

Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 4 March

Item 3: Public Participation

1. Julia Benning on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire

We welcome the papers on Zero Carbon Housing and Affordable Housing and in that context would also wish to draw the Panel'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 7b) 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. Does the Scrutiny Panel have sufficient confidence that they know:

- 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?
- b) How this work is being reported to local authority members and/or the public?
- 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?
- d) What consideration, if any, is being given to a localised definition of affordable housing?