

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel Public speakers

20 September 2022



Question

1. Ian Green, Chairman, Oxford Civic Society

It was a huge surprise when the district and city councils announced the abandonment of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan preparation.

The OCS immediate reaction was to say publicly (and this was very well presented in the August 11th Oxford Times, including in the Opinion column) that a lot of very good work has been achieved in the course of preparation of the Plan and that this good work needs to be deployed in the updated Local Plans which will still be produced.

In particular the Plan preparations were leading to a pioneer assessment of the cumulative environmental and social impacts of development across the county including a thoughtful approach to addressing climate change.

OCS stated that there should be a public discussion of what can and should be retrieved from the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan preparation and that the OCS will be pleased to lead this. Discussion on this with other civic and interest groups continues. **Should the Future Oxfordshire Partnership agree to a public discussion on making best use of the work already done on the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan?**

At the same time the OFG recognises that to update the Local Plans of the districts and city, some kind of agreement on Oxfordshire growth rate and distribution is still necessary: without evidence that the Local Plans have been prepared in cooperation with neighbouring local authorities (the 'Duty to Cooperate'), the Local Plans will not be approved by the Planning Inspectorate / Secretary of State.

It surely is not that difficult. Each local authority must be clear on what level it wants of employment and housing growth and provision of affordable housing. If one or two or three local authorities want higher growth than the other two, then agreement should be easy to achieve on what the low/no growth authorities can achieve on specific sites and areas. The other local authorities could then plan their higher rates of growth and its distribution, possibly including rates of growth that might otherwise have been expected to have been accommodated by the low growth local authorities. **Should the Future Oxfordshire Partnership continue to seek agreement on growth?**

The environmental and social implications of the proposed levels of growth and its distribution will still need to be exhaustively considered and respected and could use some of the agreed principles and guidelines established for the now abandoned Oxfordshire 2050 Plan. Exactly as was said in the OCS report published just before the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan abandonment, the links between the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (and now the draft Central

Oxfordshire Travel Plan), the Local Industrial Strategy, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and Pathways to Net Zero (Oxfordshire Leading the Way) need to be carefully considered. Optimisation of strategic infrastructure investment could be the major casualty of the abandonment of the Plan – care needs to be taken that the damage is limited.

2. John Hill

On 13 June 2022 I attended at The Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting held at Cherwell District Council's Offices where I posed the four questions, which are set below, concerning the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The background to these questions is fully set out on Page 140 of the Minutes of that meeting. The questions were as follows:

1. What are the assumptions behind the (employment) forecasts/ projections (page 107) in the Plan?
2. In the Table (para. 384) what are employment projections, what are forecasts and what, such as I believe the transformational trajectory is, are targets?
3. Are the projections/ forecasts still valid in view of the changed economic situation.
4. Are they reliable enough to be any part of the evidence base for the Plan?

In response to my questions (as opposed to those raised by others) I received the following reply on 1 July 2022. "Obviously we need our evidence to be up to date so we are commissioning additional work- including on the OGNA - to help inform the plan policies".

There was no reference in this response to the specific questions I raised and no indication that the Partnership does not intend to rely on the information contained in the Table showing the employment projections. My questions are these:

1. Does the Scrutiny Panel consider that I have been provided with proper answers to my questions?
2. Does the Partnership still intend to rely on the "evidence" contained in the present version of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 as to employment growth?
3. If the Partnership still intends to rely on this "evidence", why is the Partnership not prepared to provide answers to the questions I raised on 13 June 2022?

3. Councillor John Fouweather, Oxford City Council

Request to ask a question related to the Homes from Infrastructure programme. Text to follow.