

Oxfordshire Growth Board
Thursday 31 March 2016

Agenda Item 5: Public Participation

In accordance with the public participation scheme, requests to address the meeting and questions submitted have been listed in the order submitted.

The time limit for public participation is 30 minutes.

Restrictions on requests to address the Board:

- Must be on a substantive agenda item
- May speak for up to 3 minutes.
- With the leave of the Chairman, any questions of clarification asked of the speaker by Growth Board members should be duly answered.
- There will be no debate on any representations made except to the extent that they are considered when the relevant agenda item is considered later in the meeting.

Restrictions on questions submitted to the Board:

- Questions shall be directly relevant to some matter in which the Growth Board has powers and duties and which directly affects the area of Oxfordshire.
- Submitted questions shall be dealt with in the order of receipt by the host authority.
- The questioner may read his/her question, but the Chairman will do so if the questioner wishes for that, or is not present at the meeting. No supplementary question may be asked.
- The Chairman will answer submitted questions. This may take the form of an oral statement, or may be given subsequently in writing to the questioner. A written copy of the response will be circulated to all Growth Board Members. It is intended the written response will be given within ten working days of the meeting.
- No discussion shall take place on the question or the answer.

Public Participation Requests

- **Peter Jay, Chairman of ROAR, Member of NNGO steering committee**
“Our recent research [attached] suggests that, based on average weekly earnings, a couple of full-time average earners in Oxfordshire could at a maximum potentially ‘afford’ to buy a house costing approximately £260,000. How many of the 100,000 houses that the Growth Board is promoting in Oxfordshire by 2031 will meet this more realistic definition of ‘affordable’, as opposed to the ‘20% off market value’ definition used by developers?”

The SHMA is not being 'promoted' by the Growth Board. It was commissioned by the five District Councils and the County Council to form an up to date evidence base and so inform the development of each Districts' Local Plan, as local planning authorities are required to have as

set out in the NPPF. In terms of calculations of affordability, the Oxfordshire planning authorities follow the set national advice as set out in the Planning Policy Guidance from CLG. This guidance sets the framework for the definitions of what is deemed to be affordable housing and for framing the calculations of the proportion of houses that should be judged to be 'affordable' in each Local Plan.'

- **Pamela Roberts, on behalf of Save Gavray Meadows (Bicester) Campaign**
“The growth planned for Oxfordshire will have a considerable effect on its rural nature, environment and ecology, yet there is a notable absence of a Green Infrastructure Strategy to inform any of the Growth Board’s decision-making. Who is responsible for forming this strategy and when will it be published?”

The post SHMA Strategic Work programme is designed to provide the Growth board with a sustainable scenario for meeting Oxford’s unmet housing need that will be then used to agree the apportionment of unmet housing need across the county, not to decide upon development sites to meet the unmet need. Nonetheless, as part of the consideration of the apportionment the Board will take all relevant matters of sustainability into account including the provision or requirement for green infrastructure.

Subsequently, local planning authorities will consider how to meet their apportionment of unmet need and will once again, as part of their local plan processes examine the requirements for green infrastructure, their decisions on this will be tested through local plan examination.

Finally, both pieces of work will be informed by the county wide green infrastructure action plan being prepared by a partnership of local organisations and led by OxLEP.

- **Helen Marshall, Director, CPRE Oxfordshire**
‘The recent Oxfordshire Green Belt Study found that all of the land with the Oxford Green Belt fulfilled at least one of the purposes of the Green Belt. In particular, the land South of Grenoble Road, the key expansion target for the City Council for at least twenty years, was rated high (very valuable) against the key function of the Green Belt of protecting open countryside from urban sprawl, and scored well on other criteria. CPRE Oxfordshire believes that a housing development at Grenoble Road would be an unjustifiable desecration of the permanence and openness of the Oxford Green Belt. Given that the public has been given no sight of the ‘criteria to test the spatial options’ (Para 11 Strategic Options Assessment Project), can the Growth Board confirm whether or not Grenoble Road is being considered as part of this work and, in light of this, what is its view on Oxford City’s recently stated intention to bring forward an application for 4,000 houses in this area? What faith can the public have in the process if the work is done in secret and yet one of the participants is already pre-judging the outcome?’

The Growth Board, wishing to ensure that its examination of spatial areas of search was comprehensive, agreed that they would examine all possible options for growth throughout the county. This includes an examination of relevant areas within the green belt, such as land adjacent to Grenoble Road and these sites are included within the long list of areas of search being examined.

However as has been stated by the Board on a number of occasions the Programme is not designed to recommend growth options, merely to use a sustainable scenario to underpin decisions about how best to apportion the unmet housing need for Oxford across the other districts. It will be for each individual district planning authority to decide, through a local plan process subject to public scrutiny, how they wish to meet that need and what sites they wish to bring forward. In the case of land adjacent to Grenoble road the relevant planning authority is South Oxfordshire DC and any questions about developer initiatives concerning this land are a matter for them alone and should be addressed to them.

- **Ian Green, Oxford Civic Society**

- **Question referring to Agenda Item – Post SHMA Strategic Work Programme**

1. In general - we are concerned that this important work programme does not appear to include public participation.
2. Specifically –
 - 2.1. Paragraph 11 of the Post SHMA Strategic Work Programme Update confirms that ‘the first major task of the (Strategic Options Assessment) Project was agreement to a set of criteria to test the spatial options. This has been completed and Land Use Consultants are now engaged with examining each of the options.’ Will these criteria be made available to the public?
 - 2.2. Will the reports to be completed in April 2016 under the heading ‘High level sustainability and strategic options assessment’ in the updated Work Programme be made available to the public?
 - 2.3. Will the check and challenge workshop timetabled for April 15th and under the heading ‘High level sustainability and strategic options assessment’ in the updated Work Programme be open to the public?
 - 2.4. Will the critical friend review of the evaluation of strategic options to be finalised in April 2016 and also under the heading ‘High level sustainability and strategic options assessment’ in the updated Work Programme be made available to the public?
(Please note that although Pt 6 of the Post SHMA report says ‘the report from the critical friend (about assessment of Oxford’s unmet need) has been finalised and published on the website of the lead authority’, the document cannot be found on the site).
 - 2.5. Please confirm the public participation arrangements in the course of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan component of the Work Programme
 - 2.6. Please confirm the public participation arrangements of the final reports of the Work Programme currently scheduled to be delivered between July 2016 and early-mid September 2016

All decisions concerning the work of the Growth Board are made in public meetings and subject to scrutiny through the public participation process agreed by the Board. In addition, in common with all local government decisions, they are subject to the scrutiny arrangements of each council.

At the outset of the Post SHMA Strategic Work Programme the Board considered building further public participation into the Programme. However it concluded based on advice from the planning inspector, that this would not be appropriate. This is because the Board are not making decisions about the allocation of housing growth, this is a matter for district planning authorities, all of whom are required by law to subject their local plan processes to rigorous public examination and scrutiny.

The Board recognise however the degree of interest in its work and has committed to publishing all relevant reports on its website which is currently hosted by Cherwell DC. To date the report on the green belt and examination of Oxford's unmet need have been published and all further reports will follow once complete. Officers confirm that all reports are available on the site.

- **John Gordon, on behalf of the Need not Greed Coalition**

"Would the board please confirm that in taking the SEP refresh exercise forward, and in the light of the prime minister's speech at the Paris earth summit when he said "instead of making excuses tomorrow to our children and grandchildren we should be taking action against climate change today" they re-commit to the pledge by Oxfordshire councils to reduce carbon emissions in the county by 50% by 2030."

The refresh of the Strategic Economic Plan, or SEP is being led by OxLEP and questions concerning the process of developing this document should be addressed to them.

Within the sustainable community strategy agreed by the Oxfordshire Partnership in 2008, members of the partnership anticipated a 50% reduction in CO₂, on 2008 levels by 2030. The partnership strategy remains in place. Oxfordshire's local authorities continue to fulfil their individual commitments to delivering the strategy by consistently meeting a 3% year on year reduction in CO₂ emissions on their own estates. Beyond their own activity and as the midpoint of the period covered by the strategy approaches, the Oxfordshire Environmental Partnership plans to review progress on CO₂ reduction across all sectors in summer 2016.

The SEP is being developed by OxLEP and incorporates environmental and sustainability considerations. Contributing to the SEP process, a separate Strategic Environmental Economic Investment Plan has been agreed which outlines specific investment plans including for promoting investment in low carbon energy and the broader green economy.