

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Oxfordshire

Plan 2050 Advisory Sub-Group

HELD ON THURSDAY 25 JULY 2019 AT 10.00 AM
 COMMITTEE ROOM 2, WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL,
 COUNCIL OFFICES, WOODGREEN, WITNEY, OX28 1NB

Present:

Councillors James Mills (Chair), Jeff Haine, Alex Hollingsworth, Jeannette Matelot, Sue Roberts and Catherine Webber

Officers: Giles Hughes, Rachel Williams and Kevin Jacob

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

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Colin Clarke, (Cherwell District Council) and Councillor Judy Roberts, (Vale of White Horse District Council) who was substituted by Councillor Catherine Webber.

There were no declarations of interest.

17 Notes of previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 30 May 2019 were agreed.

18 Presentation from Alison Smith (University of Oxford) on natural capital mapping exercise for Oxfordshire

The sub-group received a presentation from Professor Alison Smith, on research work undertaken by the Environmental Change Institute and University of Oxford to map natural capital in Oxfordshire. A summary of the main points of the presentation is set out below:

- Natural capital was a term to describe those elements of the natural environment that provide benefits for humans. These might be air, water, rocks, plants, animals, etc often referred to as natural assets.
- Eco-system services were derived from these natural assets and could include cultural services, i.e. recreation and aesthetic value, regulating services, i.e. flood

and erosion control, water quality, cooling and shading and provisioning services i.e. food crops, livestock, wood etc.

- An example of a regulating service provided by woodland was cooling and shading. During a heatwave in July 2018, Epping Forest had been 20 degrees vs 38 degrees at the Excel Centre.
- Local Natural Capital Plans were a key part of and linked to the goals set out by HM Government in 'A green future: Our 25-year plan to improve the environment' and the National Planning and Policy Framework.
- The majority of land-use in Oxfordshire was set aside for food production, mainly arable farming with relatively low provision of Broadleaved woodland.
- Land use scoring approaches had been developed to calculate 0-10 scores for the ability of each habitat/land use type to deliver each of the eco-system services. Separate maps could be produced for all 18 services and extra multipliers could be used to reflect habitat condition and or location. It was accepted that some scores would be based on objective judgements whilst others would be more subjective.
- Most scores were based upon indicative rankings, but two (carbon storage and air quality regulation) were proportional to measured values.

Points raised in discussion included:

- That land on private estates might score quite highly in terms of the regulatory services it provided and have a high aesthetic value but would not contribute significantly towards recreation and amenity if it was not publicly accessible. It was felt that this was a subtlety that should be reflected in the scoring matrix.
- The 'value' of elements of natural capital was linked to location, i.e. a much-loved tree in an urban environment would score more highly than a single tree in a rural or wooded environment.
- The view was expressed that full natural capital mapping was needed. Officers commented that natural capital work was an increasingly important and helpful contribution to the strategic spatial planning process. It would be appropriate to produce more detailed survey information at different stages of the planning process, so the more specific the location the higher level of mapping information required. Some concern was expressed regarding the need to ensure the objectivity of natural capital consultants engaged by consultants.
- The role of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 as a development plan with policies applicable to specific applications, but not as the only tool available to undertake natural capital mapping.

A detailed discussion took place on seeking funding to scope reports for natural assessments to map known ecological data and ground checking work for full biological and soil health baselining. It was suggested by Councillor Sue Roberts that recommendations should be made to the Growth Board from the sub-group that Officers should be asked to source funding for the scoping reports. After further discussion and input from Officers it was **agreed** that it would be more appropriate to ask the Executive Officer Group of the Growth Board, (EOG) to consider the request.

The Chair thanked Professor Smith for her presentation, and it was agreed that copies would be circulated to members of the sub-group.

19 Presentation from Environment Agency on natural capital work being undertaken for the OxCam Arc (Luke Newbey)

The sub-group received a presentation from Luke Newbey Project Manager OxCam Local Natural Capital Plan, (LNCP) Project Team, Environment Agency on work to a pilot a LNCP within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc area. The main points of the presentation are summarized below:

- Work to pilot a LNCP for the Arc had been commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, (DEFRA) and was presently the only one of its kind in the country.
- The intention was that LNCPs would be strategic places plans that articulated the local vision and the benefits of delivering HM Government's 25-year plan to improve the environment and within the Arc there was real ambition that growth should be sustainable with natural capital thinking embedded.
- The objective was to publish the ARC LNCP in March 2020 with the objective of helping partners within the Arc provide environmental protection and environmental enhancement.
- Natural capital indicator mapping work was currently in progress linking into other natural capital work across the Arc area.
- There would be continued engagement to ensure the ARC LNCP was locally owned and codesigned in order to ensure a legacy for the project.
- Careful consideration was being given to how best to present natural capital information in a way that would be open, shareable that meet user needs. An option being considered was grid-based mapping at different levels of detail and access depending on nature of use.
- HM Government was looking for LNCP related infrastructure related schemes for consideration as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review process.

In discussion, members of the sub-group that they felt it would important for there to be engagement with groups representing stakeholder groups, for instance those representing landowners, farmers and relevant professional bodies such as the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. At the local level such organisations would be a key source of information. Potential confidentiality issues were recognized, but it was felt that there should be a way to address these issues.

The Chair thanked Luke Newby for the presentation, and he was asked to provide an update on progress at a future date.

20 Workshop to review the aspirations and objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 as presented in the consultation document

In view of the light of the time available a workshop style discussion did not take place, but RW provided a summary of the report on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 1 Consultation (Part 1). The following key points were raised:

- Work was ongoing to reflect on ways to engage with groups outside of the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups which had made up most of the responses to the consultation. This included building links with schools and colleges to obtain a broader range of voices.
- One of the key themes from the consultation responses to the vision for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was that it should be more ambitious. In discussion it was felt

that there was a need to recognise that the plan was a strategic statutory document and there was a risk that in seeking to make it more ambitious it could become overly proscriptive and constrain local planning authorities in setting their own priorities. Officers confirmed that the scope and powers of the plan had not changed and setting of local policies remained a matter for local planning authorities.

- A suite of local press titles had been used for all major updates and to push local engagement including those covering the Abingdon area.

21 The next steps

This item was not discussed, but several other issues were raised by way of any other business.

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

Whilst it was noted that Oxford City Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council had passed council motions opposing an expressway this was a Highways England scheme not an Oxfordshire Council's scheme. In further discussion, it was felt that whilst the plan and Expressway were separate project, it was appropriate for the evidence base to be shared.

Work to identify housing numbers for the Oxfordshire Plan between 2020 and 2050

A discussion took place regarding the potential impact of uncertainty around routing options for the Oxford to Cambridge Express Way on work ongoing to identify housing numbers 2020-2050 for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

22 Future meetings

It was agreed that the meeting of the sub-group scheduled for 22 August should be cancelled. Dates for the rest of the calendar year were noted as:

- 19 September (subsequently cancelled)
- 17 October
- 14 November
- 12 December