

# Notes

## OF A MEETING OF THE



# The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Planning Advisory Group

HELD ON FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER 2023 AT 10.00 AM  
MEETING ROOM 1, ABBEY HOUSE AND HYBRID VIA TEAMS

## Present:

**Members:** Councillor Andy Graham (Chair), Councillor Diana Lugova, Councillor Charlie Maynard, Councillor Anna Railton, Peter Redman, Councillor Judy Roberts, Councillor Dan Sames and Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson.

**Officers:** David Butler, (Oxford City Council), Susan Harbour, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership), Chris Hargraves, (West Oxfordshire District Council), Giles Hughes (West Oxfordshire District Council), Kevin Jacob, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership). Lucy Murfett, (South and Vale Councils), David Peckford, (Cherwell District Council), Nick Perrins, (Oxfordshire County Council) and David Yates, (Future Oxfordshire Partnership).

## 16. Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes; declaration of interests; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Louise Upton, Oxford City Council, (substituted by Councillor Anna Railton).

There were no declarations of interest. The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

## 17. Notes of previous meetings

The notes of the previous meeting held on 15 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record subject to:

- Susan Harbour to be shown as an officer representative of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at PAG meetings.
- Minute 11, page 6, first sentence under the heading 'Opportunities for joint working in the planning space' to be amended to read: 'Giles Hughes introduced ~~✗ a number of~~ suggestions in the planning space.'
- Minute 11, pages 6- 7, last sentence at top of page 7 under the heading 'Viability' to be amended to read 'There was also concern that local councils might have to make difficult decisions around seeking to secure contributions. ~~in one area instead of~~

~~another~~ It was also pointed out that local councils must individually make the difficult decisions around what kind of contributions they want to prioritise e.g. affordable housing, net zero, zero carbon, biodiversity net gain.'

## 18. Planning for Health Infrastructure

The advisory group received two presentations relating to planning for health and health infrastructure.

Rosie Rowe, Head of Healthy Place Shaping, Oxfordshire County Council spoke to the aim of healthy place shaping to:

- Develop health and sustainable communities
- Reduce health inequalities
- Work together to improve health and wellbeing
- Support climate action
- Strengthen the building blocks of health

The advisory group was informed that public health comment was provided to local authorities and developers at pre-application and planning application stage relating to strategic development sites and advice was provided on the use of Health Impact Assessments, (HIA) which were now required by the majority of the Oxfordshire councils. A detailed break down of the HIA evaluation was provided.

Information provided included the provision of relevant local health and wellbeing data within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment that would show how a particular development might impact on existing health inequalities. This included factors such as levels of air pollution, housing factors including affordability, walking and cycling infrastructure plans and access to local services.

Regular monthly meetings took place between the public health team and planning policy managers within the Oxfordshire district councils and the public health team also commented if there was a need for primary care facilities linked to new housing. It was important to maintain these links between health and planning professionals and to broaden them to increase liaison with council development managers.

In discussion, members asked how air pollution was measured and whether concerns around pollution had led to any recommendation to councils that they refuse planning permission on a specific site. Officers responded that there was not an Oxfordshire wide approach, but strategic level sites were looked at in terms of what the impact on health might be, (including from additional pollution) and whether any mitigations were necessary.

In discussion, a number of advisory group members referred to challenges the councils faced in seeking to plan for future health needs and in facilitating the health infrastructure needed to support development. The advisory group was informed that the Integrated Care Board was responsible for decisions around the provision of primary care NHS facilities, but that public health did look at applications to assess whether it was appropriate to request a developer contribution towards health. It was for the NHS to determine how that contribution could best be used.

It was suggested that a webinar to refresh planning policy officers and planning development managers on public health considerations could be useful. Giles Hughes

indicated that he would consider a potential webinar and the best to deliver it outside of the meeting.

The advisory group then received a detailed presentation from Peter Redman, Senior Programme Manager - Primary Care Estates, Julie Dandridge, Head of Primary Care Infrastructure and Jeffery NG, Senior Primary Care Estate Manager, NHS Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, (ICB). The presentation covered the constraints and challenges in delivering new primary care estate including:

- funding arrangements for GP premises
- the limited ability of the ICB to own estate which currently meant that the ICB did not own any estate including GP accommodation
- the limited nature of the procurement method for new estate
- a general lack of funding
- the complexity around the use of developer contributions
- The possible partial solution offered by Section 2 of the NHS Act 2006 which allows for agreements between a Local Authority and NHS England.

In discussion, the Chair and various members of advisory group whilst acknowledging the scale of the challenges expressed the view that there did not appear to be a long vision from the NHS as to how the challenges in providing NHS estate, particularly primary care and GP surgeries might be overcome. Access for residents of new developments to GP surgeries and pressure from development on existing facilities was felt to be an issue across the county.

The advisory group was informed of the work being undertaken as part of the development of the ICB's new draft Primary Care Strategy which was shortly to be published. The strategy was intended to set out primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, optometry and dentistry services would be transformed in the future.

Although a document primarily aimed at setting how primary care services needed to change and be reshaped in the way they worked, the draft strategy would give some direction around on estate issues and this could be feedback to the advisory group at a future meeting in spring 2024.

Co-operation between local authorities and the ICB through the One Public Estate initiative and through co-development were also potential opportunities rather than provision of health estate through third party developers.

Giles Hughes commented that planning for health infrastructure was a complex issue, but that councils were well placed to know the needs of the populations they served and to feed into a longer-term strategy. He indicated that further consideration was needed of the issues by the council officers supporting the advisory group.

## **19. Proposals for joint working on Biodiversity Net Gain**

David Yates, Policy and Projects Officer introduced a report that set out proposals for how and where the councils in Oxfordshire might work together most effectively to promote Biodiversity Net Gain, (BNG). This followed the approval by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at its meeting on 28 November 2023 of a project in this area under the sponsorship of the Planning Advisory Group.

It was noted that (BNG) was an approach to development and land management that hopes to leave biodiversity in a measurably better state than it was before. In England, BNG was at the time of the meeting due to come into legal effect in January 2024. As local planning authorities, councils would be required to decide whether to approve biodiversity gain plans that developers were required to submit. Councils would also be required to check any significant on-site enhancements or off-site gains were appropriate, legally secured and that a maintenance and monitoring plan would be in place for 30 years.

It was stressed that the suggested recommendations which had been previously discussed by the officer group supporting the advisory group were based around the principles of sharing best practice and cooperation where it was felt there would be added value and nothing was proposed that might duplicate with the individual powers and responsibilities of the councils as sovereign local planning authorities.

After detailed discussion, it was agreed to:

1. Request that officers look into the provision of BNG training options for both Members and relevant council officers.
2. Requests that officers arrange for key Planning and Development Management Officers (as appropriate) from each council to meet with Legal colleagues from each local authority to work on the development of a S106 template for BNG, based on the Planning Advisory Service best practice examples from other areas and best practice of work already undertaken by Oxfordshire Local Planning Authorities.
3. Request that council officers compile a comprehensive inventory of in-house and contracted biodiversity officer capacity across the councils. This with a view to highlighting shortfalls and available capacity and facilitating the potential sharing of resources where councils think this would be of mutual benefit. It is noted that endorsement of this recommendation does not constitute an agreement by any council to share any staff or other BNG resource
4. Request that council officers explore the option of a shared resource across councils for onsite BNG spot-checking.
5. Request that council officers explore the creation of a local register of available offsite BNG credits.
6. Request that council officers investigate options to support the provision of offsite BNG in our districts.

## **20. Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)**

Nick Perrins, Head of Strategic Planning and John Disley, Head of Transport Policy, Oxfordshire County Council presented a report and summary presentation that provided an overview of the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, (LTCP) and how it might be used by the district councils as local planning authorities to inform the development of Local Plans and the determination of planning applications in respect of transport issues. The LTCPs Monitoring Report 2022-2023 was also included.

Members' attention was drawn to a table setting out progress against LTCP targets. It was noted that the target to increase the number of cycle trips in the County from the 2019 baseline of 600,000 to 1 million was not being met following a significant decline during Covid, but that another target on bus patronage had been met with some 33.6m bus trips in 2022/2023 against a target of 31.4m.

In discussion, members raised the following points in summary:

- The data on the number of bus journeys was disappointing but needed to be seen in the context of the pandemic. It would be useful to compare Oxfordshire's data with the other areas.
- It was felt that there was a strong relationship between the LTCP and other County Council strategies for walking and cycling parking standards lacked sufficient teeth. In response officers commented that they were constantly checking at the national parking standards to ensure local requirements were as robust as possible.
- It would be useful to know the impact of Area Travel Plans, (ATPs) by district and timelines for the integration of ATPs into all Oxfordshire Local Plans.
- Further clarification was needed of the legal status of the LTCP in the context of Local Plans and the determination of individual planning applications by local planning authorities.
- The need to consider the impact of speed limits on bus viability when planning development.

Officers agreed to consider the above actions.

## **21. Forward work programme**

Giles Hughes commented that it was intended to bring an item about potential opportunities for joint working between the councils with regard to responding to developer challenges on grounds of viability to the advisory group's next meeting.

## **22. Update on Local Plan Progress**

Each member presented an update on the progress of their council's Local Plan.

## **23. Future Oxfordshire Partnership Advisory Group meeting notes for information**

The notes of the following advisory groups were received:

- Environment Advisory Group 8 September 2023 and 9 November 2023
- Housing Advisory Group 12 September 2023
- Infrastructure Advisory Group 4 September 2023

## **24. Any other business or updates**

No other business was raised.

## **25. Dates of Future meetings**

The dates of future meetings as set out in the Agenda were noted.