

Oxfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Panel meeting 30 May 2019

Agenda Item 7).

Oxfordshire's Affordable Housing Potential. Scrutiny asked for "information on the delivery rates of affordable housing". What they seem to have got is a forward-trajectory of estimated affordable housing delivery, by District, in 4-year blocks. The Officer's report states this is an estimate only as site-specific viability concerns may mean the site delivers less affordable housing in order to ensure the whole site remains viable.

This doesn't mention that improvements around the transparency of site viability assessments means should become harder for developers to argue their sites can't deliver policy-specific levels of affordable housing.

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Oxfordshire Green Belt Update. This updated an earlier map to show all the Oxford Green Belt either with permission or allocated in Plans. It is, therefore, that referring to the Growth Deal's 100,000 homes rather than any longer-term assessment. The map doesn't for some reason show Oxford City's GB allocations; a little strange but many of them are small and so might not show at that scale, and the whole lot doesn't add up to much more than 18 ha, anyway.

Agenda Item 9).

The Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme – the Workstream This report looks at how some of the key issues in building the infrastructure programme can be addressed. Well, that's the stated purpose. I've added a link to the report so that you can view the progress thus far, shown in Appendix 1. The Thame – Haddenham Cycleway is shown as a Year 3 item. The rest can be summarised as below:

The Growth Board aim to use the Government's committed spend of £215 million to help "unlock" housing in current and emerging plans (stating it will accelerate the delivery of 6,549 homes during the Growth Deal years, with another 14,000 by 2031). There has been a project list announced before (see below) and this report provides an update on those:

- Spend for Year 1 has occurred, a planned £30 million
- Most of the first 2 years will be spent on site investigations and design, with years 3 – 4 moving onto detailed planning and construction
- So far, the a scoping document for the procurement of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy Review has been carried out, and the Years 2 – 5 infrastructure / housing delivery programme agreed
- Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) surveys and procurement for land consultants have commenced, who will support the recently appointed CPO legal team to design a land acquisition strategy for identified CPOs
- Feasibility and traffic modelling work is being procured for Year 2 schemes
- Year 2 schemes have commenced in terms of early feasibility and design.

Risks have been identified:

- Traffic impact from the large numbers of schemes to be delivered within a tight timeframe
- The ability of the market to supply the "huge demands" for materials and personnel
- Delays associated with CPOs and land acquisition. These are well known and OCC are trying to prepare background work in readiness for the CPO Inquiries
- Reliance on all the third parties – developers, infrastructure providers, etc.
- External factors, such as Brexit.

It is claimed that mitigations measures are in place to address these risks... what they are isn't stated.

The report:

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/documents/s16523/Infrastructure%20Report%20to%20GB%20Scrutiny%20Panel.pdf>

Agenda Item 10).

Response to Scrutiny – air quality and climate change in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050

The Growth Board's Scrutiny panel requested information on air quality plans as envisaged by the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Vision and Objectives, with a focus on mitigating climate change in "these areas of development". This one-page report basically states it's too early to ask for that but notes:

- The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 will need to consider climate change and air quality issues, assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal process.
- Detailed air quality modelling will be needed to satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations should growth be recommended in areas that would impact on Special Areas of Conservation. That includes those sites with biodiversity value of international importance.
- It's early days but as the plan develops there will be opportunities to develop policies to help address climate change and air quality, this aspiration was strongly supported during consultation.
- The aims of wider Government policy and strategy will need to be taken account of. This Plan provides an opportunity to apply and embed goals and targets such as those in the Government's 25 year plan to improve the Environment.

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Growth Board response to Scrutiny Panel recommendations

This lists issues the Scrutiny Panel have, the Growth Board's response and any actions they anticipate taking in order to address the Panel's concerns. The response isn't always very revealing but does at least show the concern has been listed; presumably some action can be taken by the Scrutiny Panel, later...

Examples are listed below:

- The Scrutiny Panel recommend that the Growth Board reflect on the inability of the Consultation on Issues around scale of growth and broad locations to be effective as it precedes the Government's decision on the Oxford – Cambridge Expressway.
 - Response: Agree. The Growth Board shares the views of the Scrutiny Panel "that there could be added value from the alignment of the consultation on the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway route and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050". The timetable for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is fixed in the housing and growth delivery plan, however, while the Expressway is a matter for Highways England. Officers have raised this issue with civil servants.
- The Scrutiny Panel recommend that the Growth Board have a clear work programme, with clarity on agenda items, all of which should be accompanied by reports / information. This should include update notes from the three advisory Sub-Groups, reported well in advance of the Scrutiny Panel, and written responses to public questions.
 - Response: Agree. The Growth Board does have a Forward Plan that sets out key considerations and decisions of future meetings (I assume that is decisions to be made!). The Board does agree, however, this could be further developed into a more comprehensive work programme and will ask officers to prepare a report for consideration. The comments about the format of the agenda and availability of Sub-Group activities are noted and agreed.
- The Growth Board revisit the recommendation on structured communication between the Growth Board and Council's members considering member reports of having received incorrect and incomplete information.
 - Response: Unable to agree. This is a matter for each leader within their own authority.

Oxfordshire Growth Board meeting 4 June 2019 and minutes of 26 March 2019

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A presentation was given by Bev Hindle, Growth Board Director on the Oxford – Cambridge Arc. In the minutes of the 26 March, Bev Hindle explained the following:

- The Chancellor's Spring Statement made clear the commitment to the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, made alongside a joint declaration of ambition with the Arc partners, consisting of the local authorities along the route, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, the 4 Local Enterprise Partnerships and England's Economic Heartland.
- It was confirmed the coverage of the Arc includes the ceremonial counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.
- The joint declaration, available on HM Treasury's website includes an initial economic analysis of the Arc. The declaration committed the Government to embedding the principle of "natural capital" throughout its Arc approach. This is intended to ensure that sustainable places for the future are created alongside growth and development.

The joint declaration can be seen here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-oxford-cambridge-arc-government-ambition-and-joint-declaration-between-government-and-local-partners>

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An update on progress with the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal milestones.

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Minutes of Infrastructure Advisory Sub-Group meeting of 18 March 2019.

- Members questioned the numbers of homes delivered and wondered if the "original target" of 6,500 should be used rather than the possible higher figure.
- It was noted that Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) developments are not included within the housing numbers reported.
- On HIF developments, a bid for Didcot Garden Town of some £218 million has been submitted and approved in the Spring Statement. Formal notification is awaited.
 - This was led by OCC and will assist Didcot Garden Town and the associated projects, including A4130 widening, a new Culham – Didcot river crossing and the Clifton Hampden Bypass. Improved and new cycle links are included.
- A bid for A40 Smart Corridor works (some £102 million) has been submitted. This includes dualling of the A40 between Witney and the proposed Eynsham park and ride.
- Work has commenced on the Oxford Rail Connectivity Study which should be reported in September. This will comprise of a strategic overview of the whole of the Oxfordshire Rail Network and Growth potentially within the Oxfordshire Plan 2050; and a detailed study for the Cowley Branch Line.
- Communication fact sheets are being developed.

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An update from the Housing Sub-Group.

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Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Advisory Sub-Group meeting of 18 April 2019.

- Discussed the feedback from the Regulation 18, part 1 consultation (the "Introducing the Oxfordshire Plan 2050" consultation).
 - The bus roadshow and drop in events had worked well although the latter had been quiet outside of work hours.
 - The Plan had been advertised on videos and adverts on buses, train stations and 540 individuals and organisations had responded to the consultation.
 - Most users of the website, viewers of the adverts etc. were believed to be between 45 and 64 years of age.

- Procedural issues, transparency around decisions, scale of growth, built and natural environment, transport etc., were matters commonly raised.
- Future engagement was discussed.
 - Events are planned with Oxford Brookes and University of Oxford students; new means of engaging with schools are being sought, following disappointing success so far.
 - The Plan team will be contacting the economic development teams within each of the District and Town Councils and local Rotary organisations to seek the most effective way to engage with businesses.
 - Liaison with business colleges, local chambers of commerce, District Council parish liaison meetings was discussed.
- The timing of consultation around the development of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (5) and a relationship with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was discussed. Officers reported that initial liaison with OCC had led to a project plan being developed; however, the LTP consultation does not have the same scale of statutory requirements as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. When the Oxfordshire Plan yields spatial options, transport assessment and modelling will be required to test the options.
- It was advised that risks of conflict between the Housing Needs Assessments from the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and those of Local Plans had been taken into consideration.

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An update will be received from the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel.

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An update on the progress of Oxfordshire's Local Plans.

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Updates (verbal) on information relevant to the Growth Board.