

Supplementary Papers

Oxfordshire Growth Board

held in the Virtual meeting viewable by weblink
on Tuesday, 22 September 2020 at 2.00 pm

3. **Public participation** (Pages 2 - 3)

Responses to the question and address made at the Growth Board on 22 September.

4. **Growth Board Scrutiny Panel update** (Pages 4 - 7)

Responses to the recommendations of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.

Public speakers

22 September 2020



Questions

1. Julia Benning on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire

Ref Agenda Item 11 - OxCam Arc Update:

As far as Need not Greed Oxfordshire is aware, the promised publication of the Terms of Reference of the Arc Leaders / Arc Leaders Executive groups (as indicated at the July Growth Board meeting) has yet to take place. Meanwhile, we note that Hatch Regeneris has been commissioned to help develop an economic prospectus for the Arc.

Please can the Growth Board confirm:

- how much public money is being allocated to this?
- who is accountable for the work?
- whether similar work/investment is taking place in relation to developing environmental/social prospectuses?
- when the long awaited Terms of Reference will finally be published?

Response: The Terms of Reference of the Arc Chief Executives Group, Arc Leadership Group Executive and Arc Chief Executive Group are now available on the Agenda webpage page for the meeting. A total of £25,000 had been allocated by the Arc Leadership Group in commissioning the work on the economic prospectus. Reporting into the Arc Leadership Group, the Arc Director is accountable for this work on the client side alongside lead representatives from the local enterprise partnerships and leads from the universities across the Arc. Environmental and social inclusion objectives are at the forefront of thinking and these had been included within the economic prospectus, notwithstanding its title.

Addresses:

2. Michael Tyce on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire on the Government's proposed Planning White Paper and housing numbers.

Since the system of Town and Country Planning began it has been the practice for the Government to provide general guidance on policy and official forecasts of population growth, and latterly household formation, to inform decision making whilst Local Authorities decided their own Local Plan numbers and locations.

The old PPG system was torn up in 2012 and replaced with the National Planning Policy Framework intended to be the final word, but subsequently extended, clarified, and rewritten in 2019. There have been several attempts at a "standard method" by which Local Authorities should assess need, but in principle Local Authorities still

decided. Now that is all to be turned on its head.

Instead of housing numbers being decided by our local representatives, on the evidence, they are to be imposed nationally to fulfil a manifesto commitment. The new housing numbers calculation starts with the answer of 337,000 houses a year, and the arcane formula is created to arrive at it.

The allocations to the Local Authorities are based not on need, or even the less tangible “requirement”, but on relative house prices. The higher the house prices, the more houses you have to build. This will not reduce house prices as Kate Barker proved in her seminal report to Gordon Brown in 2008, because builders will only build what they can sell at current prices and are not about to devalue their own markets. Its only effect will be to bring more people to the area. As it happens Lichfields calculate that Oxfordshire would be required to build more or less the same number of houses as the Growth Deal, which the Government itself acknowledged was far greater than the number needed, all the time, every year, for ever, each time from a larger base.

How this would interact with the Zoning to be imposed in the White Paper is not clear. Would the Zoning have to take more account of the number of houses to be built than it would of the need to protect the environment? How could broad brush zoning work in a crowded island where environmental assets are mingled with development? How will it impact on broader plans such as Oxfordshire 2050? What is clear though is that both of these proposals – the numbers and the zoning – will drain decision making even further away from the people most affected and the Local Authorities they rely on to reflect their interests.

The South Oxfordshire experience where a new administration elected to scrap the submitted Local Plan it inherited from its predecessors has been forced by Government to take it to Examination, whatever the detailed rights and wrongs of the case, is as clear an indication as you need that this is a Government determined to enforce its will and how little flexibility will be tolerated.

It is against that clear statement of intent that you need to consider the proposed imposition of housing numbers and broad-brush zoning.

CPRE says that this is not so much an argument about the minutiae of the way these new diktats would work, important though that is, but that the diktats are themselves undemocratic and unacceptable because they disempower the Local Authorities we rely on (for better or worse) to represent us all.

We urge the Growth Board, and its constituent authorities, to respond strongly to both the housing methodology and Planning White Paper consultations and the wholesale erosion of local democracy they represent.

Response: It is recognised that the Planning White Paper raises some important issues and local authorities in Oxfordshire may be responding individually to the consultation. There are not currently any proposals to have a joint response through the Growth Board, but we will ask officers to consider whether there should be – accepting that the timeframe is challenging. The Growth Board’s Housing Advisory Sub-group has been considering whether a letter can be sent to the Secretary of State specifically in relation to the impacts the White Paper could have on the future provision of affordable housing.

Growth Board response to recommendations of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel Recommendations made on 15th September 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 22 September 2020.

Recommendation	Agree ?	Comment
Recommendation 1. That the Growth Board ask HM Government to provide greater clarity in terms of planning flexibilities within the local authorities and implications on the 3 and 5 year land supply with regards to the granted extension of timelines of the Housing and Growth Deal.	Yes	The Growth Board, through its lead officers, has asked HM Government to extend various elements of the Housing & Growth Deal due to COVID-19 impacts and other factors. HMG has confirmed they will allow extensions to our three main programme elements (affordable housing, infrastructure delivery and Oxfordshire Plan 2050 programmes) subject to programmes being updated and provided for their agreement. These are being submitted this week in hopes of agreement by the end of September 2020. HMG has also confirmed there will be no extension to the freedoms and flexibilities within the Deal and in particular, the 3-year land supply for housing requirement exception will cease on 31 March 2021 as agreed in the Deal structure.
<p>Recommendation 2. That the Growth Board, when it receives a presentation on the Arc Local Natural Capital Plan, asks questions to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. What methodology and sources of information will be used in quantifying natural capital? ii. What measurement will be used to assess the current level of natural capital, 	Yes	<p>The Growth Board was able to ask some of these questions to the Environment Agency at its meeting on 22 September, but there were acute time pressures at that meeting which meant that not all these questions could be asked. Following the meeting, we worked with the Environment Agency to provide some answers for the Panel in response to these questions, which are set out below. More information can be found on the LNCP website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data has been gathered from different sources to assess the value they provide. We have mapped natural capital using local and national datasets and used a natural capital accounting tool under development by the Environment Agency to value the benefits. ii. The accounting tool provides monetary valuations of the benefits derived and will be presented alongside more qualitative information on natural

<p>and to what extent this is being subsumed by development?</p> <p>iii. How will the Natural Capital Planning tool and investment toolkit be practically implemented?</p> <p>iv. What additional protections will be added to existing planning constraints with regards to AONBs and the Greenbelt?</p> <p>v. What status does the Local Natural Capital Plan have in the refresh of local plans within the districts?</p> <p>vi. Whether there is an ambition to undertake a natural capital assessment across the county?</p> <p>vii. Whether there is an ambition to have carbon sequestration objectives within the Plan?</p> <p>viii. How the existence of flood risk areas will be considered as part of the Plan?</p> <p>ix. How the Plan links with the EEH Draft Transport Strategy?</p>		<p>capital across the Arc. We also have natural capital maps based on landcover type and Ecosystem Services maps that provide relative scores for a variety of benefits. The latter uses the same method as mapping done for Oxfordshire County Council and being applied in development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The EA are not looking at the impacts of future development as part of this work, but are producing tools that will help others apply the evidence base and approach.</p> <p>iii. We are working with a range of stakeholders, including local authority planners, to develop a framework that they can use in developing policy and decision making. We will be testing this over the next six months at various scales from Arc level to neighbourhood planning to understand how the evidence base and approach can influence and support planning policy making.</p> <p>iv. The LNCP is not a plan as such, despite its name, and it will not have any power to offer or alter protections to existing green spaces. The Plan will however be a useful reference point for decision makers in their own processes for deciding where and how land is protected and where interventions to improve the environment should be targeted.</p> <p>v. As a strategic evidence base, the LNCP will have an important role to play in the future refresh of local plans. It will help local authorities to identify and manage their natural capital assets in an integrated way that will inform spatial planning. The Plan will however have no statutory standing.</p> <p>vi. This work is being led by Oxfordshire County Council and is being used to inform development of the 2050 Plan. The EA are working closely with Oxfordshire County Council and 2050 planners to apply their learning in developing the approach for the Arc.</p> <p>vii. The plan does not set targets and objectives, but we hope will be used to inform targeting of interventions to deliver objectives of local strategies and plans, e.g. where woodland planting could be focused to improve carbon storage.</p> <p>viii. Flood risk maps can be mapped alongside the mapping produced for the LNCP. We have also done an assessment of risks and pressures across the Arc, which covers flood risk. We are currently working with the Environment Agency on their flood risk project planning to apply the evidence base and approach in project decision making.</p> <p>ix. We have provided our natural capital indicator mapping to EEH to inform the strategy and their work.</p>
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<p>Recommendation 3. That the Growth Board in its aspirations of economic growth within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc organise workshops and events to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Promote the establishment of manufacturing industries ii. Promote teaching and training of engineering skills at all levels 	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Growth Board recognises that high-value manufacturing and engineering industries operating across Oxfordshire contribute to our status as a global leader in these sectors, with some recent examples of high-tech facilities expanding their local footprint. The County is part of the world leading ‘Motorsport Valley’ comprising a £6bn automotive global cluster of high performance technology, motorsport and advanced engineering companies. Oxfordshire is home to a number of internationally recognised motorsport names including Williams F1 in Grove, Renault Sport F1 in Chipping Norton and Prodrive and Haas in Banbury, as well as global supply chain companies such as SS Tube Technology and Lentus, and the iconic BMW MINI manufacturing plant.</p> <p>Through the business support and skills development work delivered by OxLEP, and the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (which sits within the Housing and Growth Deal’s Productivity Workstream) there is extensive work being undertaken to promote skills development in these key sectors building on the investment already made by OxLEP in four skills centres across Oxfordshire at Abingdon, Blackbird Leys, Henley and Culham focused on improving STEM education and creating career pathways and apprenticeships for young people.</p> <p>OxLEP works with schools, colleges and employers to deliver over 5000 work placements per year for young people, improved careers guidance in partnership with the Careers & Enterprise Company and initiatives such as the ‘Transformative Technologies Tour’ which connects young people with leading scientists, technology companies and innovators with the opportunity to understand the careers and employment opportunities in STEM which are being created across the County. Alongside this a £700,000 Skills for Business Programme is also running which provides a host of support services including training, skills workshops and skills needs assessments for small businesses to develop workforce plans for their company to support their wider growth plans and invest in their staff.</p> <p>We have indicated agreed in part, as these events are not directly delivered by the Growth Board and for the most part are addressed through the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership or through local authority economic development teams/officers.</p>
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<p>Recommendation 4. That the Growth Board again seeks clarity from HM Government concerning the current status of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project.</p>	Yes	<p>Following a previous Scrutiny Panel recommendation, the Growth Board wrote to HM Government earlier in 2020 requesting an update on the status of their Expressway Project. Baroness Vere's response indicated that the Department for Transport would provide an update on whether the project would continue in "due course." Following the Panel's recommendation, we sent another letter on 28 September 2020 which can be found on the Growth Board webpage and via our social media accounts.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5. The Scrutiny Panel supports the draft comments made by Growth Board on its consultation on the emerging EEH Draft Transport Strategy especially on policies 12, 23 & 24.</p>		Noted.
<p>Recommendation 6. That the Growth Board, in responding to the EEH Draft Transport Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gives greater importance to Digital Infrastructure considering the revelation of its importance in a post-Covid world. ii. Asks EEH to include research into autonomous vehicles in terms of personal, mass and freight transport in its strategy i.e. e-bikes, electric scooters, mid-level and long-range autonomous freight vehicles. iii. Indicates the lack of emphasis on Oxfordshire Rail Corridor and its key strategic nature, not just as part of East-West rail, but as part of the national rail infrastructure. 	Yes	Agreed these matters will be covered in our final response to EEH.