

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel Public speakers

17 January 2022



Question

1. George Curtis has made the following statement

I respectfully submit on behalf of the Bioabundance Community Interest Company, and personally as a constituent of South Oxfordshire, that the process towards the completion of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 be revised, to await and to take full account of a completed Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Route Map and Action Plan. Plans must incorporate recent and shortly to be announced Government sustainability policy:

- Build Back Greener - The Green Industrial Revolution,
- The Environment Act 2021,
- The Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021,
- The Planning for the Future White Paper,
- The Planning Bill, to be enacted shortly.

The huge amount of work that has already gone into the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is appreciated. But, this Plan cannot be considered a viable framework for the future development of our County. It fails to take into account a growing realisation of our constituents that any plans for growth must be consistent with the protection of the local environment, bio diversity and zero carbon by 2050.

The majority of any new dwellings built must be affordable. All new development must be supported prior to occupation by a viable infrastructure of drainage, flood protection, transport, schools and medical services. And, new homes must be built to the most recent environmental standards, zero carbon in build and operation, affordable and needed.

The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, signed by all of Oxfordshire Local Authorities, OxLEP and HM Government in February 2018 is a relic of now outdated policies and must be renegotiated to focus on growth within a sustainable environment. Need Not Greed Oxfordshire has suggested to the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee that planning inspectors be tasked to consider approved local plans, affordability, infrastructure, protection of the environment, rather than maximising the number of houses under construction.

I have no idea of the likelihood of a weather event in the Thames Valley comparable with the July 2021 event in Northern Germany, but the probability must have risen from being unlikely to becoming a distinct possibility. Parts of Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia were inundated with 148 litres of rain per sq metre within 48 hours in a part of Germany that usually sees about 80 litres in the whole of July. We are aware, from the all too frequent news broadcasts, that our drainage and sewage system in Oxfordshire can't cope with our

present level of rainfall. I do hope that our contingency plans for coping with an extreme weather event are receiving as much attention as the plans for building new dwellings.

This all poses great challenges for our elected representatives to address, but the era of growth at any cost has passed.

2. Suzanne McIvor on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire has asked the following question

On 29th November 2021 NNGO (along with other groups) wrote to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) to (i) re-iterate the need for a review of the OGNA and (ii) to express continued concern on how the decision on the housing target will be made. NNGO is not aware of a response to this letter.

On 13th December 2021 NNGO wrote to FOP to explain its concerns regarding the lack of scrutiny of the last (Reg 18, part 2) consultation draft and to ask that the next (Reg 19) consultation draft is subject to full and proper scrutiny. The letter also asked for a draft timetable and an explanation of the decision making process in the context of the timetable. Despite asking for a reply in time to allow NNGO to consider it before this Scrutiny Panel meeting, NNGO has not had a response to this letter.

NNGO is particularly concerned about the decision making process in relation to (i) whether there should be a review of the OGNA and (ii) what will be used as the working number for the number of dwellings to be built as the plan is drawn up over the next few months in preparation for the Regulation 19 Consultation.

Review of the OGNA

The answer from FOP regarding a request from the Scrutiny Panel that FOP should seek to initiate a peer review of the OGNA stated as follows: 'The Future Oxfordshire Partnership cannot itself commission a peer review of the OGNA, as decision making powers relating to the Oxfordshire Plan lie with the city and district councils'. (Page 20 of the agenda pack).

As FOP cannot commission a review of the OGNA, does it actually have the decision making powers to decide that there should not be a review? Concerns around the OGNA have been expressed by a number of high profile groups and are based on well-documented and coherent expert analysis [1]. See for example 3rd pdf, Letter to Cllrs, Sept 21: <http://www.neednotgreedoxon.org.uk/resources/>.

NNGO asks the Scrutiny Panel to support NNGO's view that the decision on whether to have a peer review of the OGNA should be made by the city and district councils, not by FOP.

The working number for the number of dwellings is a fundamental decision for OP2050

FOP has stated: 'The decision on the policies to guide development.... will be taken by the five local planning authorities (the City and the four district councils).through formal decisions when they approve the draft Oxfordshire Plan 2050 for consultation, which is planned for July 2022'. (Page 20 of agenda reports pack).

However, by this stage the plan will have been written solely around the number of dwellings to be built, so in effect this decision will have been taken long before July 2022.

NNGO again believes this is a decision that should be taken by the City and four district councils as it is a decision that is outside the remit of FOP.

NNGO asks the Scrutiny Panel to support NNGO's view that the fundamental decision on the number of dwellings around which OP2050 is now drafted in preparation for the Regulation 19 **Consultation should be made by the city and district councils, not by FOP.**