

QUESTIONS TO THE GROWTH BOARD; 25TH JUNE 2015

1. In light of the Localism Act, and with strong evidence of public concern at the inevitable deterioration in the quality of peoples' lives, how can you justify your policies?

Philip Redpath,
Woodstock

The specific intention of the Growth Board is to manage growth and its consequences for the betterment of those who work, live or visit Oxfordshire. All decisions are taken in public and are fully accountable.

2. With regard to transparency of the Growth Boards' future meetings which are proposed to take place at the Cherwell District Council Chamber every other month between September 2015 and May 2016 inclusive, (a) will the Growth Board be making use of the available live and on-demand webcasting facilities used regularly in that Chamber, and (b) will the Growth Board consider including public participation/comment segments as standard components of its future Agendas?

All future meetings of the Growth Board will be available on a web cast. Regarding public participation the Board has agreed to review its terms of reference and will consider this issue for its September 2015 meeting.

3. In what instances - and to what extent - has the Growth Board facilitated comments and insights directly from town/parish councils, including in relation to projects listed on the Local Growth Fund Projects Update roster?

The long list of possible projects to be considered for promotion through the Local Growth Fund are submitted by a variety of stakeholders across business and local government and it is for them to involve stakeholders as they deem appropriate. This initial long list will be developed further into a shorter list of full business cases for government and at that point it will be determined what additional consultation will be required as part of that development.

4. Why are all the descriptions of projects listed on the Local Growth Fund Projects Update roster comprised only of the proposed benefits without any indication of limitations, risks or potential adverse and/or environmental impacts? Is it not misleading and irresponsible to list and publish respective project totals of many millions of pounds for each of the projects without also noting some accompanying indications of specific constraints and potential limitations likely to be encountered in progressing those projects and expending those funds (ie, in the particular circumstances aren't the document contents likely to be wrongly interpreted as though any concerns have already been dealt with or were non-existent, and that mitigation need not be considered)?

Sharone Parnes
Woodstock

The list of Local Growth Fund projects presented to the Growth Board was an abridged long list for information only. They are supported by initial business cases that pick up the issues you highlight. However the business cases also contain commercially confidential information which cannot be published. 5. Why haven't social and environmental factors been included in the Oxfordshire Growth Board's (OGB) dubious and questionable equation and given as much prominence as that of economic growth? It is the local communities and residents thereof who are being deleteriously affected by decisions made by unelected, unaccountable and uncaring business led and financed quangos like the Oxfordshire Growth Board and its big brother the Local Enterprise Partnership. They claim protection of the environment while advocating for development on Green Belt sites.

Dr. Bob McGurrin - Chairman Woodstock Action Group

All relevant factors will be considered in public session by the Growth Board for any projects that are deemed worthy of promotion to government. To date the list is an initial wish list that will require further work, including consideration of the impacts you describe before they are submitted to Government.

6. Please confirm that you will fully disclose comprehensive documents including the business cases and supporting documents and plans for the Local Growth Fund Projects.

We note that LGF update identifies a large number of projects. It is unclear from the provided papers if these items are already funded, if bids have been submitted but yet to be determined or are embryonic business cases. One example OxLGF3/0033 (Lodge Hill Interchange P&R and Freight Park) is particularly pertinent as Phase 1 (new South facing slips) is thought to be funded, whereas Phase 2 (P&R and Freight Park) is not. Please can you clarify on a project by project, phase by phase basis the bid and funding arrangements?

In relation to this specific project please can you explain in detail how a bid for Phase 2 of this project can be drawn up (and possibly submitted) prior to the OCC decision on the OCC Local Transport Plan being made by the OCC Cabinet on the 21st July? It is understood that the plan consultation responses, analysis and output report are not being made available by officers until the 13th July (delayed from an intended publication date of the 16th June). If this is the case, how can the Growth Board determine the LGF project / bid without certainty of the specific project being approved by the relevant Authority?

Mr Bob Warne - Chairman of Sunningwell Parishioners against Damage to the Environment

The Local Growth Fund projects list is an initial wish list of projects that officers and stakeholders believe could be advantageous for the district. Initial business cases have been drafted but they are not complete. This is because we do not yet know the timing or scale of any government bid round. Once this information is known we can begin the task of finalising the bids that will go forward, complete all the business cases and ensure alignment with the relevant

strategic priorities of the county. Please see the response to question 4 concerning disclosure.

7. Why has the growth vision for Oxfordshire not been subject to public consultation and what plans are there to put this right in the future?

CPRE Oxfordshire

There is at present no one place where the “vision” for growth is set out. Instead it is contained in a variety of strategic documents, for example the Strategic economic Plan or Local Transport Plan, each of which has its own regime of consultation and public participation. However the creation of this cohesive vision is partly what the establishment of the Growth Board is aiming to do by placing responsibility in one publicly accountable body

8. There is support in the rail industry for the re-opening of the Cowley branch line for passengers, with stations adjacent to the various industries, business and science parks in the south east of the City. It would also help operationally by creating a “turn-back” for trains off the East-West line and other routes from the north, reducing train congestion in and around Oxford station. Whilst recognising that extending the use of the Cowley branch for frequent passenger trains would probably require the 4-tracking of the mainline towards Didcot, this will be vital anyway to reduce congestion on the mainline and increase capacity for freight trains, and therefore should not be seen as a reason to prevent the development on the branch. The re-use of the Cowley branch would also allow the development of “cross-City” rail services from stations on the North Cotswold (see below under 2) and Banbury lines. We are concerned that there is no entry for this proposal on the Project List.

Could you please advise what steps the Board can take to have the Cowley branch added to the Project List.

The reopening of the Cowley Branch line is a project that the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership have already highlighted as one they feel would benefit Oxfordshire. The reason it is not part of the LGF bids is because they are time limited and it is not believed that this is an appropriate funding stream to promote this scheme through. Nonetheless the LEP will continue to work with government and local stakeholders on the feasibility of this project and will bring its recommendations to the Growth Board for ratification when appropriate.

9. We welcome project number 16 – Hanborough Station improvements. We share the view that Hanborough has the potential to be considered as a “Witney Parkway”, providing better services for residents of West Oxfordshire, with express connecting bus links from Witney and Carterton. There could also be operational advantages if London-Oxford trains could run up the line to Hanborough (or Charlbury) to reverse, reducing congestion and saving siding spaces around Oxford station. This would also open up the potential for increased service frequencies to Oxford and for a cross-City line (see 1. above) if the

Cowley branch were to be re-opened for passengers, allowing West Oxfordshire residents to have easier access to the new industries, business and science parks to the south-east of the city where many of them are employed. However, it would appear that the proposed site for the extended car park at Hanborough has no direct road access from the A40, vital for the proposed express bus links. The A4095 is already over congested and also does not provide a good link to Carterton.

How is it planned to achieve direct road access to the new Hanborough car park from the A40 for cars and for the proposed express buses from Witney/Carterton? Could you also please advise how the Board can best promote the other rail service benefits from such investments on the North Cotswold Line.

Nigel Rose
Railfuture Thames Valley

The Growth Board will consider the traffic implications of the scheme should it be considered worthy of further development as a business case as outlined in the answer to question 6.

10. Para 7 of the post-SHMA update states that the LUC study will not be a formal review of the Green Belt, just an evidence document for future Local Plans. Does this mean that the green belt will be free from future incursions in the Vale of white horse district until 2031?

Chris Henderson

The future of the green belt in any one district is the sole concern of the relevant district council in its capacity as a planning authority and the question should be directed to them.

11. How many of the GB criteria outlined in the NPPF will a parcel of land have to meet in order to be considered still a valid part of the GB in the current GB study?

Given that a full study of the GB is now underway, what is the view of the Growth Board on interim proposals for removal of land from and/or development of the Green Belt?

Tim Pottle
Chair, Keep Cumnor Green.

The Green Belt study is designed understand how the current green belt relates to the 5 tests of suitability set out in the NPPF but will not form conclusions as to whether a parcel of land is or remains suitable for inclusion in the green belt. Decisions about whether land remains in the green belt requires a local plan review by the relevant planning authority

12. Sunningwell Parish Council notes that the Growth Board is facilitating a bid for Local Growth Funding, for the OCC LTP proposal for a P&R and Freight Park at Lodge Hill

(OXLGF3/0033). Bearing in mind that, in line with NPPF para 88, both of these individual proposals will have to demonstrate an absolute requirement for a Green Belt location for their eventual planning permission to be granted. What detailed evidence has been provided by OCC to satisfy the Growth Board that the specific location of LH proposed for these projects is viable and therefore should receive Growth Board funding support?

What other evidence exists to clearly demonstrate that other non Green Belt sites rather than Lodge Hill, which is in the Green Belt have been formally considered and properly evaluated?

What is the status of the funding for Phase 2 (P&R and Freight Park) at the proposed Lodge Hill site (OxLGF£/0033)?

What is the proposed maximum acreage being considered for the P&R/Freight Park/Any other activity at the proposed Lodge Hill site?

Have any impact/other studies been carried out to assess the effect of the proposed development at Lodge Hill relative to the villages of Sunningwell Parish, all of which are in the Green Belt?

Further, can the Growth Board, as a formal Joint Board, outline the quality assurance process it uses to validate the bid proposals sponsored by the individual constituent authorities?

Joanne Blower
Sunningwell Parish Council

Please see the answer to question 6. Such deliberations will be part of the preparation of a detailed business case should this project be taken forward

13. What process is in place to provide transparent public involvement in shaping the objectives and outcomes of the Growth board.

What is the primary mandate of the Growth Board.

How is / was the growth board democratically established.

What agreed process is in place to exercise challenges and impact on the outcomes and assumptions of the SHMA and LEP, which over time are proven to no longer be valid.

Lewis Owens
Rural Oxfordshire Action Rally

The Oxfordshire Growth Board is a Joint statutory committee of Oxfordshire local authorities whose mandate is set out in the Oxfordshire City Deal document (available on the County Council website) to work collaboratively to deliver the City Deal and other government initiatives that require the councils of Oxfordshire to work collaboratively together. It is established under the

relevant legislation and its terms of reference, membership are all detailed on the relevant page of the County Council website.

The Strategic housing Market assessment is a piece of evidence used to inform planning policy and Local Plans and is tested through the public examination of those plans.

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is a partnership of business and local government designed to drive economic growth in Oxfordshire,. Approval for projects related to that, where they involve local authority partners will come from the Growth Board