

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel Public speakers

23 November 2021



Question

1. **Suzanne McIvor on behalf of Need, Not Greed, Oxfordshire has asked the following question.**

Need Not Greed Oxfordshire has written to all councillors raising questions about the adequacy of the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA) as the basis for a decision on how many homes should be built in Oxfordshire in the period up to 2050. The full OGNA is 364 pages long and a challenging read to anyone other than a specialist. The tender document for the OGNA has a number of requirements which should have meant that the report was: clear; concise; written in plain English; and that it clearly set out the methodology and assumptions used.

It is self-evident that the OGNA fails the requirement to be concise and clear and it certainly isn't accessible to those without specialist knowledge. Neither are the methodology and assumptions clear.

NNGO has invested a significant amount of time investigating the OGNA in an effort to understand it. But the more we probed the more opaque it began to look. We didn't get answers to questions we just had more questions. Neither did the methodology and assumptions become clearer. Instead, we found that the OGNA uses a variety of questionable and, in our view, unjustified techniques to manipulate data from various sources, to produce over-estimated and injudicious population projections. This in turn gives rise to growth projections and housing trajectories that are way in excess of what is actually needed in Oxfordshire. We don't believe that this is really what the councils are trying to achieve.

NNGO has been calling for a peer review of the OGNA for some time now. This call has been echoed by a number of other groups for example Oxford Civic Society and POETS.

We have no wish to delay the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timetable but we do feel there are questions around the OGNA that need to be answered *before* it can be used as the basis for planning in Oxfordshire for the next thirty years.

Therefore, we would like to ask:

- a) *Will the Scrutiny Panel support the increasing number of civic groups which are calling for a peer review of the OGNA?*
- b) *Will the Scrutiny Panel ask the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to agree terms of reference with these civic groups and to commission this peer review at the earliest opportunity so as to avoid any further delay to the plan timetable?*

2. Campaign for the Protection of Rural England Oxfordshire have asked the following question

Can the Scrutiny Panel please help the public to understand the decision-making process for the next steps of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and in particular how the number of homes to be built will be decided?

We understand that the Regulation 19 public consultation will be Summer 2022 and that the draft consultation document will need to be signed off by all the local authorities shortly before this. However, by that stage, the document will be almost a fait accompli, having effectively selected and embedded a growth option and proposed spatial distribution. Other decisions, such as whether or not to work up a much needed policy on increased housing density, will also have been taken. So, who is going to make the decisions on which direction the Plan should take, on what basis will these decisions be taken and how will this process be made transparent to the public?