

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny

Panel

HELD ON THURSDAY 30 MAY 2019 AT 6.30 PM
 OLD LIBRARY, OXFORD TOWN HALL, OX1 1BX

Present:

Councillor Sean Woodcock (Vice-Chair)	Cherwell District Council
Councillor Andrew Gant (Chair)	Oxford City Council
Councillor Craig Simmons	Oxford City Council
Councillor James Fry	Oxford City Council
Councillor Charles Mathew	Oxfordshire County Council
Councillor Susanne Pressel	Oxfordshire County Council
Councillor Richard Webber	Oxfordshire County Council
Councillor Peter Dragonetti	South Oxfordshire District Council
Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson	South Oxfordshire District Council
Councillor Sarah Gray	South Oxfordshire District Council
Councillor Diana Lugova	Vale of White Horse District Council
Councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne	Vale of White Horse District Council
Councillor Matthew Barber	Vale of White Horse District Council
Councillor Derek Cotterill	West Oxfordshire District Council
Councillor Richard Bishop	West Oxfordshire District Council
Councillor Julian Cooper	West Oxfordshire District Council

Officers contributing to and supporting the Panel:

Andrew Down	Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Partnerships and Planning, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
Caroline Green	Assistant Chief Executive - Oxford City Council
Sue Halliwell	Director of Place and Planning - Oxfordshire County Council
Bev Hindle	Growth Board Director - Oxfordshire Growth Board
Aaron Rosser	Growth Deal Service Delivery Manager
Amit Alva	Project and Scrutiny Officer – Oxfordshire Growth Board
Kevin Jacob	Democratic Services Officer – Oxfordshire Growth Board

1 Election of Chair of the Scrutiny Panel for 2019/2020

Councillor Woodcock proposed and Councillor Simmons seconded Councillor Gant as Chair of the Panel. There being no other nominations, the proposal was agreed upon being put to the vote.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Andrew Gant be elected as Chair of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel for the 2019/2020 municipal year.

2 Election of Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Panel for 2019/2020

Councillor Gant proposed, and Councillor Pressel seconded, Councillor Woodcock as Vice-Chair of the Panel. There being no other recommendations, the proposal was agreed upon being put to the vote.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Sean Woodcock be elected as Vice-Chair of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel for the 2019/2020 municipal year.

3 Apologies for absence and substitutes; declarations of interest; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted from:

Councillor Nick Carter, Oxfordshire County Council, (substituted by Councillor Charles Mathew)

Councillor Andy Cooke, Vale of White District Council, (substituted by Councillor Diana Lugova)

Councillor Ted Fenton, West Oxfordshire District Council, (substituted by Councillor Richard Bishop)

Councillor Damian Haywood, Oxfordshire County Council, (substituted by Councillor Susanne Pressel)

Councillor John Tanner, Oxford City Council, (substituted by Councillor James Fry)

Councillor Tom Wallis, Cherwell District Council

Councillor Lucinda Wing, Cherwell District Council

There were no declarations of interest.

Chairman's announcements

Councillor Gant introduced Councillor Sue Cooper, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council and the new Chair of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, and Bev Hindle, Oxfordshire Growth Board Director, to the meeting. He invited them to address the Panel.

Councillor Cooper indicated that, following her taking on the Chair of the Growth Board, there would be a period of reflection on how the Oxfordshire Growth Board functioned and operated – this would include whether its title should be amended. It made sense for the Scrutiny Panel and Growth Board to work together, and she wanted to listen and learn from any comments and concerns of Scrutiny Panel members. This increased cooperation would enable them to work together towards a positive and sustainable approach for growth.

Bev Hindle set out some of the background behind the establishment and development of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and Oxfordshire Growth Deal. It was an appropriate time to reflect on whether the Growth Board's structure and processes remained fit for purpose – especially in light of changing circumstances. In respect of the Growth Deal, its components worked well together, but there was also potential to further improve and reflect. Issues to be considered could include how issues and comments were conveyed

at the Growth Board and what work could be done to engage with the wider public more effectively.

Various members welcomed the review. They highlighted the importance of the Board giving due consideration to issues and concerns about growth (particularly in relation to housing and traffic) raised by both the public and the Scrutiny Panel. The view was expressed that the Growth Board itself should declare a climate change emergency. Bev Hindle responded that it was important to appreciate that there were many positive outcomes arising from growth and the Growth Board could have a role in changing opinions.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2019 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

It was **agreed** that a copy of the Scrutiny Panel's final response to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (JSSP) consultation would be sent to all members in light of the turnover of the committee since the previous meeting.

5 Public participation

The Panel heard one statement and two questions from members of the public.

Daniel Scharf MRTPI, gave the following statement:

I would like to request that the Growth Board declare a "Climate and Environmental Emergency" to bring it into line with the Committee on Climate Change recommendation of a 'zero carbon economy', and the resolution of both Parliament and constituent councils (e.g. South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, Oxford City and Oxfordshire County), with the stated intention that this would frame and inform all its future operations and decisions?

The 'declaration' would be a marker for the Growth Board to commission work on how its preoccupation with economic growth could be made consistent with the need to reduce carbon emissions in very short order (i.e. heading for zero by 2030) and reverse the collapse of biodiversity due to operations within the County, and through impacts elsewhere associated with its activities. For the operation of the Growth Board to succeed, there needs to be a high level of trust by the public in the land use planning system, beginning with ensuring that growth does not take place at the expense of the environment.

On the issue of transport, a very clear example of how trust has broken down is the proposal to build an Expressway between Oxford and Cambridge. The construction of a new road, to enable 1 million car dependent houses to be built along a 'corridor' of movement, implies an increase in carbon emissions during a period when these must be eliminated. The National Infrastructure Commission, (NIC) has itself stated that new road building is a spur to the growth of car/freight traffic (see Congestion, capacity and carbon 2017), and it has no evidence regarding the impact of electrification or automation of road traffic, it has no evidence that the road would not prejudice the completion of the rail link (i.e. make it less likely and/or less viable), or add to the traffic and congestion on the A34 (and other feeder roads along its length and at either end). The manufacturing of new

electric vehicles and batteries will mean that electrification of the road system will not result in a significant reduction in net carbon, without there being significantly less vehicles and, therefore, no need for new roads. It will be hard to trust in promises of biodiversity gains.

Incidentally, Oxford Economics have been appointed by HM Government to assist with the Expressway and have previously explained (the Redfern Review) that new housebuilding will not reduce house prices more than a few percent.

On housing, the National House Building Council (NHBC), the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) and the UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) have all accepted that about half the carbon associated with new housing is embodied in the building and associated infrastructure at practical completion and before occupation. In these circumstances, the Growth Board should not be proposing any new housing without taking measures to ensure that 'embodied carbon' is taken fully into account to ensure that the housing, employment and associated infrastructure will approach net zero emissions. This implies a moratorium on the use of concrete and masonry until the climate emergency is over, and meeting housing needs by concentrating on carbon negative materials and reducing the levels of under-occupation of the existing housing stock through incentivizing sub-divisions. 50% of houses in Oxford City have one and, more often, two spare bedrooms. Outside the City the number is closer to 80%.

Sue Haywood on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire, (NNGO) asked the following question:

NNGO took part in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 engagement exercise last Friday. The opportunity for such an exercise was welcome, and there were a number of positives, including confirmation that there are a number of good people involved in the project who are trying to do good things. However, it was hard to not come away with some lingering concerns, mainly regarding the erosion of meaningful locally elected member voice, mandate and accountability in the processes and to what degree other strategies will predetermine the Plan that Oxfordshire can develop. I apologise if I am repeating some of the questions posed to you at the last Scrutiny Panel meeting but hope you agree they are still relevant.

1. The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, (LIS)

The Oxfordshire LIS has not been subject to local authority debate, public consultation or environmental assessment and yet, if endorsed by government (which could be in June or July), it could pre-determine the outcome of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The NPPF clearly states that planning policies must 'have regard' for Local Industrial Strategies. Thus, if the Oxfordshire LIS is approved before the proposed summer Oxfordshire Plan 2050 consultation has even taken place, surely it will make any local member voice or public consultation moot? We would ask if you share our concerns with this and can Scrutiny ask the Growth Board to commit to informing HM Government - with urgency - that the LIS must go through the formal local authority sign off process prior to final endorsement?

2. Ox-Cam Arc

I previously noted our concern that The Joint Declaration of Ambition between HM

Government and Local Partners did not appear to have had much, if any, sharing of information or debate in some local councils. We would, therefore, ask again on whose mandate was it that council leaders signed that Joint Declaration? And what provision is being made to ensure that there is opportunity in future for council leaders to be provided with guidance and mandate from local members for their decision making in their roles on Arc committees? I ask this in the additional context of statements in the Joint Declaration that imply that there will be yet further changes in process and governance that could affect local accountability and influence in decision-making.

3. Probity of Process

Our recollection is that, at the last Growth Board meeting, your Chair challenged the material differences that had been introduced into the Oxfordshire Plan document used in the consultation earlier this year from the draft that had been signed off by local Councils. The Growth Board has not to my knowledge responded on that point, nor has it been minuted, and we would ask if you are confident that the processes in place are sufficient to a) reflect and respect council decisions, and also b) recognise and respect challenge from the Scrutiny Panel?

4. Climate emergency and biodiversity loss

The LIS and Arc strategies that are likely to be accommodated in the Oxfordshire Plan hinge on the premise of housing growth at a scale that is above natural growth and the building a (very large) road. Your Panel has previously pressed for climate change to be considered in the Oxfordshire Plan Vision and priorities. How do you intend to continue your welcome challenge on this, and other important issues such as biodiversity loss, and how can you encourage and support the Growth Board to review its processes to embrace sustainability more meaningfully in the heart of decision making?

5. Affordable and Social Housing

We welcome Scrutiny's interest in Affordable Housing and the report on its agenda this evening. We would also welcome a debate and focus on the types of affordable housing, and most particularly on social housing and the role this could, and should, play in meeting Oxfordshire's needs. Do Scrutiny members have a view on this please?

Helen Marshal on behalf of Campaign to Protect Rural England, (CPRE) asked the following question:

At the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Stakeholder Forum held last Friday, the Oxfordshire Plan team appeared unable, or possibly unwilling, to answer the following question:

“Has an update to the Oxfordshire SHMA 2014 and/or an Oxford Green Belt Review been commissioned and, if so, will the Terms of Reference be made publicly available and when will the report/s be published?”

Can the Scrutiny Panel help shed any light?

In discussion about the issues raised the Scrutiny Panel commented:

- That it recognised many of the issues and concerns expressed within the statement and questions submitted.
- Many of the comments regarding climate emergency and a zero-carbon economy had been captured by the Panel as part of its response to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 consultation.
- Issues around the accountability of the Oxfordshire LIS and Ox-Cam and probity of the Oxfordshire Plan document would be taken into account by the Scrutiny Panel in formulating its recommendations to the Oxfordshire Growth Board on 4 June.

6 Introduction to the work of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, (OxLEP) as part of the Growth Board

The Panel considered an introductory presentation on the work of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) from its Chief Executive Nigel Tipple. The presentation focussed upon the organisational and accountability structure of OxLEP, its relationship to the Oxfordshire Growth Board, future topics such as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and an update on the Local Industrial Strategy.

The Scrutiny Panel noted in the update and their discussion:

- The role of OxLEP in supporting work with schools and colleges with regards to addressing future skills gaps, opportunities for existing workforce and timelines to 2040.
- Work around the business support agenda across Oxfordshire with the economic development officers in each council.
- It was noted that the number of forecast homes for the Oxfordshire Garden Village (shown on slide 22 of the presentation in respects of the Living Labs Testbeds) was incorrect due to a typographical error. The correct figure was 2,200.
- That formal governance arrangements were not yet in place in respect of the Oxford to Cambridge ARC and role of the Growth Board representative on the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Executive Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Growth Board be requested to clarify the governance structure for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Committee and the appointment procedure of the representative to the Ox-Cam Arc Committee.

It was noted that a copy of the updated slides used during the presentation would be published following the meeting.

7 Oxfordshire's Affordable Housing Potential - secured through planning policy

The Panel considered a report (included within the supplementary agenda) responding to its previous request for information around the delivery of affordable housing. Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive - Oxford City Council introduced the report and provided additional specific data in respect of Oxford City Council as circulated at the meeting.

The Scrutiny Panel noted in the update and their discussion:

- A best estimate of council's affordable housing could be derived from the overall housing trajectory and the application of local planning policies to deliver a proportion

of affordable housing on market sites alongside sites developed exclusively for affordable housing, but these were not formal targets.

- In considering any estimate it was very important to take into consideration that affordable housing levels derived through planning policy would always be subject to the challenge of site viability, i.e. whether a specific site could deliver the level of affordable housing. The level of this challenge and impact on estimates for affordable housing was difficult to predict.
- Estimates of affordable housing were not included in council's Authority Monitoring Reports, (AMR).
- Updated data on affordable housing trajectories could be provided for the Scrutiny Panel at a future meeting.
- Housing trajectory data for Oxford City was in the process of being updated to support the Oxford City Local Plan and was, therefore, an estimate.
- A significant proportion of sites in the Oxford Local Plan housing trajectory would not have on site affordable housing – around 50 sites out of a total of 90. This was because the sites would be:
 - Student accommodation
 - Employer linked housing; or
 - Conversions under permitted development
- A significant number of Oxford City sites were not large enough to trigger a requirement for affordable housing.
- Based on a high-level calculation of future affordable housing supply, which assumed a 50% level of policy compliance, the number of new affordable homes in Oxford City was projected to be around 2,700 homes for the period between 2019 and 2036.
- Changes had been made to the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) which effected the way in the which the delivery of sites could be counted.
- The challenges of providing future data on affordable homes trajectories were recognised by the Scrutiny Panel together with caveats around accuracy of any estimated data. However, the Scrutiny Panel felt that it was achievable in the context of AMRs.
- While estimated data over a four-year period was welcomed by the Panel, it was felt that annual data was more informative especially if provided in conjunction with information showing actual versus figures for affordable housing and affordable housing as a percentage of overall housing completions.
- It was noted that it would be a more complicated process to compile this information.
- The appetite of the Scrutiny Panel for monitoring information was positive, whilst recognising that there was a challenge in ensuring any monitoring information it requested added value.

RESOLVED: That Officers be asked to produce annualised housing and affordable housing trajectories with a graph comparing the actual versus forecast (4-year plan) and affordable housing as a percentage of overall housing completions derived from the Annual Monitoring Reports.

8 Oxfordshire Green Belt Update

The Panel considered an updated map illustrating both the Oxford Green Belt and emerging local plan proposed amendments. This had been requested by the Scrutiny Panel at its previous meeting.

In discussion, the main points raised in discussion were as follows:

- The importance of recognising and preserving Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, (AONB), in addition to Green Belt.
- It would be possible to look at adding additional overlay information on the map to show sites of Special Scientific Interest, (SSSIs), and AONBs.
- It would be helpful if future maps also included location names.
- It was not possible for councils to swap areas of Green Belt for other sites under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It was likely that such a decision would only be taken by HM Government in exceptional circumstances.
- A review of Green Belt had been undertaken post the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, (SHMA), but a new review would still be helpful.

The Panel discussed the potential for the swapping of Green Belt land. As a result of the discussion, it was proposed that they recommend to the Growth Board that it should encourage district councils to achieve Green Belt swaps. However, on being put to the vote, the proposal was lost.

RESOLVED:

1) That the Green Belt update be noted, and

2) That a further map be requested setting out already developed areas and existing allocation of sites for development with the addition of location names.

9 Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme

The Panel considered a report which set out an introduction to the Growth Deal Infrastructure workstream and a presentation by Sue Halliwell, Director of Place and Planning - Oxfordshire County Council and Aaron Rosser, Growth Deal Service Delivery Manager.

Key points arising from the report and presentation were as follows:

- Over the past decade, Oxfordshire had thrived, with levels of growth higher than any other local area. Investment in infrastructure had, however, failed to keep up, increasing pressure on the county's existing transport network, facilities, amenities and services etc.
- Infrastructure was not limited to roads. It also included footpaths, cycleways, high speed broadband, health care facilities etc.
- Oxfordshire's first Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS), was developed in 2018 - it covers the period up to 2040.
- The strategy set out the long list of schemes and level of infrastructure required along with work with partners on the basis of priority. A review of the OXIS was now underway.
- Spend in Year 1 was £30m. 17 Year 1 schemes had commenced, and were on target for successful delivery.
- Under the Housing and Growth Deal, a total of £150m was available for infrastructure over the period of the deal.
- The OXIS had informed Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bids submitted to HM Government e.g. Didcot Garden Town and the A40.

- As infrastructure projects require significant work and investment at the front end (feasibility and design), there will be a shift towards completion on site over the period of the deal.

In discussion, the Scrutiny Panel supported the inclusion of superfast broadband within a broad definition of the infrastructure to support growth. They also noted that the OxIS delivery plan would be influenced by the individual council's local plans. The management of risks to the programme was also considered, for instance in connection to congestion on major trunk roads such as the A34.

Members referred to Annex 2 of the report which set out a list of individual schemes by year and commented that it would be useful if future reports included information on the costs of each project. This would help demonstrate both the scale of the Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme and how the budget was being spent. In connection to Annex 1, the Scrutiny Panel was informed that the red, amber and green ratings in the delivery confidence column related to the level of confidence that a project was on target to reach its expected delivery milestones, not that a project had been physically completed on the ground.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

10 Response to Scrutiny Panel request in relation to air quality and climate change in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050

The Panel examined a report setting out an update on air quality plans as envisaged by the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Vision and Objectives with a focus on the mitigation of climate change in areas of development. This had been requested by the Panel at its previous meeting.

The Panel noted that air quality action plans were based on assessments done by local authorities. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 would need to appropriately consider climate change and air quality issues which would be assessed via a sustainability appraisal process. Detailed air quality modelling would also be required if the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 recommended growth in locations in Special Areas of Conservation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

11 Growth Board response to Growth Board Scrutiny Panel recommendations – March 2019 Meeting

The Panel noted the Growth Board's responses to recommendations from the meeting on 21 March 2019 as set out in the Agenda. In addition, Councillor Gant updated the Panel on his attendance at the Growth Board on 26 March 2019.

In respect of Recommendation 8 that the Growth Board revisit its response to the request for structured communications between the Growth Board and council members, the Panel was disappointed that the Growth Board had been unable to agree to the recommendation citing that this was a matter for each leader within their own authority. In discussion, the Panel felt that whilst there were examples of effective communication structures on Growth Board matters between leaders and their members in individual councils, (for example regular reports to full council by the leader on the Growth Board) practice varied across the councils and a number of members of Panel commented that they did not feel they were

effective within their own authorities with members receiving incorrect or incomplete information. The Panel felt that given the importance of the activities of the Growth Board to residents, a structured process was justified. It was therefore, agreed that the Growth Board should be asked to revisit its response.

The Panel considered the statement earlier in the meeting by Helen Marshall on behalf CPRE, that the Growth Board should commission a review of the Oxford Green Belt and/or request an update to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, (SHMA). The Panel agreed to support this request.

The Panel also reconsidered the question and statements put forward by Sue Haywood on behalf of NNGO in respects of: The Local Industrial Strategy, Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation Part 1 Consultation and Joint Declaration of Ambition. It was agreed that these recommendations should also be made to the Growth Board on these matters.

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed the following recommendations to the Growth Board:

- 1) That the Growth Board revisit the earlier recommendation on structured communication between the Growth Board and council's members considering member reports of having received incorrect or incomplete information.
- 2) That the Growth Board commission a review of the Oxford Green Belt and/or request an update to Oxfordshire SHMA 2014.
- 3) That the Growth Board reflect on the mutual dependencies between the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and both the Local Industrial Strategy and Ox-Cam Arc and also that the Growth Board commit to informing the Government with urgency the need for the LIS to go through Local Authority sign off process prior to final endorsement.
- 4) That the Growth Board outline what procedures were followed for the changes to Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 Part 1 Consultation and reflect on the changes in the text which altered the narrative between the endorsement of the Local Authority Scrutiny Committees and the publishing of the document in the public domain.

That the Growth Board seeks clarification on the process; how and when the Joint Declaration of Ambition HM Government and Local Partners will be subject to public scrutiny and debate.

12 Oxfordshire Growth Board Papers 4 June 2019

The Panel discussed the Agenda and reports published for the Oxfordshire Growth Board meeting on 4 June.

Councillor Gant referred to the Panel's previous concerns regarding the number of items on previous Growth Board agendas which were either verbal updates and/or lacked background papers. He commented that there was evidence that this issue was now being addressed, highlighting the current Growth Board Agenda. Nevertheless, he did express some concern that a background paper was not available in respect to Item 6 on the Growth Board agenda relating to the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. This lack of information meant the Scrutiny Panel were unable to scrutinise the item.

Bev Hindle responded that as discussions around the Arc were continuing and the situation evolving, a presentation to the Growth Board was most appropriate at the present time and was intended to be a discussion point. He indicated that he would be happy to come back to the Panel at a future date to provide further information.

In respect of the notes from sub-groups of the Growth Board, the Panel asked that care should be taken to set out any acronyms and abbreviations.

It was felt that other areas of the Growth Board agenda had been covered as part of the Panel's earlier discussions and that the Housing and Growth Deal Annual Review Report had covered similar areas to the Growth Deal Infrastructure Update as set out in the Panel agenda.

13 Work Programme for the Scrutiny Panel – May 2019

The Panel considered its work programme as set out in the Agenda and the following additional items were agreed:

- An up to date Oxford Green Belt Map which includes already developed areas and existing allocation of sites for development with addition of location names included.
- Annualised Housing and Affordable Housing Trajectories with a graph comparing the Actual Versus Forecast (4-year plan) and affordable housing as a percentage of overall housing completions derived from the Annual Monitoring Reports.

Questions from the Panel with regards Skills training and coverage within the OxLEP framework.

14 Dates of meetings

The Panel noted the dates of meetings as follows:

Scrutiny Panel
25 July 2019, (subsequently cancelled)
19 September
21 November
23 January 2020
26 March
28 May

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Chairman

Date