

Supplementary Papers



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FOR THE MEETING OF

Oxfordshire Growth Board

held in the Virtual meeting viewable by a weblink. Please see the note below

The reports marked 'to follow' on the agenda published on 20 May are attached. Please have these available along with the main agenda pack.

7 **Public participation** (Pages 45 - 46)
 Two questions and an address received.

8 **Growth Board Scrutiny Panel update**
 To receive any recommendations from the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 28 May 2020.

Public speakers

2 June 2020

Questions

1. Julian Benning on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire.

When considering the impacts of Covid 19, NNGO challenges the implicit assumption that the Arc will go ahead unchanged, along with the Expressway. The whole concept of the Arc should be looked at again and adjusted to meet the joint challenges of post-COVID economic recovery, the biodiversity catastrophe, UK food security and retention of best and most versatile agricultural land, and climate change (only the latter making any impact on the text of the documents).

Whilst Oxfordshire may trumpet the claim that the area is one of only three net contributors to the Exchequer, we see this as a rather sad indictment of the imbalance of our society and a justification for a greater sharing of investment across the UK.

NNGO repeats here again that documents relating to the future development of Oxfordshire should prioritise the health and well-being of its residents and environment, with economic growth seen as one potential means of delivering this rather than an objective in its own right.

It is disappointing therefore to see that the OxIS brief still puts economic growth as the overall driver, with its first objective to 'set out the priority strategic infrastructure investment needed to support sustainable, clean and inclusive growth in Oxfordshire'.

It is also widely recognised that the existing Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy was not particularly strong in its recognition of the vital role of green infrastructure, nor in collating the evidence base necessary to attract and guide further funding in this area. The current brief and scope of work for the revision of OxIS must therefore address this.

Can the Growth Board please explain:

- a) How will it put environmental considerations, including climate change but also biodiversity, food production and access to green space, at the heart of the OxIS revision, including decision-making on spatial strategy, and how will this be reflected in the brief to external consultants?
- b) Which partners/stakeholders does it propose to work with to ensure that the evidence base is available and used to best effect to support the necessary step-change of investment in Oxfordshire's green infrastructure and to guide any funding obtained to where it can be most effective (rather than simply a rather random wish-list of projects, no matter how noteworthy)?

2. Charlotte Ritchie

In view of the fact that:

- 1) Any investment in infrastructure to boost local economies should and will take place in the north of England, and that
- 2) Oxford's 'housing need' is unclear, and that
- 3) The Green Belt, once destroyed cannot be reclaimed, that its destruction contradicts the aims of sustainability, biodiversity and ecosystemic balance, and in particular government

policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs:7-14,117-123 and 133-147, and that

- 4) Working practices including the use of offices and transport, post Covid 19, will change.

Is it not time for the Growth Board to request a review of the local plan, and to meet any unmet housing need using brownfield areas, and in particular, redeveloping the Botley Road/Western gateway to the City (currently occupied by carparks and superstores) and the Oxford Business Park areas that are within the ring road, and which are currently under-utilised and are likely to become more so?

Addresses:

3. Giles Lewis, Cherwell Development Watch Alliance.

We have recently sent a letter to Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government asking him to intervene to stop the Oxford and Cherwell Local Plans from being adopted. The letter was signed by Layla Moran, twenty four other councillors, planning professionals, and community groups. It explains in detail that Oxford's housing 'need' has been exaggerated and is unrealistic, and our evidence is reinforced by the Office for National Statistics' projection of a decline in Oxford City's population over the plan period (published in March 2020, after the Inspectors' initial conclusions).

The report to the Growth Board drafted by Bev Hindle focuses on the impact that the pandemic is having on local delivery against the Deal Programme. In this context it should be noted that Planning consultant Barton Willmore forecasts that net new homes completed nationally will drop by one third over the next five years. Bev Hindle's report also seeks an endorsement of the extension of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan timeline so that the Plan can continue on its trajectory of economic growth, more homes and more infrastructure. We are disappointed to note that the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan continues to be set within the context of Oxfordshire being a contributor to the 'Arc' and wider sub-regional ambitions.

Shouldn't the impact of Covid-19 be seen as an opportunity to revise Oxford's already greatly-overstated housing need assessments downwards, to a level which reflects true need, not one based on expectations of economic growth which are ever more unrealistic.

To: Oxfordshire Growth Board
Date: 2 June 2020
Report of: Growth Board Scrutiny Panel
Title of Report: Recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 28 May 2020

Purpose of report:	To present recommendations from the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 28 May 2020 to the Growth Board.
Scrutiny Lead:	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.
Recommendation:	That the Oxfordshire Growth Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Panel would like to thank Councillor Ian Hudspeth (Leader – Oxfordshire County Council and Chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Sub-Group), Bev Hindle (Growth Board Director), Stefan Robinson (Growth Board Manager), Andrew Down (Acting Deputy Chief Executive – South and Vale District Councils), Susan Harbour (Strategic Partnerships Manager - South and Vale District Councils), Paul Staines (Housing and Growth Deal – Service Delivery Manager), James Gagg (Infrastructure Strategy Team Leader – Oxfordshire County Council) for attending the meeting to answer questions.
2. The Panel discussed the Growth Board’s Response to Scrutiny recommendations from the previous Growth Board meeting held on 11th March 2020. On recommendation 2, the Panel considered the positive response from the Growth Board concerning having elected councillors represented in the Oxford – Cambridge Arc governance structures. The Panel further clarified its support for wider engagement with non-local authority groups but only as non - voting members.

Recommendation 1: That the Growth Board confirms that the emerging governance structures within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc concept will ensure that matters retained for local authority decision making will remain

reserved and within the responsibility of locally elected council leaders; accepting that there is value in engaging with wider non-local authority members such as local enterprise partnerships, health and environmental groups but in a non-voting capacity.

3. The Panel also received a report on the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. The Panel considered the need for a seven-month extension on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timeline and accepted the officer recommendation that this would be a modest assumption of the required extension needed for the Plan. The Panel asked however that the Growth Board seek agreement with Central Government to this extension as soon as possible.

Recommendation 2: That the Growth Board agrees to endorse a seven-month extension to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timetable as proposed in the Covid-19 Impact Report, whilst also urging Central Government to respond to its previous request for an extension and to make clear a definitive timeline.

4. The Panel reflected on a previous request for information it made on 19 September 2019 on the progress and delivery of Infrastructure projects to support homes as part of the Homes from Infrastructure Programme. The Panel also noted that officers had previously explained that a review of infrastructure projects was ongoing, however the Panel considered it was important to reiterate the significance of this request through a recommendation to the Growth Board.
5. The Panel considered an update from Councillor Ian Hudspeth – Chair of the Infrastructure Advisory Sub-group with regards to the work of this group. The Panel considered updates on specific projects on rail, cycling routes and highways, and discussed the funding dependent nature of these projects. The Panel discussed the need for rural transport infrastructure and the use of smart technology to provide access to transportation in rural areas.

Recommendation 3: That the Growth Board commission officers to produce a Gantt chart or table showing progress against delivery of investment in infrastructure to support homes (as part of the Homes from Infrastructure workstream within the Housing and Growth Deal), including any available information on the likely impact of Covid-19 on these projects.

6. The Panel considered a report from James Gagg – Infrastructure Strategy Team Leader, which set out the scope of a review to the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) with regards to timescale, governance and funding. The Panel discussed the significance of the strategy to be reviewed based on need rather than being funding led.
7. The Panel also discussed the adopted channels of communication by the Growth Board to Local Authorities and the Scrutiny Panel with regards to openness and transparency in the process undertaken to review OxIS. The Panel also endorsed para 8.1(4) of the report; which in part said that the refreshed scoring matrix of Oxfordshire's emerging infrastructural priorities being led by environmental factors.

Recommendation 4: That the Growth Board clarify the channels of democratic accountability and oversight to ensure there is openness and transparency in the process undertaken to revise the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS)

Recommendation 5: That the Growth Board ensures that projects in the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy are based on locally identified need as opposed to being funding led, and commission officers to provide project schedules and progress reports.

8. The Panel also thanked Paul Staines (Housing and Growth Deal Service Delivery Manager) for a comprehensive briefing paper on definitions of affordable housing adopted by Local Authorities based on the National Planning Policy Framework.

Future Work

9. As well as reviewing the Growth Board’s response to these recommendations at its next meeting on 15th September 2020, the Panel will also be considering in detail:
 - The Growth Board Review
 - Supporting Oxfordshire’s Tourism and Visitor Economy
 - Oxford-Cambridge Arc Update
 - Q4 Housing and Growth Deal Progress Report and Financial summary
 - Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Update
10. The Panel noted that there may be a need for an additional Growth Board meeting in July 2020 and has asked officers to find a suitable meeting date for the Panel in advance of that meeting, to undertake overview and scrutiny in the usual way.

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