

Public speakers

28 July 2020

OXFORDSHIRE

G R O W T H B O A R D

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 university 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?

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?

3. Julia Benning on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire, (to be put in 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?

Addresses:

1. Professor David Rogers, (to be put in absence)

I refer to Agenda item 10 Oxford to Cambridge Arc Update, where the Oxfordshire Growth Board Director states:

"The Arc Leadership Executive, which met for the first time on 02 July, strongly urged this work be completed at pace; in particular, that we develop a high level prospectus, similar to other regional pitches (e.g. West Midlands <https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/32-billion-blueprint-unveiled-to-kickstart-the-west-midlands-economic-recovery/>), that we can submit to Government ahead of an anticipated Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn."

The regional pitch referred to – called *'Recharge the West Midlands. Kickstarting the West Midlands' Economy'* - gives a whole list of targets for jobs, houses, projects etc., many of which are 'shovel ready'.

There is not a SINGLE mention of protecting or enhancing the natural environment of the West Midlands as all this development takes place. The terms 'biodiversity', 'net gain', 'ecosystem services' and 'natural capital' are all conspicuous by their absence from the entire document.

Is this really the model for Ox-Cam Arc development that the Arc leadership wishes to follow?

2. Cllr Kate Gregory

News reached the Thame community about a week ago that Growth Board funding for the dedicated cycle route to Haddenham station, a joint project with Buckinghamshire, has been withdrawn.

Our understanding is that certain criteria have been applied, on the basis of which cycle routes do not qualify as infrastructure that will support the provision of new homes in Thame.

As these criteria have been defined by the Government and the county council, we would like to ask on behalf of the community of Thame that the growth board seeks more flexibility in the use of Government infrastructure funding.

In our view the cycle route does support housing delivery, as moving to Thame becomes more attractive if prospective buyers can see a safe green cycle connection directly to the station.

The dedicated cycle route from Thame to Haddenham station is not a leisure trail, but a commuter connection to our local mainline station, which is only 2 and a half miles from Thame town centre. It would also support the Thame business community, allowing easy access for shopping from Haddenham on foot and by bike.

The main roads between Thame and Haddenham are 60 mph national trunk routes with no footpaths and are extremely dangerous for cyclists who have to cut across both carriageways to reach the station.

Crucially, building this greenway would take traffic off our roads. With both Thame and Haddenham growing in size by more than a third, the saving on road improvements to handle greater volumes of traffic is substantial.

It is also the case that the funding requirement for the cycle route can be significantly reduced by choosing a route that avoids the main roundabout outside Thame, also a route which the local community prefers.

An online survey on the Haddenham and Thame Greenway was conducted between 25th November and 9th December 2019, which received a total of 2012 responses. The responses showed overwhelming support for the project, a summary of the results has been published online:

www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/transport-and-roads/cycling-and-walking/new-walking-and-cycling-routes/haddenham-and-thame-greenway

Please consider our request on behalf of both Thame and Haddenham to renegotiate with those who made this decision and find a way to invest your board's funds in a high-profile, green and popular project.

Kate Gregory, (SODC and Thame Town Council), Pieter-Paul Barker (SODC Cabinet member for partnership) and David Bretherton (SODC chair and Thame Town Council)