

Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment

Below is a Scrutiny Panel recommendation and the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) response from March 2021.

Scrutiny Panel Recommendation 1: That the Growth Board ensures the OGNA 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 (OP2050) Regulation 18 Part 2 public consultation.

Growth Board Response: The OGNA work is not yet finalised as the consultants with officers review the findings in the light of the pandemic. It is the intention that once completed the OGNA will be a key evidence base for the Regulation 18 Part 2 consultation of the OP2050. The OGNA will not seek to prescribe growth but will offer a range of three scenarios and invite consultees to reflect upon what would be appropriate for the future of Oxfordshire. The Board is content to publish the OGNA when it is complete but in practice, given the tight timescales for the Regulation 18 Part 2 consultation later this year it does not practically see that this will be possible significantly before the consultation and believes that the fact that the OGNA will be published alongside the consultation will give both appropriate context for the OGNA and time to reflect and respond.

The OGB response is unsatisfactory for the reasons given below:

1. We have been told that the consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (OP2050) will take place this summer (July 2021 was mentioned).
 - Paragraph 035 (extract) of the Planning Policy Guidance says: *“We would encourage authorities to publish documents forming part of their evidence base as they are completed rather than waiting until options are published to keep communities informed and involved.”*
 - Paragraph 038 (extract) of the Planning Policy Guidance says *“The evidence needs to inform what is in the plan and shape its development rather than being collected retrospectively.”* How can the OGNA be shaping the plan if it is not yet complete?
 - We are now nearing the end of May and the officers of OP2050 Advisory sub-group have already had a meeting to consider a discussion draft of the OP2050 Regulation 18 (Part 2) outline consultation document. The OGNA, in OGB’s own words above, is a key evidence base for the Reg 18 (Part 2) consultation. It is inconceivable that it is not now at a stage where it could be released.
2. It is OGB policy to release documents as they are completed.
3. The OGB response states that it is content to publish the OGNA when it is complete but will actually publish alongside the consultation. As it is inconceivable (given the timescales) that it is not for all intents and purposes complete, if OGB is content to publish when complete, then why hasn’t it done so?
4. In the event that the OGNA was not to be published as soon as it is completed, the Scrutiny Panel asked the OGB to ‘clarify the reasons and timescale for publishing it as part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 Part 2 public consultation’. The OGB has done neither! It has merely stated its intentions and it has omitted any mention of actual timescales. This approach is not in line with either OGB policy or Planning Practice Guidance.

May I request that the Scrutiny Panel press OGB to release the OGNA now?

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