain Conference Centre, Howbery Park, Wallingford,
Oxfordshire OX10 8BA

on Wednesday 11 March 2020 at 2.00 pm

- 5 **Written response to question from Need not Greed Oxfordshire**
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- 6 **Growth Board response to Growth Board Scrutiny Panel**
recommendations (Pages 6 - 7)

Public speakers

11 March 2020



Questions

1. Question from Julia Benning on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire.

We welcome the papers on Zero Carbon Housing and would also wish to draw the Growth Board'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 7) 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. Please can the Growth Board provide information on:

- a) Which steering/working groups have been established, who the members are and how they have been selected, what their Terms of Reference are 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) How the environment is being taken adequately into account in each case ie 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.



Growth Board response to recommendations of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel Recommendations made on 4th March 2020

The Growth Board is requested to provide a response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 11 March 2020.

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
<p>Recommendation 1. That the Growth Board, in its future involvement in the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, continues to champion and seek deliverability specifically against the following section of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc joint declaration between HM Government and local partners, which the Scrutiny Panel supports:</p> <p><i>“We value the natural environment highly and aim to meet our economic and housing ambitions while overall improving, rather than degrading, the environment in the Arc. We want better places to live, which are beautiful and inspiring, to benefit the Arc’s residents today as well as tomorrow. The Government has already set out its intention for the Arc to embody England’s 25 Year Environment Plan, which we will work together to deliver, including through planning for local natural capital. We want new developments to use intelligent and sensitive design to create or enhance habitats and improve habitat 8 connectivity, in situ and in the surrounding area. We also want to improve access to the environment for existing and new communities in order to improve health and wellbeing.”</i></p>	Yes	<p>The Growth Board welcomes the Scrutiny Panel’s support for the statement set out in the Joint Declaration of Ambition. The Arc Leaders are currently a coalition of the willing, but as and when the Arc begins to develop more formal governance arrangements, the Board’s membership will continue to ensure that Oxfordshire’s environmental ambitions are heard.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2. That any representation from the Growth Board within the formal governance structures of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc should remain reserved for elected councillors within the Growth Board.</p>	Yes	<p>The Growth Board agrees that representatives of the Oxfordshire Growth Board on the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Leaders Group Executive should be chosen from the elected Local Authority Leaders to ensure democratic accountability is embedded as Arc level. The Growth Board also wishes to see</p>

		that LEPs and universities are represented on this Executive as well.
Recommendation 3. That the Growth Board encourage Government to put in place a series of phased incremental 5-year targets to reduce carbon emissions from new and existing homes to achieve Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2050. This could be an effective measure to increase the focus on realistic delivery towards this target.	Yes	The Zero Carbon Report considered by the Board on 11 March 2020 made a series of recommendations concerning the journey to zero carbon. This report represents the start of developmental work which can help to inform county wide planning for a zero-carbon future. The Board will ask officers to consider at what intervals phased targets might be most appropriate, and to make the case to Government as part of that wider work.
Recommendation 4. In view of the Government’s target to reduce carbon emissions by 2050, the Growth Board recognise the significant need for a national household retrofitting programme in addition to ensuring current developments are inexpensive to retrofit. Furthermore, make the case to Government for investment support.	Yes	The Zero Carbon Report considered by the Board on 11 March 2020 included a recommendation to seek incentive from Government to support carbon zero development. The Board will ask officers to make the case to Government on this issues as part of the wider work listed in response to recommendation 3.
Recommendation 5. That the Growth Board recognise the higher than average purchase price for modular build and Zero Carbon housing built by modern methods, setting out to Government the need for more accessible mortgage products.	Yes	The Board will ask officers to make the case to Government as part of the wider work listed in response to recommendation 4.
Recommendation 6. That the Growth Board, in considering the Housing and Growth Deal Progress report, seek to develop a reflective paper on experiences to date concerning the deliverability of the Housing and Growth Deal including mitigation activities and future risks. Furthermore, that the Growth Board ask the Government to respond to the request for extension made by officers on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timelines and that this should reflect on the need to set flexible and realistic timescales for any future investment agreements with Government following an audit of existing arrangements.	Yes	<p>The Growth Board will ask officers to identify a suitable time in which a lessons learnt paper can be brought forward, once the audit has been confirmed as proceeding and completed.</p> <p>The Growth Board Director will seek clarity on the timing for an annual review meeting with MHCLG and Homes England where at this point, and other matters related to issues across the programme, should be addressed.</p>