

Public speakers

29 November 2022

1. George Curtis has asked the following question on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire

At the last Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting several groups including NNGO asked questions of the partnership. Cllr Wood, as Chair, took the questions and said that some of them would be covered by other items on the agenda. However, the NNGO question was not then discussed. Instead, we received a written response which was presumably drafted by an officer. We ask questions because we would like to know what the leaders of the councils are thinking and we would like to see where there is agreement, and where there are alternative views within the partnership. **Can the Future Oxfordshire Partnership please review how they respond to questions from civic groups and ensure that the issues raised are discussed?**

Response:

Where questions raised by civic groups relate directly to a substantive agenda item for the meeting, as required by the public participation protocol, then the issues raised are likely to be discussed.

Meanwhile, in relation to Agenda Item 5, Delivering the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, we note the following text within the Vision:

“Measuring progress, so that we know what responses are needed to achieve continual improvement, will be an important part of our approach to delivering the Strategic Vision.”

We agree entirely that setting up the processes to measure and report on progress is crucial to the successful delivery of the Vision. We encourage the FOP to engage with the parts of Oxford University that are at the heart of International work to redefine economics to include sustainability and well-being, in particular the Doughnut Economics Action Lab, which is already making significant progress on this in Amsterdam, and the University of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute. (Perhaps some of our Councillors and Officers might be interested in attending the Doughnut Economics Urban Development event on 7th Dec - <https://doughnuteconomics.org/events/218>)

Measuring and reporting is the vital step to convert a Vision which 'talks the talk' to a Programme of work with measurable outcomes that 'walks the walk'! Although the Vision outcomes have been designed to be achieved by 2050, shorter term objectives, actions and milestones must be set so that action to satisfy short-term ambitions of growth are not permitted to prejudice the longer-term achievement of sustainability. It is important for all stakeholders to understand how this long-term vision will be achieved through shorter term county and district plans.

Questions:

- How does the FOP intend to move from aspirations (talking the talk) to achievement (walking the walk)?
- How will this Vision be transformed into a series of achievable projects with measurable outcomes?
- How soon will you have the system of measurement in place?

Response:

- *The Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) is already working to deliver the outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development, through programmes of work which include the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) route map and action plan, and upgrades following the Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity Study. Programmes of work have also already been delivered which support us in progressing towards the outcomes of the Vision, for example 876 additional affordable homes were delivered through the Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Programme.*
- *The partnership is proactively working to identify further opportunities for collaborative working across the County to support delivery of the Strategic Vision, as set out in the report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting of 29 November 2022.*
- *The ambitious nature of the Strategic Vision requires sustained commitment by not only the organisations that make up the FOP, but by a wider set of strategic stakeholders and partners. As well as delivering its own programme of work aligned to the outcomes of the Strategic Vision, the FOP arrangements provide a forum in which key place-shaping organisations can discuss how their own individual plans support delivery of the Strategic Vision.*

The FOP has already started to explore a system of measurement which will help us in understanding how we are collectively progressing towards the outcomes of the strategic vision, enabling us to identify further activity which will help to deliver the Vision, as we move towards 2050. We recognise the importance of measures, both quantitative and qualitative, and will work with key strategic partners during 2023 to define an appropriate method of measurement.

2. Ian Green has asked to make the following address on behalf of the Oxford Civic Society

At the most recent Future Oxfordshire Partnership meeting I asked three questions. One of the main thrusts of the questions was public participation in countywide strategic planning, following the abandonment of the preparation of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan. The written responses to two of the three questions miss the main thrust:

- **Recommendation # 2** - OCS recognises that to update the Local Plans of the districts and city, some kind of agreement on Oxfordshire growth rate and distribution is still necessary: without evidence that the Local Plans have been prepared in cooperation with neighbouring local authorities (the 'Duty to Cooperate'), the Local Plans will not be approved by the Planning Inspectorate / Secretary of State.

Optimisation of strategic infrastructure investment could be a major casualty of the abandonment of the 2050 Plan – care needs to be taken to limit the damage.

OCS recommends that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership identifies and makes public the strategic infrastructure investment implications of each local planning

authority establishing its own rate, pace and distribution of employment and housing growth.

*Response: The Councils have each adopted the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire and remain committed to working together on strategic infrastructure issues. The update report on the agenda about the Oxfordshire Plan includes as one of its principles that we continue to work together on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, and officers are considering how this will sit alongside and support Local Plan processes. **The question remains – how can the public participate?***

- **Recommendation # 3** - As noted in an OCS report published just before the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan abandonment, the links between the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (and its Travel Plans), the Local Industrial Strategy, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and Pathways to Net Zero need to be carefully considered. Public discussion needs to continue on strategic (inter-local planning authority) planning matters and OCS will be pleased to contribute to this.

OCS recommends that as Oxfordshire strategic plans still need to be well coordinated and synchronized with, and integrated into, the local plans, the future Oxfordshire partnership should publicly debate how this is done.

*Response: The update report on the agenda about the Oxfordshire Plan outlines how the Councils can continue to work together and engage with each other on strategic planning issues. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership agreed the recommendation that it should retain an Advisory Group on Planning involving relevant Cabinet Members from each of the County, City, and District Councils. This will be a useful forum for the Councils to update each other on their respective plans as they are prepared, and for discussion on strategic planning issues, thereby helping coordination and synchronisation. **The question remains – how can the public participate?***

Response

Infrastructure requirements are linked to Local Plans which are the responsibility of each Local Planning Authority. The councils have together developed the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) and expect this to continue to be a valuable strategic tool.

Local Plans provide a key mechanism allowing people to participate in the future planning of an area. There are a number of stages of consultation in preparing a Local Plan, and submitted plans are considered by an Independent Inspector through an Examination in Public.

3. Prof. Richard Harding has asked the following question on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire

CPRE Oxfordshire would like to ask to clarify FOP's plans with regard to the provision of solar farms in Oxfordshire. FOP will be aware that we are facing a wave of speculative planning applications to install solar farms on green field sites (including the West Botley proposal for a National Infrastructure Project). Many of these proposals are generating considerable concern and opposition from local communities. CPRE supports the provision of renewable energy but not in a chaotic way as a result of unplanned and speculative developments.

The PaZCO report identifies four pathways, three of which attain scope 1 zero carbon emissions by 2050. The three credible pathways have a considerable range in their provision of solar power (ranging from 1400 to 3900 GWh yr-1), as well as many other necessary actions and policies. The most ambitious pathway requires a substantial devotion of land to solar farms and other renewable energy initiatives (such as biomass). The report also clearly identifies that 'Smart land use planning with participation of all stakeholders is essential' (page 8).

CPRE Oxfordshire therefore asks:

1. What is the status of the PaZCO report? Is it/will it be guidance or adopted policy?
2. What is the process that FOP (and constituent Councils) will adopt to decide the preferred pathway to zero carbon?
3. How will stakeholders (and, in particular, civic society) engage in this process?
4. Will Oxfordshire produce a 'smart' land use plan which will balance the needs of renewable energy generation with those of food production, biodiversity and the protection of the rural nature of the Oxfordshire countryside?

Response

1. What is the status of the PaZCO report? Is it/will it be guidance or adopted policy?
It is a decision for each individual authority as to whether it adopts PaZCO as method. The work which the Environment Advisory Group of FOP is currently overseeing to develop a route map and priorities for collective action from PaZCO, is working to the Oxfordshire Leading the Way pathway, so includes the high solar target in the route map.
2. What is the process that FOP (and constituent Councils) will adopt to decide the preferred pathway to zero carbon?
This is still under consideration and will be discussed as part of the process to agree the route map.
3. How will stakeholders (and, in particular, civic society) engage in this process?
This is still under consideration and will be discussed as part of the process to agree the route map.
4. Will Oxfordshire produce a 'smart' land use plan which will balance the needs of renewable energy generation with those of food production, biodiversity and the protection of the rural nature of the Oxfordshire countryside?

The National Planning Policy Framework states that "planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions." Land use planning is thus the preserve of Local Plans and therefore, since the end of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 project, a matter for each of Oxfordshire's Local Planning Authorities.

The councils are of course keenly aware of the need to think strategically and beyond local boundaries and will continue to work closely together on land use matters while retaining discretion over their own Local Plans.