

# Public speakers

13 June 2023

## 1. Ian Green, Chairman Oxford Civic Society

### Planning Advisory Group Draft Terms of Reference

Oxford Civic Society is very pleased to see this Draft Terms of Reference – we have been looking forward to it. Our five comments are as follows:

1. **Purpose and objectives:** we are delighted that a Planning Advisory Group is proposed to provide a forum in which local authority members can discuss county-wide strategic planning matters.

We suggest much more emphasis on the provision of a wide-ranging strategic planning forum. The forum provided by the Group would be enriched with the inclusion of business interest groups, community interest groups, academic interests and strategic planning expertise.

A wide-ranging strategic planning forum could provide stimulating ideas from all quarters and could be extremely useful to the local planning authorities and the county council.

2. **Membership and Appointments:** paragraph 2.5 is welcome as it acknowledges that partnerships, with wider partners and experts are expected. But it is unnecessarily qualified in that wider participation will be as the agendas of meetings require.
3. **Meeting Arrangements and Structure:** paragraph 6.2 stipulates that the Group will meet in private. Why? The future of the county is of great public interest.
4. **Work Plan:** one of the gaps in strategic planning in the county is infrastructure investment planning – how do we overcome the massive infrastructure funding shortfall? Could the Planning Advisory Group take this on, with a specialist sub-group looking at innovative funding sources?

This is consistent with one of the suggestions made by FOP for the work of FOP – ‘commissioning a piece of work to explore innovative funding options e.g., land value capture, social bonds to support in financing infrastructure ambitions, as well as other workstreams which support delivery of the Strategic Oxfordshire Vision’.

This is very consistent with an Oxford Civic Society report of July 2022<sup>1</sup> which emphasised the importance of integrated development planning.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfordshire in 2050 – Linking Oxfordshire’ development policies and strategies – a briefing note. Oxford Civic Society, July 2022

5. **Challenge:** the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan largely failed because agreement could not be reached on the rate, pace and distribution of employment and housing growth. Why did it fail? Does the design of the Planning Advisory Group address the reasons for the failure?

**Response:**

*The support from the Oxford Civic Society for a strategic planning forum is welcome. The purpose of the proposed Planning Advisory Group is to provide a forum in which local authority members can discuss county wide strategic planning matters, and this will help delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development.*

*The proposed terms of reference make clear that Local Plans for the City and District Councils now provide the framework for long term planning across Oxfordshire. The individual councils maintain sovereignty over the content of local plans through their own internal processes, as local planning authorities. The Planning Advisory Group offers a mechanism through which to work cooperatively and constructively in developing respective Plans and other key strategies.*

*Each of the City and Districts set out in their respective Statements of Community Involvement how they will engage with the community and wider interest groups in developing their Local Plans. The Local Plan engagement and consultation processes provide the best place to hear stimulating ideas from all quarters and to influence Local Plan policy.*

*The Future Oxfordshire Partnership advisory group meetings are not formal decision taking meetings, they are there to encourage informal discussion and to help identify areas of common agreement. Therefore, they are not public meetings. Updates are given to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in public, and summary notes are published.*

*The Planning Advisory Group if established may wish to work closely with the Infrastructure Advisory Group on the review of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy . The point made about exploring innovative funding options is worth considering.*

*Each Local Plan will have to consider the future level of housing and employment need and be tested through an independent examination. The City and Districts will engage with each other on those questions, and the Planning Advisory Group will provide a useful forum for discussion supporting the Duty to Cooperate.*