

Public speakers

13 June 2022

1. John Hill has asked the following question:

The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (OP2050) Regulation 18 Part 2 Consultation contains a table ("the Table") on Page 107 taken from the Oxford Growth Needs Assessment ("OGNA") which shows five employment projections. In Para. 384 the Table is confusingly described as showing a "range of forecasts".

These two descriptions of what is contained in the table are incompatible. A forecast in general terms is based on certain assumptions expected to be in place and is much firmer than a projection which is more hypothetical. A projection is often just based on following past performance. Compared to what is shown on the Table the actual growth in employment in Oxfordshire over the last decade has been sluggish so I want to know the assumptions on which the projected growth in employment is based. I am interested to know also why all the projections/ forecasts are linear in the Table.

The recent independent ORS report concerning the OGNA which has been published by Cherwell Development Watch Alliance states in Paragraph 1.10: "*Very little information is given about the assumptions or source data underlying the jobs growth scenarios and source data references are inadequate e.g., "ONS, Cambridge Econometrics". This makes it virtually impossible to understand in any detail how the trajectories have been constructed*".

Economic forecasting is very unreliable and one would expect similar factors to apply to the employment forecasts /projections in the Plan but what these are is not disclosed.

The Table and the projections/ forecasts are described as evidence to be used in the preparation of the Plan. As I cannot find the basis and assumptions behind these, on 26 November 2021, I contacted the Oxfordshire Plan Team ("OPT") for their help. After months of correspondence with OPT I am no further forward.

In response I have been informed repeatedly that the information I am asking for is within the OGNA. This has remained the situation despite having sent OPT numerous lengthy and detailed emails explaining that this is not the case and they having been referred to the ORS report. I was eventually informed by email on 24 February 2022 that if I was still unhappy, I should contact the Freedom of Information Team. I am at a loss to understand why the OPT can't/won't answer my straightforward questions (even if they need to revert to the author of the OGNA to do so).

Can the Partnership please help me obtain answers to the following:

- What are the assumptions behind the forecasts/ projections in the Plan.
- In the Table what are projections, what are forecasts and what, such as I believe the transformational trajectory is, are targets.
- Are the projections/ forecasts still valid in view of the changed economic situation.
- Are they reliable enough to be any part of the evidence base for the Plan.

2. David Young has asked the following question on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire

Further to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) response to our question about the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan at its last meeting, Need not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO) fully understands that the final decisions on housing numbers etc will be taken by individual councils. But to suggest that each individual council is separately considering an Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment peer review, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 timetable and whether to undertake a third Regulation 18 Consultation seems to make no sense. The whole point of the FOP is that it co-ordinates the councils work on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 via the Advisory Group.

We therefore ask again:

- What is the project timetable for the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan?
- What is the OP2050 team currently working on? How can they be developing a spatial strategy without agreeing the number of houses to be built?
- How will criticisms of the growth options presented in the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment and the Reg 18 consultation be addressed? What assessment has the FOP/Advisory Group made of the recently published report into the OGNA by Opinion Research Services which found that *"The unjustified use of adjustments made to official projections and the Standard Method together with the lack of a conventional central economic forecast call into question the soundness of this document as supporting evidence for the development of the Oxfordshire Plan"*.
- Will the Advisory Group be recommending - as we think they should - a further Reg 18 consultation?

Although we feel our challenges are justified, we remain supportive of the principle of an Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and hope that we can work constructively with the FOP/Advisory Group to achieve a strong and robust Plan for the benefit of existing and future local residents.

3. Robin Tucker on behalf of the Coalition for Health Streets and Active Travel, (CoHSAT) has submitted the following address in writing (not attending):

CoHSAT is a group of voluntary and campaigning organisations working across Oxfordshire to create attractive, accessible and people-friendly streets.

It is proposed to cut the funds for Banbury Road and Woodstock Road programmes due to over-spends elsewhere.

However, these are two of the few schemes that encourage sustainable transport, rather than increasing private car use. These roads are both currently poor for walking, wheeling and cycling with a mix of poorly designed facilities in poor condition, and these schemes would improve them in most aspects. The scheme for Banbury Road was developed with a high level of stakeholder co-production, and in consultation received a high level of support.

These schemes are in line with the strategy of the County, City and District Councils making this partnership, and with the need to tackle climate and public health emergencies and should be retained.

Other schemes, for road expansions create problems for healthy forms of transport.

- The A40 dualling will bring more cars through the gap between Eynsham and Salt Cross, creating a severed development unless two underpasses are built to allow easy passage on desire lines.

- Large and expensive roundabouts, built to inappropriate 'DB32' standards, at the entrance of housing developments provide barriers to cycling and walking. (Recent examples in Bicester, Didcot).

Instead of dropping schemes that promote sustainable transport, you should de-scope or drop schemes that encourage motor traffic and that make active travel harder.

4. Peter Barnett has submitted the following address in writing (not attending):

I am disappointed to see in agenda item 7a that the Future Oxford Partnership is abandoning one of the key policies of the Fair Deal Alliance: to promote active travel. To transfer funds from a badly needed upgrade of the Woodstock and Banbury roads to projects which upgrade roads optimally for motor vehicles and sub-optimally for active travel, flies in the face of all sense: more, better roads equals more motor vehicles, more congestion.

The fair deal alliance should be diverting funds from roads projects to active travel: HiF2 and CIL funds. Projects which should be funded which would make a tremendous difference to active travel and reduce motor vehicle demand could be: a Wolvercote Roundabout cycle Hovenring, a Barton Park bridge crossing (as required by Oxfordshire County Council's LTCP where there is a "Presumption against at-grade pedestrian crossings" on Class 2a: Strategic Primary Routes such as the A40.). Oxfordshire County Council should pause all road upgrade projects and re-think.

As Oxfordshire County Council move forward with a Vision Zero agenda, there is a need for a different mindset when it comes to infrastructure policy and design which priorities a re-allocation of road space from motor vehicles to active travel (as required by the DfT in Gear Change). Oxfordshire County Council need to think seriously about what cultural norms it is setting by moving forward with major road projects and not active travel, and realise that Vision Zero requires a paradigm shift and a change in organisation practices. Otherwise Vision Zero is just words.

Please re-think.

5. Councillor Charlie Hicks has asked the following question:

CONTEXT

The Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance has passed a budget for 2022/23 with the stated corporate priorities including:

- 1. Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
- 5. Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.

The Leader of Oxfordshire County Council frequently says that the Fair Deal Alliance that she leads will put climate at the heart of everything it does. She has recently taken part in a film for UK 100 about the Council's plans for zero carbon Oxfordshire, and she attended the launch of Zero Institute/Mini Tesa at Oxford University - a new institute that will tackle climate change on a global scale.

The County Council's Climate Action Programme sets out a strategy to implement the key findings of the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO). On building new road infrastructure, PaZCO states:

"Road building, particularly to support new developments which may then be more car-dependent, is short-sighted when it has become clear that the transition to zero carbon vehicle

technologies is insufficient to reach net-zero within the timescales set by the Paris Agreement or most local governments. Local policy-makers recognise this, and, as climate policy was strengthened over the past two years, the decision was made to revisit the Infrastructure Strategy. In developing the fifth LTCP and revising OXIS, there is consensus around seeking opportunities to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport."

And the upcoming Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 5 has a headline target to reduce car use by 1 in 4 journeys by 2030.

All the above is excellent rhetoric and ambition to follow an evidence-based pathway to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire.

However, it does not appear that this rhetoric or ambition is being backed up by action or money, where it really matters. Rather, the FOP / Oxfordshire County Council seem to be doing precisely the opposite of what they say they will do, by proposing to take money away from active travel infrastructure and put more money into infrastructure that will increase car capacity. The Review of Homes from Infrastructure (Hfi) Programme report details how £12.5 million is proposed to be taken out of building new active travel infrastructure on the Woodstock and Banbury Roads, and instead be put it into road-building and car-infrastructure schemes, including the Benson Relief Road and widening of the A40.

QUESTION

Can the FOP please explain this paradox? How could this decision to take money away from active travel infrastructure and put it into car-based infrastructure be in line with the very publicly-made statements on Climate and Sustainable, Inclusive, and Integrated transport pledges? When will the decisions and budget allocations made by the FOP and Oxfordshire County Council begin to reflect the ambition and rhetoric put out about Climate and Transport?

6. Mary Kroll has submitted the following address in writing (not attending):

As the representative of the Oxford Civic Society on the recent Woodstock and Banbury Roads co-production, I ask the Partnership to reconsider the proposal to cancel the funding for the planned improvements to Woodstock Road.

Decent cycling provision for the Northern radial route is urgently needed, both for local traffic and for commuters into Oxford from the new housing developments to the north-west of the city. The Woodstock Road corridor is particularly suitable, as it has relatively few side roads. With a fast safe continuous cycle route, pedal or electric cycling would be an attractive choice for commuters.

Including representatives of many local groups, the co-production was intended to embody the best principles of local planning. It was nearly unanimous in supporting the Woodstock Road cycle route. Much time was spent in producing a careful and detailed design, and the public consultation was positive. It would seem perverse to waste all this effort and good will by cancelling the project now.

7. Graham Smith has submitted the following address in writing:

I am Graham Smith, a Cyclox and Cycling UK member and representative. I have a longstanding professional interest in roads layout design and provision for Sustainable Movement. I formerly taught at Oxford Brookes in Urban Design.

I object to the proposal for removal of further funding from two schemes currently within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal programme – Woodstock Road Corridor and Banbury Road Corridor

These major axes could and should be carrying a significantly greater amount of active travel movements. Their current condition is unsupportive of modal shift towards active travel and thus in support of local and national policies.

Even with 'COTS', or Connecting Oxford as was, most people would be unlikely to choose to ride - in these roads - (new riders especially). So, the starting point of the project is currently relevant. The removal of the specific funding is most likely to kill the project. An uncertain future in a much wider COTS programme will dilute the importance and likelihood of improvement of these axes.

This major project to enable greater number of movements by Active Travel, is notable for its focus on coherence and continuity for cycling. Notable for its conformance with Manuals for Streets and to the authoritative LTN1/20 guidance and in line with the 'Gear Change', July 2020. This stands in stark contrast with current major County schemes where cycling as a mode is effectively deprioritised and made less safe, for the benefit of driving. These projects, HiF, etc, illogically cherry-pick national guidance. The gear change called for by Government will not be delivered by Highways Engineers sticking with irrelevant concepts rooted in misreading of Motorways and Trunk Roads: DMRB.

I am concerned about mention of Kidlington Roundabout: a simply dreadful '1960s' design which very effectively deters use by all but the most determined cyclists and pedestrians. At a superficial level any changes for the benefit of active travel should be funded by developers: Begbroke (University) and Stratford Brake (Oxford United). Kidlington roundabout itself is already effectively part of an urban area and will be more so with future development, it does need to be reconceived as an urban junction and not as a semi-motorway provision. It is not part of a 'Trunk Road'.

Graham Smith,
Dip AD, MA (RCA), MA Urban Design

8. Seb Balcombe, on behalf Oxford University Development Ltd has submitted the following questions:

- Woodstock Road Corridor / Banbury Road Corridor improvements directly support the delivery of new housing associated with the PR sites to the north of Oxford in terms of addressing modal shift and reducing congestion. Safe cycling infrastructure is essential given recent cycle fatalities. One of which was close to Oxford Parkway station. Improvements to cycle infrastructure has far wider implications over and above reducing urban traffic congestion, including tackling the Climate Emergency, improving health and wellbeing, Improving air quality and reducing traffic noise -and as such to meet the aspirations of the Local Transport Plan investment in cycle infrastructure should be a priority. Indeed, a recent DfT publication¹ states that "one can confidently conclude that sustainable travel and walking and cycling in particular regularly offer high and very high value for money."
- The proposed works to Banbury Road and Woodstock Road would link with the proposed A44/Pear Tree and Kidlington Roundabout schemes and provide comprehensive routes between PR8 and the City Centre.
- Given the level of housing proposed at the North Oxford PR sites, and the proposed expansion of the Begbroke Science Park on land removed from the green belt for that purpose, it is a serious concern that the Growth Deal investment allocated for improving both the Banbury and Woodstock Roads is being withdrawn and re-allocated to other schemes.

- Early delivery of these comprehensive routes is considered essential to establishing travel patterns early in the development.
- OUD/The University of Oxford would therefore request that this proposed funding action is reconsidered.

Questions

The Active and Healthy Travel Strategy (AHTS) set out that Oxfordshire County Council plan to increase the number of cycle trips in Oxfordshire from 600,000 to 1 million cycle trips per week by 2031, while the Oxford LCCWIP identifies 2 targets to increase both commuter cycling and all cycling trips in Oxford by 50% by 2031. To achieve these targets, there needs to be 25,000 new cyclists, including 9,000 everyday cyclists and 8,000 weekly cyclists in Oxford by 2031. How will these targets be met if funding for key cycle corridors such as Woodstock Road Corridor / Banbury Road Corridor are reallocated?

If the proposal to re-allocate the residual funding away from the Woodstock Road Corridor and the Banbury Road Corridor is agreed and the projects are considered as part of COTS (Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy) can clarification be provided on how COTS schemes will be funded?

If funding has to be reallocated, why has funding been reallocated to the Benson Relief Road? Following any reallocation to; North Oxford Corridor (NOC) – A44 Cassington to Loop Farm, North Oxford Corridor (NOC) – Kidlington Roundabout and Access to Witney shouldn't any residual funding be retained and used to fund improvements on the Woodstock Road Corridor / Banbury Road Corridor, on a phased basis?

The PR sites have already submitted a joint letter to Oxfordshire County Council raising concerns with the design of Kidlington Roundabout and that it is not in accordance with latest design standards and a more ambitious design solution for active travel should be sought. Has consideration been given to retaining the Woodstock Road and Banbury Road schemes and delaying the Kidlington Roundabout scheme instead?

9. Councillor Laurence Fouweather has submitted the following statement:

Good afternoon and thank you Chair for this opportunity to raise the serious concerns I and many of my ward residents have about the proposal to remove funding from the improvements to Woodstock and Banbury Roads. These roads both pass through my ward and are used by many residents for their journeys into and around Oxford. In particular they are used by very many young cyclists travelling to and from local schools with little or no segregation from the heavy commuter traffic.

To say I was surprised to hear from County colleagues that both of these schemes were now in danger of being scrapped is a gross understatement. I am incensed by this proposal and even more incensed that it is being proposed by officers, who presumably were the same officers who developed the plans we were briefed about last year. Where is the democratic oversight here? Where is the pressure coming from to cancel? I am amazed that this is being presented as a deferment – if the earmarked money is spent elsewhere then it seems extremely unlikely that the present Government will be giving any more.

These schemes were allocated funds in the Hfl stream of the Growth deal in 2018 and have already had a lot of money and resources spent on them – is this to be thrown away in favour of other schemes that are nowhere near the same stage of development?

I can understand why they need to be aligned with other strategic Core schemes but surely this is not a reason for cancellation. It should be an opportunity to fine tune them before going out to a wider consultation with local people and key stakeholders.

I am very concerned about the impact of the new developments at Oxford North and the Kidlington Gap which will bring a large increase in traffic in the area. Are you seriously proposing that the current inadequate infrastructure of Banbury and Woodstock Roads are in any way suitable for this increase in all types of traffic without improvements being put in place as soon as possible?

Oxford is supposed to be a cycling city. On a recent visit to Belgium I noted that even small towns had an active travel infrastructure far better than anything in Oxford. Segregated cycle lanes with smooth well maintained surfaces and properly marked out junctions with priority for pedestrians and cyclists. Continuous and clearly marked cycle lanes with no abrupt stops. I would be ashamed to show any Belgians what passes for active travel in Oxford.

These schemes would be a very good start to improving things for the residents of Oxford and those in Oxfordshire who use these roads. To cancel them would be a very retrograde step. Please do not agree to this proposal.