

**To:** Oxfordshire Growth Board  
**Date:** 22 March 2021  
**Report of:** Growth Board Scrutiny Panel  
**Title of Report:** Recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 16 March 2021

<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present recommendations from the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 16 March 2021 to the Growth Board.
<b>Scrutiny Lead:</b>	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the Oxfordshire Growth Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.
<b>Appendix:</b>	1. Growth Board response template to Scrutiny recommendations.

## Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Panel would like to thank John Disley (Infrastructure Strategy & Policy Manager, Oxfordshire County Council), Andrew Down (Growth Board Executive Officer Group Chair), Paul Staines (Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, Interim Head of Programme), Stefan Robinson (Oxfordshire Growth Board Manager) for presenting and attending the meeting to answer questions.
2. The Panel received a public address and questions from Suzanne McIvor the Chair of the Cherwell Development Alliance concerning the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA) and the reasons why it had not yet been published. The Panel discussed at length the need for the OGNA to be published as soon as it is ready which would be useful to inform the public well before the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 Part 2 Public Consultation begins.

**Recommendation 1: That the Growth Board ensures the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment work is published as soon as that work is completed; or clarify the reasons and timescale for publishing it as part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 Part 2 public consultation.**

3. The Panel also noted from the public address and questions that the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 development need to have a significant focus on environmental issues and there seems to be a lack of representation from groups with environmental concerns in the Growth Board's wider programmes.

**Recommendation 2: That the Growth Board clarifies how it intends to increase the consideration of environmental issues through the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and wider programmes of work.**

4. The Panel also received the Task and Finish Group report on Private Investment in Public Infrastructure Projects from Councillor Alex Postan, Chair of the group. The Panel then agreed to endorse recommendations from the Task and Finish group to be presented to the Growth Board at its next meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021.
5. The Panel also received a report concerning the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study: Completion and Next Steps. The Panel noted that there was no mention of new railway lines because the study's scope was focussed on upgrading and widening the existing railway network in Oxfordshire.
6. The Panel also noted that the study did not include any updates on how changes to local rail services such as the additional line from Bicester to London impacts the modal shift from cars to rail to which the officers indicated that more train journeys were occurring especially from Bicester to Oxford.
7. The Panel discussed in detail and agreed that there is a need look at areas such as the North Cotswolds where the train services have been reduced bringing increasing road traffic to the A40 Oxford – Witney route and also in areas of existing railway lines like Kidlington-Begbroke-Yarnton area where planned large scale developments would benefit from the building of a train station. The Panel agreed that the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study needs to be cross referenced with the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

**Recommendation 3: That the Growth Board undertake further work to understand the impact that changes in local rail services do and may have in the future on modal shift, particularly with regards to personal car use, to help inform the 2022 Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and future business cases for rail investment. There should be cross referencing between the rail study and the LTCP.**

- i. **Especially the A40 Oxford – Witney route should be considered since traffic in these areas will continue to rise with the reduction of services in the northwest of the Cotswolds railway line, bringing in traffic from areas such as Charlbury.**
- ii. **In addition, consideration should also be given to the building of new stations on existing lines especially in areas such as Kidlington-Begbroke-Yarnton where there are large scale development plans.**

8. The Panel received the Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development from Paul Staines (Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, Interim Head of Programme). The Panel showed concerned with the following extract from the Vision which was perceived to narrow the definition of growth: "*Growth can be defined narrowly in terms of expansion in numbers of homes and jobs and economic output.*" within the Strategic Vision.
9. The Panel also noted that the language used in the Strategic Vision contained jargon that might not be comprehensible by all members of the public and that the literature used must be more user-friendly and summarised to a one-page format.

**Recommendation 4: That the Growth Board take steps to ensure that the Strategic Vision is supported by a communications strategy containing appropriately concise and engaging literature especially summarising the vision in a one-page format and user-friendly language.**

**Recommendation 5: That the Growth Board recognise that the following statement contained within the Strategic Vision could be misunderstood as a justification for using a narrow definition of growth: "Growth can be defined narrowly in terms of expansion in numbers of homes and jobs and economic output." The Panel recommends that this is revised to assert that growth can and should be defined in a more holistic way, as intended through the "good growth" definition set out in the Vision. Consideration should also be given to whether the definition of Good Growth can be moved to an earlier position in the document, and whether mentions of prosperity and clean growth can be more frequently referenced throughout the document.**

10. The Panel received an update from Andrew Down (Growth Board Executive Officer Group Chair) on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The Panel agreed that, with the announcements made concerning the Arc Spatial Framework, the Growth Board should make Oxfordshire's voice heard at the Arc level to ensure that local planning decisions remain with Local Authorities and that any proposal from HM government to reduce local democratic accountability should be strongly opposed.

**Recommendation 6: That the Growth Board makes clear through the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Executive Group that local planning decisions should remain as a matter for local planning authorities through the plan making process. Any proposal from HM government to reduce local democratic accountability and oversight with respect to planning would be strongly opposed. Similarly, any future proposals concerning HM Government's plans for the emerging Arc "Growth Body" and the Arc Spatial Framework must have local accountability, oversight and engagement built into its structure.**

## **Future Work**

4. As well as reviewing the Growth Board's response to these recommendations at its next meeting on 1 June 2021, the Panel will also be considering in detail:

- Regional development updates within the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.
- Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 Part 2 Consultation (provisional)

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