

To: Future Oxfordshire Partnership (formerly the Oxfordshire Growth Board)

Title of Report: The Oxford to Cambridge Arc Vision Consultation

Date: 20 September 2021

Report of: Stefan Robinson, Future Oxfordshire Partnership Manager (on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Executive Officer Group)

Status: Open

Executive Summary and Purpose:

HM Government is currently consulting on a draft Vision for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, which will help inform their ambitions for an Arc wide Spatial Framework. The Spatial Framework will form national planning and transport policy for the area. The consultation closes on 12 October 2021, and the Partnership is asked to consider a draft response as set out at Appendix 1.

How this report contributes to the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision Outcomes:

The draft response provided at Appendix 1 draws on the key themes and principles identified within the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, advocating for an Arc wide vision that is compatible with, and supportive of, local ambitions.

Recommendations:

That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership:

1. approve the submission of the draft response at Appendix 1, and;
2. delegate responsibility to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director, in consultation with the Chair, to make any amendments as agreed at this meeting, prior to submission.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft consultation response

Introduction

1. HM Government is currently undertaking a consultation exercise to gather views on a draft Vision for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, which will help inform their plans for an Arc Spatial Framework to 2050. This consultation is being undertaken to inform their approach to the future of the Arc, which has been identified by the government as a key economic priority. The Spatial Framework will form national planning policy and transport policy for the Arc and local planning and local transport authorities must have regard to it when preparing

local transport and local development plans and policies, and it will be capable of being a material consideration in relevant planning decisions in the area.¹ HM Government are also seeking views on the initial work that has been done to set the scope of an accompanying Sustainability Appraisal.

The Consultation

2. This consultation follows the standard format for HM Government engagements. The online consultation platform asks a significant number of questions which provide a mix of free text entry and multiple-choice answers across the seven themes listed below. Each section also provides the opportunity to submit wider thoughts and comments about these themes, and there is also the option to submit written responses.
 - Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc
 - The Environment
 - The Economy
 - Connectivity and Infrastructure
 - Place-making
 - Delivering the Arc Spatial Framework
 - Sustainability Appraisal
3. The consultation presents an opportunity for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to be clear with HM Government about what we want to achieve here in Oxfordshire, and to support and challenge elements of the Arc Vision that complement or misalign with our Strategic Vision respectively.

The Draft Response

4. The draft response at Appendix 1 has been developed by the Partnership's Executive Officer Group based on the narrative contained within the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, which was agreed by each of the six Oxfordshire Councils in April 2021. The response has been structured to align with the chronology and themes of the consultation document. Many of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's member organisations will be writing separately in their own capacity and nothing within this submission is intended to over-ride those comments. This has been reiterated in the draft response itself.
5. The response focuses on the importance of the Strategic Vision in providing a solid foundation for what we want to achieve here in Oxfordshire, being a cross-cutting statement of intent that will inform a range of local strategies and programmes. Drawing on the Vision's guiding principles and 2050 outcomes, the response highlights that we are striving to enhance environmental, social, and economic wellbeing across the county, and that the Arc Vision should be complementary to that ambition.

¹ HM Government 2021. Creating a Vision for the Arc. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-vision-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc/creating-a-vision-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc>

6. The response pushes for environmental considerations to be a priority across the Arc's policy pillars, referencing the Arc Environment Principles,² and asking that these be given due weight in the Arc Vision and Spatial Framework. Challenges around affordable housing and the inclusive economy are also highlighted as needing to be given priority focus within the Vision, as is the electrification of East West Rail and the decarbonisation of local transport options.
7. The latter stages of the response ask for widespread engagement from HM Government with the public and other stakeholders to inform the development of the Spatial Framework and to ensure a diverse mix of views are heard and understood. The document concludes by highlighting concerns regarding the potential negative environmental impacts that may occur through the process, as outlined in the Sustainability Appraisal, if appropriate mitigations are not put in place.

Financial Implications

8. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal Implications

9. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Conclusion

10. The Arc Vision consultation presents an opportunity to inform HM Government thinking and preparations for an Arc Wide Spatial Framework. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is asked to consider the draft response at Appendix 1 and approve it for submission, subject to any amendments. The Partnership has the option to delegate responsibility to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director, in consultation with the Chair, to make any amendments to the draft following this meeting. Alternatively, the Partnership could choose not to submit a response.

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² Produced by the Arc Leadership Group and endorsed by all of Oxfordshire's councils. Available at: https://www.semlep.com/modules/downloads/download.php?file_name=2306