

Public speakers

26 March 2019



Questions

1. Question from Jo Allen, Chair of Upper Heyford Parish Council

We are strongly of the view that the Growth Board, in administering the production of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan, must take into account the impacts that a huge increase in the growth of housing and businesses in Oxfordshire will have on the following:

- growth in energy use
- growth in water use
- growth in waste created (rubbish, sewage etc)
- growth in traffic and pollution
- growth in noise and light pollution
- decrease in green space, diminished rural environment and displacement of wildlife.

It is also essential to include the impacts of major growth on local public services, for example:

- NHS services: hospitals, GP surgeries, ambulance services, etc
- Schools
- Police services

These important community services are not being enabled to grow in parallel with all the extra growth in housing and increased population that is proposed. This problem needs to be addressed by the Growth Board before decisions about more housing are made. Local people should not have to pay the price for increased housing by seeing their public services further diminished, while traffic and pollution increase.

It is time to look holistically and to consider our **existing** communities in Oxfordshire. We are not nimbys, but insist that we should be valued and our views taken into proper consideration. It is not enough to give money to 'mitigate' outcomes that are not capable of being mitigated.

Frontline services (such as Thames Water, police, GPs, schools etc.) are very important sources of information in the planning process because they are already having to try to accommodate an increased population on decreasing budgets and are struggling to deliver decent services. It is essential that their first-hand experience is made available to fully inform the Growth Board when such huge decisions are being made. Representatives of frontline public services must therefore be included on the Growth Board together with representatives from community organisations and Parish Councils and representatives for the environment and wildlife.

Oxfordshire Growth Board should be leading the way forward towards genuine sustainability and enhancing Oxfordshire - economically, socially and environmentally, **all equally valued together**, for present and future generations.

We would like to know how the Growth Board is going to ensure the issues raised above are addressed fully and how it will reassure existing communities that they have been listened to and the issues acted upon.

Response

These issues are all fundamental concerns of good planning which the Oxfordshire Plan will strive for. The aspirations as set out in the consultation document are intended to help set the context for decision making; balancing the environmental quality, strong and healthy communities, economic growth, housing availability and affordability and connectivity and movement. The aim is to find good solutions that address all of these aspirations. The Oxfordshire Plan Team will look holistically at the options available and the likely impacts of those choices in recommending a way forward to the constituent authorities for their decision.

At each stage of the project we have committed to a full engagement process and will publish the results of the consultation and set out how those responses have influenced the next stage of work.

2. Sue Haywood on behalf of Need not Greed Oxfordshire

Given that the Growth Board has made a commitment to enshrine sustainability into the process of the Oxfordshire Plan, in line with a request made by DEFRA at the September 2018 meeting, does the Board consider that it ought to be able to provide an explanation of how this will be achieved in practice and, if so, could it now explain in detail:

- How people with the appropriate skills for this complex and technical concept will be incorporated into the decision-making process (in the way that health place-shaping is being visibly embedded)? For example, who is the sustainability expert on the JSSP Sub-Committee? In the Project team? In the Executive Officers' group?

Response:

The Plan is being developed in conjunction with the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process and the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) process.

The SA process is a statutory process for assessing the options available to the Plan and the likely impacts of those choices, in terms of the environmental, social and economic impacts. The relationship between the Plan and the SA is iterative so that initial assessment work informs selection of options and then further assessment work assesses those choices in more detail. The Oxfordshire Plan team has secured the support of leading expert Riki Therivel of Levett-Therivel and consultants LUC to carry out the SA work for the Oxfordshire Plan.

The HRA is a statutory process that applies to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The regulations ensure that plans can only be adopted where they will not (in combination with other plans and projects) adversely affect the integrity of the SAC. Local consultancy expertise has been appointed to carry out this work.

Both projects, although externally commissioned will be closely managed by the Oxfordshire Plan team and Liaison Group, providing the link between the streams of work.

- It is welcome that the Growth Board and project teams for the Plan are engaging specialists for various technical work. But who will set the scope for any specialists engaged, and who will assess and balance the information received, from responses to consultations as well as from expert reports, all of which requires a fundamental understanding of sustainability principles?

Response

A range of pieces of technical work are being commissioned to feed into the Oxfordshire Plan project. Many of these streams of work are (or will be) new commissions from consultancies expert in their fields, others will involve collating already existing evidence from within the constituent authorities, and some will be pieces of work carried out by the Oxfordshire Plan team in-house.

Briefs for externally commissioned work are being drawn up by the Oxfordshire Plan team in conjunction with members of the Liaison Group and other specialist officers in the councils. Before any work is commissioned briefs are being signed-off by the Heads of Planning Group (or by officers in the districts nominated by them where appropriate).

The outputs of the studies will feed back into the Oxfordshire Plan Team and into the work of the SA and HRA consultants described above.

- And most importantly, how will issues such as social cohesion, the value of ecosystem services, and what scale of growth can be accommodated by various natural resources without depletion or harm over time, be championed and recognised in the decision making structures as central to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, rather than simply regarded as things on which any damage must be "reduced" as much as possible, or mitigated?

Response

These are all fundamental concerns of good planning which the Oxfordshire Plan will strive for. The aspirations as set out in the consultation document are intended to help set the context for decision making; balancing the environmental quality, strong and healthy communities, economic growth, housing availability and affordability and connectivity and movement. The aim is to find good solutions that address all of these aspirations.