

Public speakers

26 January 2021

OXFORDSHIRE

G R O W T H B O A R D

Question

1. Councillor Debby Hallett, Deputy Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council

On 26 April 2018, as the Chair of Vale's Scrutiny Committee, I submitted a statement to this Board about Vale's concerns regarding the affordability of housing in Oxfordshire. I provided to Growth Board members a report produced by Vale officers about affordability issues in Vale of White Horse, and urged you to *"do all you can under these new rules of working and within upcoming new planning policies to make some measurable headway into solving Oxfordshire's housing problem. Explore the options, be courageous and creative, and find sustainable solutions that improve people's lives here in the county."*

That statement is attached, (**Appendix 1**), and within it is the link to the report I referred to. I asked Growth Board to consider this report in its work on affordable housing in the Growth Deal.

The meeting minute says my points were considered in the debate that followed under minute 85. However, that minute lacks any mention of what the Growth Board decided to do as a result of the information I presented. In fact, it has to do with planning flexibilities and not affordable housing at all. There remains a serious issue of housing affordability in Oxfordshire, which the OxPlan50 is well-placed to address.

Since that time, the Affordable Housing subgroup has contributed to the Growth Deal's work. But I haven't seen any reports on evidence gathering to begin to answer the question of, 'Just how unaffordable is housing throughout Oxfordshire?'. Any proposed means of solving this problem must come after defining the problem.

It's been nearly three years since I asked about this.

Please can you report on what has been done to gather evidence that establishes the accurate scope and nature of Oxfordshire's housing affordability issues, and what decisions have been taken by the OxPlan50 team or the wider Growth Deal team to consider the particular problems here in Oxfordshire and to provide housing that people who work here can afford?

2. Michael Tyce, on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire

The National Infrastructure Commission originally proposed one million homes, and an associated population increase for the OxCam corridor, of which 250,000 were targeted at Oxfordshire. Everyone rushed to disown the figure, saying it had no validity. That now appears to be the case as Bidwells report that it is now 1.5 million, which is 50% higher, and implying 375,000 houses for Oxfordshire, close on four times as high as the current Growth Deal, which is itself about double the number of houses long term population growth

suggests are needed. Your Chairman has said that the Growth Board's objective is to "moderate" the Government's plans for the Arc.

What is the figure for Oxfordshire the Growth Board seeks to moderate towards?