

Growth Board 26th July 2017
Public participation
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To: Oxfordshire Growth Board
Date: 26 September 2017
Title of Report: Public participation - requests to address the meeting and questions submitted have been listed in the order submitted.

Introduction

1. Members of the public can address or ask questions of the Oxfordshire Growth Board.
2. Addresses and questions submitted by the deadline are listed below in strict order of receipt by the host authority.
3. Where written responses are available, these will be circulated at the meeting. The Chair may give a verbal response in place of or in addition to this. If no response is available for the meeting a written response will be sent and circulated to all Board members within ten working days of the meeting.

Addresses and questions

1. Question from Colin Thomas, the Need Not Greed (Oxfordshire) Coalition – Agenda Item 6 OXIS (read by David Illingworth of the North Abingdon Local Plan Group)..... 1
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1. Question from Colin Thomas, the Need Not Greed (Oxfordshire) Coalition – Agenda Item 6 OXIS (read by David Illingworth of the North Abingdon Local Plan Group)

The OXIS report makes it clear that priority is being given to schemes that promote growth and connectivity, with green infrastructure relegated to a possible but unspecified ‘specialist strategy’. This appears to work against all the principles of good sustainable development, with plans for economic growth racing ahead and environmental interests at best parked in a silo and at worst forgotten about. This is despite the fact that the report clearly acknowledges a key message from the recent

consultation that more emphasis should be placed on Green Infrastructure, the historic environment and understanding the economic environmental value of Oxfordshire.

What active steps is the Growth Board taking to mitigate its approach to ensure that the quality of life of the existing residents of Oxfordshire is not being compromised by the dash for growth?

Response

Today's report to the Board recommending the approval of OxIS makes two important points. Firstly it demonstrates the importance of developing connectivity to the county and secondly it highlights that developing enhanced connectivity is only in a suite of issues necessary for planning authorities to address to ensure sustainable growth.

In this context, OxIS could be seen as a base document that offers us a vision of how Oxfordshire could grow and the issues that need to be addressed to ensure that this growth is sustainable. Examples of where we need to build on OxIS are given in the report and green infrastructure is highlighted as an area where the Board wishes to focus its attention next.

At its next meeting on 30th October, specifically convened for the purpose the Board will consider a proposal to take forward a countywide Joint Spatial Plan (JSP). A key element of the evidence base for the JSP will be an assessment of current green infrastructure and its role in ensuring sustainable growth for Oxfordshire. The JSP will therefore provide a vehicle for us to consider the future provision of green infrastructure alongside other key issues, for example energy usage, that the Board recognise as necessary for sustainable growth.

Cllr Price added that the consultation responses would be incorporated into the OXIS report. He assured the speaker that green infrastructure would be included in the development planning stages.

2. Question from Helen Marshall, CPRE Oxfordshire – Agenda Item 8 O2C (read by Dr Peter Collins, Chairman of CPRE Oxfordshire)

it is noted that the councils are actively working with the NIC on plans to create an Oxford Cambridge Growth corridor involving a million more houses and an Expressway. Can we be advised:

- a) Why it was not thought appropriate to consult with Oxfordshire's residents on a plan that would transform the rural nature of the County into a growth hub before this work started?*
- b) Why Councils have been to put it mildly less than forthcoming about the numerous work streams when directly asked?*
- c) Whether the public will be consulted at all on the principle of this growth plan before it becomes irreversible, and before any commitment is made to the Government or its Agencies and if so when?*

Response

The National Infrastructure Commission or NIC is a government advisory body charged with considering longer term national strategic infrastructure requirements necessary to help the Ox-Cam corridor achieve its economic potential.

As part of this work last year it published a report on the potential for growth in what's called the Oxford- Cambridge Growth Corridor and set about considering what the strategic infrastructure requirements would be for a range of growth scenarios in this corridor.

All councils in the corridor have been engaged with the NIC on helping them developing their vision and we will be discussing an update on this work at today's meeting. But importantly it should be stressed that the NIC are developing a report to advise government on what growth in this corridor could look like and what the implications might be. If out of this longer term strategic vision proposals for the corridor should come forward then they will still need to be subject to the full rigours of the planning policy system.

Cllr Price added that the NIC is charged with delivering long term economic growth and had identified the corridor as a key element, which was why the Growth Board was working on this and why it interlinked with the OXIS. Some of the decisions were not for any local planning process but would be for central government who would manage the public consultation once the proposals were announced.

3. Question from Helena Whall, CPRE Oxfordshire – Agenda Item 10 Government consultation on Objectively Assessed Need (read by Dr Peter Collins, Chairman of CPRE Oxfordshire)

The new Government Housing numbers have exposed the SHMA (Strategic Housing Market assessment) for what CPRE Oxfordshire always said it was – over-exaggerated and deeply flawed. It shows the SHMA was never the assessment of housing need it pretended to be, but a mask for the Growth Board's scheme, about which we had never been consulted on or even told about, to change rural Oxfordshire into an industrial hub. The Government now says that Oxfordshire's twenty-year housing target is not the 100,000 houses in the SHMA but less than 70,000. Numbers for all Districts are dramatically reduced and, crucially, the City numbers are almost halved from 28,000 to 15,000. The Government also acknowledges that the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty prevent Councils from meeting housing need.

In light of this, will the Growth Board now:

- a. Call a temporary halt to all Local Plan proceedings currently underway - to avoid surplus allocation of land which allows developers to cherry-pick the 'best' sites?*
- b. Update the Oxfordshire SHMA, based on the new methodology, including proper acknowledgement of Green Belt and AONB constraints?*
- c. Ensure any proposed uplift for economic growth ambitions are subject to full democratic consultation?*
- d. Take this opportunity to draw a line under the diverse Local Plans and commit to the production of a Joint Spatial Plan, allowing the proper consideration of the cumulative environmental and social impacts of development across Oxfordshire?*

Response

The question highlights that last week the government published a proposed new methodology for the Objective Assessment of Housing Need or OAN entitled Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places: consultation proposals. The Consultation closes on the 7th November.

Oxfordshire has always followed recommended guidance in the assessment of housing needs and has not shied away from attempting to address the challenges of for example a lack of affordability and the impact of development on our county. We will of course be responding to the government's consultation and will be reporting on the conclusions and its implications to our next meeting.

In answer to your specific points.

- a) Local plans are a matter for District Local planning Authorities, or the County Council for minerals and waste planning and matters concerning their local plans progress or timing need to be addressed to them. Notwithstanding this, it should be noted that not proceeding with local plans leaves districts potentially exposed to unplanned development with a loss of opportunity to secure necessary infrastructure and affordable housing.
- b) Any decisions on whether the Board should commission an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment will await the conclusions of the consultation on OAN and the decision to move forward with a joint strategic planning approach where the commissioning of such work can be planned for and undertaken collectively.
- c) All OAN calculations should take into account the impact of all types of growth for example population, economic growth, net migration etc. These calculations underpin local plan decisions on where growth should be sited and are therefore already subject to scrutiny and challenge in the Local Plan examinations. The preparation of economic policy through the Strategic Economic Plan process has democratic engagement through the LEP Board where the Oxfordshire
- d) As mentioned earlier, the development of a Joint Spatial Plan will be the subject of an additional meeting of the Board on 30th October

Cllr Price added that this was a consultation document and so he saw no basis for changing the housing numbers until these were finalised. Cllr Wood said it was important to be clear about what the consultation was and was not. The consultation had to result in a change to the NPPF before anything changed, and that if the process set out in the consultation was followed councils would still end up with similar numbers. Local Plans beyond, at or near examination were not affected by this change.

4. Address from Peter Rutt, co-ordinator of the Expressway Action Group

Statement on behalf of the Expressway Action Group to the Growth Board attached separately.

Response

Cllr Price thanked Mr Rutt for his address and said that his points were noted and discussions were at a very early stage. Cllr Hudspeth added that the Board was responding to overtures from Highways England about their long-term plans: there were no secretive decisions or deals. As well as providing the corridor, the proposal may also help provide a solution to the current problems with the northern stretch of the A34. Preliminary discussions were ongoing with Highways England and the NIC and as this progresses there will be consultation with those affected by this significant proposal.