

Growth Board 30 October 2017
Public participation
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To: Oxfordshire Growth Board
Date: 30 October 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 including responses

1. Helena Whall on behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire

CPRE Oxfordshire welcomes the business case for a Joint Spatial Plan for Oxfordshire and we are pleased to see we have mention as sponsors of this initiative.

We are also pleased to see that a JSP ‘will help to address the perceived “democratic deficit” by giving the public a clear overview of and transparent engagement in the county growth/development picture’.

And we are very encouraged that the JSP will address ‘environmental implications and potential for securing environmental gains’ – CPRE has long called for consideration of the incremental impact of Oxfordshire’s growth plans on the environment.

However, we believe that there is little point in pursuing a JSP unless it is statutory and binding on all Oxfordshire Councils, not optional whether they conform or not.

We welcome the opportunity today to comment on the business case for a Joint Spatial Plan and have a number of questions which we seek answers to from the Board:

1. Firstly, how will 5 year supply issues be handled? If one Council fails to build, will that mean all Councils will be at risk? At the time the JSP begins, will all deficits be “pooled”?
2. Secondly, the plan talks only of the 2014 Oxfordshire SHMA. We believe it should be explicit that if the Government determines a new formula for OAN, this will be adopted in the plan. Can the Board assure us that this will be the case?
3. Finally, while we appreciate the commitment to full public consultation (with Oxfordshire electors) and an EIP, we would like the plan to be more explicit. The

consultation and Enquiry *must* include consideration of whether the Growth Strategy which forms part of the process is itself supported by the public, or whether the public seek to retain e.g. (more of) Oxfordshire's rural character. Can the Board guarantee this?

Response

1. The issues around how the 5 year housing land supply figure is calculated and apportioned across Oxfordshire is one of the matters that will need to be considered in developing the JSP and in the light of the revised National Planning Policy Statement (NPPF) expected in the New Year.
2. The business case for the JSP makes it clear that the JSP will be based upon an up to date calculation of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing in Oxfordshire. This will of course follow whatever guidance is enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at the time of its calculation.
3. Regardless of whether the plan is statutory or non-statutory the JSP business case makes it clear that at the relevant stages the emerging document would be subject to consultation and engagement with the general public and stakeholders. If the plan should take a statutory route then, it would be subject to an examination by the planning inspectorate.

2. Colin Thomas on behalf of the Need not Greed Coalition.

The NNGO coalition has for some time expressed its concerns around the Growth Board's lack of democratic accountability and the absence of public engagement concerning the county's growth plans, so we welcome Para. 11 of the business case: "[The JSP] will help to address the perceived "democratic deficit" by giving the public a clear overview of and transparent engagement in the county growth/development picture, thus enabling a better understanding of the growth trajectory and underpinning evidence across the county and an increased ability to engage in collective decision making.

Bearing in mind our view of the lack of public accountability and transparency of the Growth Board, what assurances can the Board give that the JSP process and its outputs, already criticised by many, will ensure effective public engagement and independent public examination?"

Response

We do not accept the assertion that the Growth Board lacks accountability. It is a statutory committee of the 6 democratically elected councils of Oxfordshire and all its business is conducted in public with opportunities for engagement via questions and statements.

Regardless of whether the plan is statutory or non-statutory the JSP business case makes it clear that at the relevant stages the emerging document would be subject to consultation and engagement with the general public and stakeholders. If the plan should take a statutory route then, it would be subject to an examination by the planning inspectorate.