

Supplementary Papers

Oxfordshire Growth Board

Held as a Virtual meeting viewable by a weblink
on Tuesday, 28 July 2020 at 1.30 pm

3. **Public participation** - copy of public questions and written answers
(Pages 2 - 5)

4. **Growth Board response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations**
(Pages 6 - 10)

Public speakers

28 July 2020

Questions

1. Charlie Hicks

To each board member, ask yourself: How old am I? How old will I be in 2050?

My name is Charlie, I'm 25. Born in the JR in May 1995. I grew up here, did my undergrad here, spent a few years in London and now I'm back living here. At uni I was lucky enough to visit Silicon Valley and learn the best way to think like a designer - just like Apple, Google, Uber and the like. If Oxford - Cambridge and Oxfordshire within that is to become the 'Silicon Arc', it would probably be wise to adopt some thinking from California. The context of the question is this:

What is the purpose of this group of people? What power do you hold between you? What will be impacted by the decisions you make? *Who* will be impacted by the decisions you make?

Good design principles, fit for the 21st century - used by all the best tech companies in the world - always start with one thing: the user. The user is the person or people who use the product or service that is being created. Good design *obsesses* over the user: the every last detail of their journey, their need, their context, their background, their hopes, their dreams, their desires.

Good design has core to it an overwhelming empathy for the user. An empathy that can only happen through one thing: *listening* to the user. So, the purpose of this group is to design an Oxfordshire for 2050.

So ask yourself this:

How old am I today? How old will I be in 2050? Who are the working-age users of Oxfordshire in 2050? Where are *their* voices in any of the work that we are doing? Where are *their* voices in any of the decisions we make? If they - people born after 1990 - are not central to everything you do, including as a part of this group, how can you even begin to have a hope of designing a future that will work for people in 2050?

So ... how old am I? Who is this group for? How are we designing for the future?

Answer provided: *Thank you for your question Charlie and your challenge to us on engaging young people – an issue close to my heart.*

The purpose of this group is included in today's agenda at page 22. We are a collaboration of local council and system leaders with the purpose of coordinating local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.

While we meet to share information and discuss ideas and solutions to county wide issues, our coordination role does not extend to taking any statutory decisions. Instead, we have been asked by Oxfordshire's councils to provide oversight of various pieces of joint work they are undertaking.

Most relevant to your question is our role in overseeing the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, which will set a spatial framework for Oxfordshire's future from now up to 2050. The voice of young people is critically important in this work. Officers supporting that work have held several workshop events that place young people at the centre of that process.

We held a workshop with the Voice of Oxfordshire's Youth earlier this year. As a youth-led countywide forum for young people in Oxfordshire, they were keen to discuss with us their concerns and ambitions for the future, and how this might shape the Oxfordshire Plan. There have also been several workshops held with local college and university students designed to help inform our planning. The outcomes of these engagements can be read about on the Oxfordshire Plan website.

Recently, a successful three-month work placement was offered to a City of Oxford College student to help communicate and engage with young people. Additional work was done with college students in producing youth-targeted material for future social media campaigns. Further engagement with colleges and schools is being developed while complying with any future Covid-19 guidance.

Your question is well put, and we can of course always do better. We recognise that a diversity of voices, young and old need to be heard and inform how we plan for Oxfordshire's future. I am encourage by the comments and ideas being submitted through the Oxfordshire Open Thought online platform and encourage people to use that to let us know what is important to them and their communities.

On a technical point, it is important that we are clear that any decisions pertaining to the content of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 are matters for individual councils to agree at key milestones in the Plan's development. Councillors are of course elected to represent all the residents in their council area, whatever their age, but with the average age of a councillor being 59 and 45% of councillors being retired I think there is some work to be done to improve diversity...although that is a matter for individual councils and political parties rather than the Growth Board.

2. Helen Marshal on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire.

CPRE Oxfordshire notes that the new Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) – this time known as an Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA) – is continuing behind the scenes. (Agenda Item 7e)

Given that:

- The consultants working on it are the same as those that worked on the previous inflationary growth strategy
- The terms of reference have not been made publicly available
- It is likely to be influenced by the expansionist Local Industrial Strategy, drawn up by the unelected Local Enterprise Partnership and signed off by Government without any public consultation
- An Arc-wide sales prospectus, that is also likely to set aggressive growth targets, is being prepared entirely behind closed doors

What reassurance can the Growth Board give Oxfordshire residents that it will be able to 'prioritise sustainable development and quality of life' as per its newly defined purpose?

Answer provided: *Officers are confident with the integrity of the firms undertaking the work in relation to the OGNA. The work is being overseen and scrutinised as it is developed by*

several professional layers across all of our local authorities. It is sensitive work due to the nature of what it is assessing and developing and by the fact that there is little precedent out there for such work informing a statutory plan covering a 30-year time horizon across a strategic geography. We understand there is a desire to have this open and transparent and we are committed to doing that when we are confident that the methodology we have deployed has been adhered to and we are happy the product is in a state where we professionally are confident in its robustness.

The OGNA work though is not policy, nor is it the sole determining evidence for how we seek to deliver the shared ambitions and goals of the Oxfordshire authorities or the Growth Board. The assurance we give is that we as a Growth Board, including our constituent Local Planning Authorities, as well as groups such as CPRE and the wider public, will be scrutinising the emerging Oxfordshire Plan 2050 as well as the evidence it uses to base its emerging preferred options on, to ensure that sustainable development, well-being and quality of life will be at the heart of the Plan. That is part of the plan-making system and what we all seek to achieve...not something that is derived from one source or piece of evidence.

3. Julia Benning on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire, (put in her absence).

'Need not Greed Oxfordshire notes the proposed revised Terms of Reference for the Growth Board and welcomes the steps towards including social and environmental considerations within its purpose. However, this is largely meaningless whilst the emphasis is still only on managing the impacts of growth, not informing the actual level of growth that Oxfordshire can reasonably accommodate.

Fully embracing the Doughnut Economics model for the county in the way that Amsterdam has done would greatly assist in creating an Oxfordshire that is more respectful of our environment and wildlife, desists in concreting unnecessarily and creates an economy that provides sufficient wealth to deliver services and infrastructure that sustains quality of life for most and provides significant improvements for others. It would also contribute to a more balanced regional economy, supporting the Government's levelling up agenda.

Will the Growth Board therefore:

- Amend the proposed purpose of the Board (as set out Para 1.1, Appendix 1, Agenda Item 5) to seek only sufficient economic growth to support organic population growth rather than unconstrained business expansion and jobs growth (which is widely acknowledged and evidenced as such a major contributor to the climate emergency)?
- Ensure that this principle is enshrined in any Arc-wide prospectus (Para 7, Agenda Item 10, Arc update)?
- Ensure that any such prospectus does not pre-empt the considerations of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan and is prepared in an open and transparent manner, including public consultation and debate/vote at full council meetings?
- And meanwhile ensure that the terms of reference for the OxCam Arc Leaders Group and Executive Sub-Group are subject to public debate and consultation, with no further meetings of the OxCam Arc Leaders/Chief Executives/Executive Group taking place unless such meetings are held in public (virtually, if necessary), with published agendas and minutes, and with the opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and address the Groups?

Answer provided: *The Growth Board Review was tasked with considering what direction the Growth Board's future purpose should take. That review welcomed over 250 responses, which have shaped the Terms of Reference presented today. I am glad to say that Need Not Greed's own submission to that review is strongly reflected in our new purpose. Our new draft purpose has been in the public domain since January, and I do not propose that we change it, given the support we have received.*

I am pleased to say that the Terms of Reference for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Leaders Group will be made public soon. As a non-statutory coalition of the willing, the Arc and its governance structures have no powers to decide on our local planning matters. Through updates presented at this meeting, we aim to bring much more visibility to the work taking place at an Arc level.

In answer to other parts of your question, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 will be central to numerous public discussions and votes across all our local authorities, and a comprehensive schedule of consultation is in place. The Board trusts in the role of individual local authorities to plan for their own future, and our role is to provide some coordination to that work.

**Growth Board response to recommendations of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel
Recommendations made on 22nd July 2020**

The Growth Board is requested to provide a draft response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel, to be published as a supplement collectively with the Scrutiny Panel’s report, for decision at its meeting on 28 July 2020.

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
<p>Recommendation 1. That the Growth Board, in considering its role in the Post-Covid-19 recovery, supports the principles of recovery as agreed by the C40 Mayors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recovery should not be a return to ‘business as usual’ - because that is a world on track for 3°C or more of over-heating; • The recovery, above all, must be guided by an adherence to public health and scientific expertise, in order to assure the safety of those who live in our cities; • Excellent public services, public investment and increased community resilience will form the most effective basis for the recovery; • The recovery must address issues of equity that have been laid bare by the impact of the crisis – for example, workers who are now recognised as essential should be celebrated and compensated accordingly and policies must support people living in informal settlements; • The recovery must improve the resilience of our cities and communities. Therefore, investments should be made to protect against future threats – including the climate crisis – and to support those people impacted by climate and health risks; • Climate action can help accelerate economic recovery and enhance social equity, using new technologies and the creation of new industries and new jobs. These will drive wider benefits for our residents, workers, students, businesses and visitors; • We commit to doing everything in our power and the power of our city governments to ensure that the recovery from COVID-19 is healthy, equitable and sustainable; 	<p>Yes (in principle)</p>	<p>The Board supports these principles, however the decision to specifically commit to these principles’ rests with the constituent partners of the Growth Board. Importantly, Oxfordshire is a rural county with many towns and villages as well as City.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commit to using our collective voices and individual actions to ensure that national governments support both cities and the investments needed in cities, to deliver an economic recovery that is healthy, equitable and sustainable; • We commit to using our collective voices and individual actions to ensure that international and regional institutions invest directly in cities to support a healthy, equitable and sustainable recovery. 		
<p>Recommendation 2. That the Growth Board, in considering its role in the Post-Covid-19 recovery, champions the role of the science and technology industries in delivering economic recovery and renewal, especially where those sectors can contribute towards our local environmental and healthy living ambitions; areas that the Panel felt were not sufficiently recognised within the report presented to them.</p>	Yes	<p>The strategic direction set out in the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), which is a key element of our Housing and Growth Deal, makes clear the importance of local science and technology sectors in Oxfordshire’s future. It explains <i>“Oxfordshire wants to be a pioneer for clean and sustainable growth, known as the location which harnesses the dynamic potential of its science and technological innovation for the benefit of local residents, business and improved public services which is an exemplar for contemporary living and design, and delivers sustainable and flourishing communities.”</i> The strategy continues throughout to give great emphasis to the importance of local innovation in contributing to a sustainable and healthy future for Oxfordshire.</p> <p>The LIS is focused on certain sectors of our local economy and both executive and associate members of the Growth Board have responsibility to support all sectors, small and large to participate and respond to the challenges and opportunities the post-Covid, post-Brexit world presents.</p> <p>The Board notes this was only an update report and was not setting out an exhaustive or exclusive strategy for recovery – the Board recognises the role this sector needs to play when the Economic Recovery Plan for Oxfordshire takes shape.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3. That the Growth Board revise its Freedom of Information Request Procedure to remove references that permit local authorities to consult other local authorities on how they intend to respond; this would ensure the responses are transparent and highlight any gaps in governance or policy related issues.</p>	No	<p>The Board has sought Monitoring Officer advice, and where FOI or EIR requests relate to the Growth Board’s work, they will by their nature affect all of the local authorities in Oxfordshire as constituent members of the Board. Therefore, it would be courteous and good practice to notify those other affected Councils. This practice is consistent with the S45 Code of Practice. The Panel should be assured that it is the receiving authority’s legal duty to apply its own mind in responding, even after such consultation, which is what the</p>

		<p>Protocol reflects. It is explicit that “achieving a ‘consistent’ response cannot be the primary aim.” It is expected however that this approach will lead to a more meaningful outcome for the requester.</p> <p>The Protocol summarises that it “provides a legally compliant means of dealing with such requests while providing a degree of mutual consultation whilst also ensuring the identity of requesters is not disclosed to other members of the Growth Board... This process is on the basis that, while each authority is an FOI authority, consultation between authorities on a proposed response does not breach that principle.”</p>
Recommendation 4. That the Growth Board provide the Scrutiny Panel with an update at its next meeting concerning the development of a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire.	Yes	Agreed, as part of the Growth Board Review Stage 2 Report.
Recommendation 5. That the Growth Board provides clarity about how members of its Advisory Sub-Group will be expected to carry out their conduit role between that group and their local authority, as suggested in the Terms of Reference for those groups.	Yes	As lead executive members for their respective portfolios, it is expected that members of the Advisory Subgroup will be well networked into their Council. Since these groups were set up, councils have adopted their own approach to this. Some provide updates through their Cabinets and some have pre-meetings involving officers to discuss upcoming agendas. There is no uniform approach, and no current central resource available to support members in undertaking their conduit role, but support can be provided through their own councils. To support members, public summary notes are provided for each meeting and published online, which will be a useful resource.
Recommendation 6. That the Growth Board ensures that the Advisory Sub-groups have access to the minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meetings.	Yes	These are made available online after each meeting as part of the Growth Board’s agenda packs.
Recommendation 7. That the Growth Board make visible on its website’s home page how the public can register to speak at future meetings of the Board.	Yes	The Board will ask that the Oxfordshire Growth Board website be updated before its next meeting to raise the profile of the opportunity for the public can take part in our meetings.
<p>Recommendation 8: That the Growth Board in its reporting for the Housing Sub-group categorise Affordable Housing in two sub-categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Affordable Housing: 80% market rate (NPPF) ii) Affordable Housing: 5 x median household income (mortgage rates) 	In Part	The Growth Board will ask officers whether this information can be made available for the Sub-group.

<p>Thus, giving the actual number of truly affordable houses as per the median household income in Oxfordshire.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 9: That the Growth Board in its work with Oxfordshire Plan 2050 re-examine the boundaries of Green Belt with a focus on countryside housing developments and its impact on flood risk areas.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Oxfordshire Plan will be developed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework which sets out that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Consideration will need to be given to any local flood risk management plans, strategic flood risk assessments and a wide range of studies that will form part of the Plan's evidence base. A Green Belt study was commissioned in 2015 on behalf of all the Oxfordshire Local Planning Authorities, and there have also been a number of recent local studies to support individual Local Plan evidence bases, for which the Oxfordshire Plan will need to take into account. Throughout the project we will review all the available evidence base materials and update and/or supplement that as appropriate to ensure that the Oxfordshire Plan is based on the best available evidence. Changes to the Green Belt boundaries can only be made in exceptional circumstances, as defined in the NPPF, through the Plan making process.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: That the Growth Board investigate ways of funding public Infrastructure Projects by incentivising private sector organisations in order to attract capital investment; decreasing budgetary pressures on these projects.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>While we do work closely with private sector developers to ensure we are maximising private sector investment and supplementing that where mitigation requires it with further legal agreements (e.g. S.106 or CIL), and indeed have used public funding to leverage significant private sector investment through programmes such as City Deal and Local Growth Fund, there is no specific mechanism to "incentivise" the private sector to deliver publicly beneficial capital investment for infrastructure. We have as a group of local authorities lobbied Government to create greater long term funding certainty so that we can continue to leverage and attract private sector investment – we have also suggested that we could look to "incentivise good growth options if we were afforded local determination over the release of that funding –</p>

		<p>something that is very difficult to do under traditional Green Belt business cases whilst also avoiding any perception or actual contravention of state aid law. This is something though the Growth Board should continue to lobby for as the principle raised by Scrutiny is a good one.</p>
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