

# Minutes of a meeting of the OXFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD on Tuesday 27 March 2018

## Voting members of the Committee present:

<b>Councillor Bob Price</b>	<b>Chair - Executive Member of Oxford City Council</b>
<b>Councillor John Cotton</b>	<b>Vice- Chairman - Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council</b>
Councillor Barry Wood	Leader of Cherwell District Council
Councillor Ian Hudspeth	Leader of Oxfordshire County Council
Councillor James Mills	Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council

## Non-Voting members of the Committee present:

Professor Alistair Fitt	Universities Representative
Kevin Bournier	Homes England Representative
Louise Patten	Oxfordshire CCG Representative
Lesley Tims	Environment Agency Representative

## Officers:

Paul Staines	Oxfordshire Growth Board Partnership Programme Manager
Nigel Tipple	Chief Executive, OXLEP
Gordon Mitchell	Chief Executive, Oxford City Council
Caroline Green	Assistant Chief Executive, Oxford City Council
Patsy Dell	Head of Planning, Sustainable Development & Regulatory Services, Oxford City Council
Peter Clark	Chief Executive, Oxfordshire County Council
Giles Hughes	Head of Strategic Planning, West Oxfordshire District Council
Bev Hindle	Strategic Director, Oxfordshire County Council
Sue Halliwell	Director for Planning and Place, Oxfordshire County Council
Andrew Down	Head of Partnership and Insight, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
Jennifer Thompson	Committee and Members Services Officer, Oxford City Council

## Apologies:

Councillor Matthew Barber	Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council
Jeremy Long	Chairman of OXLEP
Adrian Lockwood	Vice Chairman of OXLEP and Skills Board Representative
Richard Venables	OXLEP Business Representative – Oxford City
Andrew Harrison	OXLEP Business Representative – Science Vale
Phil Shadbolt	OXLEP Business Representative – Bicester

## **65. Declarations of interest**

## **66. Minutes of the last meeting**

The Board confirmed as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Oxfordshire Growth Board held on 1 February 2018 (with minor corrections to acronyms).

## **67. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair announced:

- The Board welcomed the Government's confirmation that two of Oxfordshire's bids to the Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF), Didcot Garden Town and West Oxfordshire Garden Village, near Eynsham, have progressed to the next stage and detailed business plans will now be developed.
- The Housing and Growth Deal and the delivery plan had been agreed by all 6 local authorities and with government. Work on the delivery plan was underway as were the appointments of an overall programme director, programme leads for each delivery strand and other key staff.

## **68. Growth Board: Public Participation**

In accordance with the public participation scheme the Chair invited those who had submitted questions or registered to give an address to speak to the Board.

The Board had before then:

- written questions submitted by
  - Sue Haywood on behalf of Need not Greed Oxfordshire
  - Michael Tyce on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire
- and written responses from the Chair.

Sue Haywood read her submitted question, the Chair read the response, she asked a supplementary question and the Chair responded.

Michael Tyce read his submitted question, the Chair read the response, he asked a supplementary question and the Chair responded.

Oxford City Councillor Andrew Gant addressed the Board.

Oxfordshire County Councillor Charles Mathew addressed the Board.

Full details of the written questions and responses and summaries of the supplementary questions and responses and the addresses are in the supplement to these minutes.

## **69. National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) Update and Oxford to Cambridge corridor**

Matt Stafford (Project Director for the Ox-Cam Expressway, Highways England) gave a presentation to the Board on the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project; key milestones, and strategic objectives.

In his presentation he:

- outlined the strategic context for the expressway as a whole and the ‘missing link’ 50km (30 mile) connection between the M4, M40 and M1, emphasising the scale of this scheme;
- outlined the strategic objectives, as the scheme had to provide value for money and significant benefits:
  1. connectivity and creation of an integrated corridor
  2. economic growth and improving access to employment and facilities
  3. future-proofing including innovative and sustainable technology
  4. and wider economic and environmental benefits including separating through and local traffic, providing adequate links to local destinations, and supporting transport modes other than private petroleum fuelled car;
- outlined the assessment criteria: resilience, reliability, shortened journey times and reduced congestion, support for potential growth along the corridor, impact on environment;
- outlined the consultation and desk-top evidence gathering undertaken to this point (a third of the way through the process for establishing the business case) including understanding traffic movements and geographical/ geological/ statutory designation/ land use constraints and features;
- explained that stakeholder and public views would be taken into account but were not given disproportionate weight in the evidence;
- described the options for the corridors through which the expressway would pass, with common areas from the M4 to Abingdon and then east from the M1, and three options for the section from Abingdon to the M1;
- explained the consultation phases and timetable for the project: the corridor being chosen mid-2018; formal public consultation on the shortlist of proposed routes within the chosen corridor in Autumn 2019 with an announcement in Autumn 2020; and construction from 2025 to 2030, subject to funding;
- explained engagement with several stakeholder groups and special interest groups (including a forum and stakeholder reference group) and the relevant All Party Parliamentary Group; and the request for considered feedback from local authorities along the wider corridor area.

The Chair permitted questions from Michael Tyce, CPRE representative, as set out below.

1. Are the options for the corridors now restricted to only those shown with all other options outside these areas shown in the presentation now rejected? For example has the original option ‘S4’ which ran south of option A been rejected?  
A: The only corridor routes now under consideration are as shown in the presentation.

2. How is the 'preservation of the rural character' taken into account as this has not been discussed explicitly?

A: the rural character is part of the consideration, and is one of the objectives when assessing the wider environmental impact of each corridor.

3. Will the A34 form part of the expressway, as the treatment of this in the the maps is unclear about the inclusion of the A34 and the stretch over Boars Hill?

A: we are still considering the inclusion of the A34 – there is no decision as yet but if corridor routes B or C are chosen then all options for the A34 are still available.

The Chair invited questions from the Board as set out below.

1. The Housing and Growth Deal recognises the whole of Oxfordshire as a single economic area. Will you take OxLEP's evidence about the whole economic area into account? Is this project also considering the entirety of Oxfordshire as a single area?

A: We will undertake an economic analysis across the full study area that will not be based on county boundaries.

2. Have you revisited the data gathered for the route choice of the M40 through Oxfordshire, especially on the geography and microclimate, and established the impact on the Ministry of Defence's fuel line crossing this area? This data is the reason for the M40 bending round to avoid the fuel line and frequent fogs on Otmoor.

A: We are looking at all historic data and consulting with the utilities but have not spoken to the MoD about the impact on their supply lines.

3. When is the Stage 2 consultation and engagement happening?

A: Autumn 2019, on a smaller number of route options within a single corridor. The corridor will be chosen without a formal consultation stage.

4. Are health services and health service planners involved in the consideration of the corridor?

A: We are working with the ambulance service. We will check that we have involved other health services and service planners.

## **70. Housing and Growth Deal Delivery Plan update report March 2018**

The Board considered a report on progress with the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (the Deal), agreed between Government and the Oxfordshire partners and the proposed year one programmes for infrastructure and affordable housing.

Caroline Green introduced the report and the Year 1 infrastructure and affordable housing delivery plans and milestones agreed by the partner authorities.

She reported in her presentation and in answer to questions that:

- the Deal was now moving into the implementation phase, and the first posts to create the capacity and resources to deliver this were advertised and appointments made;
- the delivery plan would be updated to take account of the outcome of the Housing Infrastructure Fund bids and other future funding deals, which if

- successful (so financing became available for those currently allocated Deal monies) would allow projects lower down the list to be funded by the Deal;
- the Year 1 plan was based on the criteria in the report and the agreed OXIS projects and deliverability and some funding was allocated to enhance projects already scheduled or underway to ensure early gains from the Deal programme;
  - a more fully balanced 3-year programme would be developed
  - the draft Statement of Common Ground for the JSSP would be presented to the April meeting: this would remain draft until the new NPPF was in place and then, subject to any consequential changes, would be put to each district council for adoption;
  - alongside this the outcome of work with MHCLG on planning freedoms and flexibilities would be presented to the Board and adopted by partner councils in July;

Kevin Bourner, Homes England, noted that this was the first such Growth Deal. Homes England was conducting high-level 'due diligence' on the delivery plan and would undertake an agreed monitoring role, including understanding the links between OXIS and housing delivery and how these affected milestones.

Board members commented:

- There was an absence of any measure of success or measure of identifying the specific benefits arising from the Deal, and noted that internal and public targets for delivery and achievement would be set.
- In terms of mitigating the impact of developments, the detailed relationship between S106 agreements, CIL, and subsidy from the Deal and other funding needed to be understood: but it was noted that at a general level this could not be set out in detail as it depended on individual scheme's negotiations.
- It was crucial to have the correct skill and knowledge in place to ensure delivery was possible.

**The Growth Board resolved:**

- i. to note the progress towards the Housing and Growth Deal Milestones as set out in the Delivery Plan; and
- ii. to endorse the year one programmes for affordable housing and infrastructure delivery as agreed by the Oxfordshire Partners.

## **71. Matters arising from OXLEP**

Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive of OxLEP, reported:

1. Discussions had taken place with BEIS and MCHLG on the productivity strand of the growth deal
2. OxLEP were working on their Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) over the course of 2018 to develop a unique proposal based on the county's strengths in response to the government industrial strategy for adoption in March 2019.

3. A review of the LEP itself had shown that oversight and statutory compliance was up to date and adequate: new members of the Board had been appointed to replace two members standing down;
4. The Harwell link road opened on Friday 28 March; improvements at Didcot station were well underway;
5. Work on the STEM skills and innovation centres was progressing well.

The Board noted the update.

## **72. Growth Board Forward Plan**

The Board noted the Forward Plan and list of decisions to come to future meetings.

## **73. Oxfordshire Local Plans progress report**

The Board noted the update on progress on each district council's Local Plan.

## **74. Sub-national Transport Body (STB) proposals**

Bev Hindle, Oxfordshire County Council, gave an update from the recent STB meeting and ongoing work and answered questions, making the following points:

- Discussion covered innovation, activity and transport across the whole region, and the requirement to emphasise the necessity of including the whole M4-A34-M40 link stretch in consideration of the proposed expressway route.
- The Board discussed the difficulty of providing views as a transport body on proposed options, without the full evidence base, and in light of the immediate disquiet of local residents.
- Highways England had not updated their processes to adequately reflect the existence of the STB.
- The emerging route of the expressway would have an impact on the emerging JSSP, although the timetables for these did not correspond.
- Currently Network Rail and Department for Transport were developing the rail connectivity study in isolation as a technical study without considering the wider economic case. The STB and Growth Board's representatives continued to press the need for involvement in this: the Growth Board could take a pro-active role in the study.

Councillors commented that

- The A34 was the route with the highest impact on all areas: Highways England's stated wish to separate local and through traffic on this route was welcomed.
- If the county was expected (as seemed to be the case) to match-fund rail improvements, then the whole county should benefit. Rail improvements would unlock economic opportunity but there was a need for more local as well as central stations to achieve this.

The Board noted the update.

**75. Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity update**

The Board noted there were no updates.

**76. Updates on matters relevant to the Growth Board**

There were no updates.

**77. Dates of next meetings**

The Board noted the meeting dates including that of 26 April 2018.

**The meeting started at 4.00 pm and ended at 5.45 pm**

Chair .....

**Date: Thursday 26 April 2018**

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## GROWTH BOARD 27 MARCH 2018

### Questions and written responses

#### Summary of supplementary questions and responses

#### Summary of addresses

#### **1. Question on behalf of Need not Greed Oxfordshire, read by Sue Haywood**

We note that the Growth Board's Terms of Reference are under review and scheduled to be discussed at the next meeting. This will be a valuable opportunity to address on-going issues of transparency and accessibility of information, including timeliness. For example, with the increasing amount of decision-making apparently to be made at the Growth Board level, removing it further from the local electorate, steps must be taken to ensure that all local councillors have adequate opportunity to input to the process, including sufficient time to review documentation. Increasing transparency, including appropriate time to consider and respond to often very detailed and complex issues, will enable all stakeholders to be more constructive in their involvement. Some of this comes down to setting the right philosophy and ethos for the Board, which should be embodied in the Terms of Reference. However, there are also simple practical steps, such as the creation of a single web location for all Growth Board information. This has been previously requested and we trust that a few pounds from the recent £5m capacity funding might be spared to take this forward.

How will the Growth Board factor these issues into the review of the Terms of Reference?

#### **Written Response**

The Board will be reviewing its terms of reference to align them to the changed role of the Board and in particular the governance requirements of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. It is certainly our intention that the work of the Board should observe all the standard local government principles of transparency and public engagement, as is shown by the facility for asking questions and making statements to the Board and presentations such as the one that is on today's agenda from Highways England on the Growth Corridor. The Board will also be considering how it can broaden its engagement with local councillors. These matters will be discussed at the April meeting.

The Board has always had a profile on the web sites of its constituent partners but a stand-alone website would clearly be helpful in the next phase of work to implement the Growth Deal and this should be completed by the end of April.

#### **Supplementary Question summary**

We note the intention to ensure all councillors are kept up to date and informed but it is on record that some councillors have not had enough time to consider Growth Board papers before decisions are made. Please can the new terms of reference include explicit commitments to transparency and giving time for constructive engagement by all councillors and stakeholders?

#### **Response summary**

We note the concerns and will consider how to realistically address these when finalising the terms of reference and how the Board operates.

## **2. Question on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire, read by Michael Tyce**

England's rural landscape is precious and Oxfordshire is currently the South East's most rural County. The countryside and environment must weigh at least equally in the balance with economic growth. These issues are complementary not incompatible. Economic growth is important but the supply of land is finite and it must therefore be used with caution. In considering development, we must think first whether it can be accommodated within existing settlements and by using higher densities. If new sites must be contemplated for housing this must only be for the reasonable requirements of the existing population, taking into account both affordability and tenure. If despite addressing only real local demand, whilst maximising densities and previously developed land, there is still be a need for new land to be used this should be to a strict order of precedence with designated land such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Green Belt being the absolute last resort.

How will these considerations be taken into account when drafting the Oxfordshire-wide Statement of Common Ground and appointing to and setting terms of reference for the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan Project Board?

### **Written Response**

The Growth Board has already made clear, when approving the business case for the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP), that the Plan is intended to be a strategic and long term framework for the development of the county up to 2050. The Board accepts that this must involve the maintenance of natural character of the county, as local plans are also required to do. We will be seeking to apply the principles of sustainable development and environmental sensitivity throughout.

In common with all statutory local plans the JSSP will be scoped and governed by key documents that will be placed in the public domain and the considerations and findings of the JSSP will be tested at key stages through public consultation, including an independent examination held in public.

### **Supplementary Question summary**

While you have stated you would take account of the impact of housing on undeveloped rural land, you have collectively agreed housing numbers 40% above what the government now deems reasonable: additionally you are no doubt ready to sign up to the further 300,000 houses in the NIC Corridor Growth scheme, more than doubling the present housing stock. This is a self-inflicted challenge. How are you going to preserve Oxfordshire's rural nature when you have signed up to deliver numbers of houses way beyond any conceivable need?

### **Response summary**

Councillor Price said:

We will work as stated in the response above. The housing numbers proposed are entirely consistent with the numbers required by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the SHMA and so development will be consistent with these defined measures of current and future unmet need.

### **3. Address to the Board by Oxford City Councillor Andrew Gant**

Councillor Gant said in summary:

- Having called for the establishment of oversight and scrutiny of the Growth Board's work he was pleased to hear that this was under consideration in the draft new terms of reference.
- On the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP):
- It would be a mistake to allow Kidlington and Oxford to expand and coalesce into large centreless spread.
- Statements in the House of Commons reiterated the principles of maintaining and not developing designated Green Belt land and resisting urban sprawl.
- The Growth Board should safeguard these principles and commit to the Green Belt as a whole not removing stretches piecemeal.
- There was a need to make a natural capital assessment and then safeguard these assets.
- There were some interesting statements about different types and tenure of housing but these must deliver a mix of homes for key workers – of all types, and not just social housing, at all stages in the plan.

Housing must be built in the right places, not just the easiest places.

#### **Response summary**

While the JSSP will form the overall strategy, these decisions will be for each local authority and ultimately for the Planning Inspectorate to take as they determine the soundness of individual Local Plans. So any proposals will be consulted on locally as well as county- wide and be tested for each authority's Local Plan by inspectors at public inquiry.

### **4. Address to the Board by Oxfordshire County Councillor Charles Mathew**

Councillor Mathew said in summary:

Referring to his question at the 1 February meeting and following on from the announcement of successful Housing Infrastructure Fund bid, he was still waiting for a satisfactory response to his question.

His concerns and queries over the efficacy of measures to mitigate current and future pressures on the A40 had not been addressed.

He asked the Growth Board to confirm support for the review of options open to them for A40 improvement in light of the successful HIF bid before committing to a potentially pointless park and ride at Eynsham and bus lane to Dukes Cut and asked for the A40 improvements to be brought forward to October.

#### **Response summary**

Councillor Hudspeth said:

The park and ride and bus lane were funded by the existing City Deal for the science corridor and cancelling this would lose a £3m investment as the funds were not transferable. The Garden Village HIF bid had reached the second stage, not a final decision. Once a business case was submitted for this a final evaluation and then a funding announcement was expected in the autumn: unfortunately too late to allow work on the A40 contingent on this bid to start in October.

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