

Draft notes of the Oxford Economic Growth Steering Group Meeting

Venue: Oxford Brookes University, John Henry Brookes Building, Gipsy Lane Campus, Headington

Date: 8th June 2016

Attendees:

Cllr Bob Price, Leader Oxford City Council (Chair)

Richard Venables, VSL & Partners and Oxford Business Representative on OxLEP Board (Vice Chair)

Helen Brind, City of Oxford College

Richard Byard, Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)

Dr Phil Clare, University of Oxford

David Edwards, Oxford City Council

Sarah Harrison, Principal Planner, Planning Policy, Oxford City Council

David Hartley, Oxford Brookes University

Sebastian Johnson, Oxford Strategic Partnership

Tom Morris, Oxford City Council

Matt Peachey, Oxford City Council

Jonathan Riggall, Peter Brett Associates

Nick Scott-Ram MBE, Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network

Lynn Shepherd, Executive Chair of Venturefest Oxford

Laurie-Jane Taylor, City Centre Manager

Rachel Williams, Team Leader Planning Policy, Oxford City Council

1. Welcome and apologies

Cllr. Bob Price welcomed everyone. Apologies had been received from Anne Augustine (OxLEP), Hayley Beer-Gamage (Experience Oxfordshire), Simon Cox (Centrica), Richard Rosser (B4 / The InOxford Group), Anthony Mtitimila (Oxford University and OxLEP), Peter Reynolds (City of Oxford College), Nigel Tipple (Oxfordshire LEP) and Dr Stuart Wilkinson (University of Oxford)

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Phil Clare suggested an amendment to the second bullet point on page 3, which referred to a comment made by Professor Ian Walmsley. It should say that the Government's perception of Oxford was now that money ploughed in to research and development projects will positively 'bring benefits.'

Start-Up/Grow on space: Another meeting of the Group will be convened toward the end of July and a summary of the discussion reported back to the Steering Group. This new Group has been a positive initiative with each stakeholder starting to consider their own assets and how they can make the best and most efficient use of their sites and property. For example Oxford Centre for Innovation (OCI) is developing a co-worker offer based on re-using their

space better to release some accommodation for co-worker use. Recently the Oxford Trust has purchased a site in Headington Quarry known as the Stansfield Centre, where a scheme is being developed to create some new Grow-on business space, which will allow some of the larger businesses within the OCI to relocate to this proposed new building and thereby release space in New Road. A planning application will shortly be submitted for this new development in Headington Quarry. The City of Oxford College is looking to make better use of one of their vacant buildings, with OxLEP likely to be the new occupier. The City Council are looking at some spare office space within the Town Hall to be potentially refurbished and let out for start-up businesses. Peter Brett is considering releasing part of their new office space in Cambridge Terrace for spin-off businesses / data / GIS or land development companies. It was suggested that OSI may know of a suitable occupier that would be worth contacting – Phil Clare and Jonathan Riggall to discuss.

Phil Clare reported that Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn, has announced a [\\$1M gift](#) to support entrepreneurship at Saïd Business School and across the University of Oxford. Hoffman's gift is a founding donation for '[The Oxford Foundry](#),' a new initiative driven by Oxford Saïd in collaboration with other departments, where he has also agreed to be the Senior Advisor giving his time and advice to help start and scale new ventures. The Saïd Business School are discussing with Nuffield College the potential for some new space to be provided as part of the redevelopment of the Island site.

Fast Growth Cities Group: On the 21st June the Group will be meeting up with Lord Adonis to discuss future infrastructure and rail requirements for the city. This meeting will include civil servants from DCLG together with Cabinet Office. It is clear that all the cities within the Group do experience similar issues, which to a degree come from their success. As part of these discussions the potential for 'licensed exemptions' will be put forward to recognise that the Group should be allowed more control to resolve some key common issues.

The Commission have asked for comments from the LEP's and stakeholders on East West Rail link from Oxford to Cambridge. It was suggested by the Chair (Cllr. Bob Price) that everyone should make comments focused on their own particular concerns. But the City Council would be looking to comment very much on how these major projects contribute to solving Oxford's traffic / transport problems. It was considered important to find solutions to these local problems in and immediately around Oxford. Richard Byard confirmed that OxLEP will be making out a case with other LEP's supporting the 'macro' position but linking in the LGF programme as a means of addressing key local transport issues.

3. Local Plan 2036

Rachel Williams (Team Leader Planning Policy) provided a presentation on the role and scope of the new Local Plan 2036, which is at the very early stages of preparation. The functions of the Local Plan in terms of setting a vision for the next 20 years and the importance of integrating any existing strategies, such as the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) together with the new Green Plan. The timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan was

fully explained with particular emphasis on the key stages of consultation and submission in December 2018. A copy of the presentation setting out the key questions that were then discussed by the Group will be forwarded with these minutes. The main issues and comments put forward by the Group to the key questions raised for discussion were as follows:

What should be included in the vision for Oxford 2036?

- **Scale of Growth:** This did seem from all the forecasts of housing and job growth to be at an unprecedented level, with present targets for Oxford already having been exceeded. The solutions that need to be developed through the lifetime of this plan should reflect the scale of these challenges and explore radical approaches where possible;
- **Transport:** To seek to accommodate this growth and allow for better movement and connectivity new radical transport solutions should be pursued, with appropriate infrastructure funding. The recent Oxford Parkway Station will provide improved accessibility for the north of the city to the City centre but the benefits of the re-opening of the Cowley branch line to passenger traffic could make a significant difference to the south-east corner of the city, which is home to a number of key employment areas;
- **Innovation strategy:** this should be a key theme as part of the vision for Oxford since it is directly linked to the research and development undertaken by the two Universities and Oxford's 'knowledge economy' which will be key to the future generation of economic growth;
- **'Jewel in the crown':** Oxford should make more of its importance on the global stage and within the UK as a 'power-house' for national economy. The city is a leader in clinical excellence, community health, carbon footprint and developing ideas for using smart technology to solve issues. So the vision does need to be big;
- **Devolution:** The vision needs to recognise the changing political landscape and ensure that the Local Plan has sufficient flexibility to be able to respond to these changes. There will be a need to 'think outside the box';
- **Smart city solutions:** The vision for the future of Oxford should recognise that 'smart city' solutions and projects (technology and data) can help to play a key role in delivering solutions;
- **Private sector:** The solutions to some of the city's problems will inevitably be solved partly through private sector funding and initiatives but the framework provided by the public sector through the Local Plan will be essential in directing future investment. Working with the private sector in better understanding their problems and growth aspirations is vital in setting the vision at a high-level. This dialogue should be continued through to identifying a range of potential solutions;
- **Environment:** It will be important to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the city's environment and its historic legacy. So Oxford's future growth in housing

and jobs does need to be balanced in a way that respects the environment. New residential developments should ensure an appropriate mix of housing that supports balanced communities;

- **Strategic Economic Plan (SEP):** Vision for the Local Plan needs to incorporate the key themes of the SEP namely people, place, enterprise and connectivity;
- **Innovation Districts:** These areas need to be reflected in the Plan particularly for the City centre and Districts to encourage more office space to be provided. These centres should however comprise a range of mixed-uses including residential to promote sustainability and allow people to live and work within the same area;

How should growth be accommodated?

- **Building heights:** There are buildings of historic importance within the City centre that do need to be protected as such the height of new buildings should be respectful. But areas outside the City centre such as Headington could potentially be built out to a greater height and a higher density;
- **Cowley Branch Line:** If this line is opened-up to passenger traffic this could potentially increase the scope for increasing the density of new development which would make the area more accessible to accommodate future job and housing growth;
- **Development constraints:** There should be an open discussion on key existing building constraints, such as building heights and view cones to assess their future relevance for all the areas covered;
- **'Good architecture:'** It is important to ensure that the highest possible standards of architectural design are promoted in Oxford, particularly the City centre;
- **District centres:** Policies controlling the mix of uses on the ground floors of commercial buildings within centres should be much more flexible including a greater mix of uses responding to market demand. Present policies outdated and too heavily reliant on maintaining predominance of retail uses. District centres need to reshape themselves to meet future changing demand, so understanding how they are used both now and in the future is essential;

How do we get Oxford to work successfully?

- **Use of the car:** How people who live and work in the city use the car will have a significant impact on a range of factors such as transport, infrastructure, facilities / services, the environment and existing communities;
- **Influencing behaviour:** Important to explore the 'sticks' and 'carrots' that help to influence people's behaviour, such as travel patterns. There does need to be a fair and balanced approach taken;
- **Impact on new development:** Need to consider the impact that any major new development such as Barton housing scheme has on the older established residential areas;

- **Community Skills Plan:** This should be viewed as a key element of 'infrastructure' that needs to be provided to ensure that the job growth can be maximised for the benefit of the local workforce. Present job market already 'tight' with forecast job growth this will make it all the more difficult for staff to be recruited to fill these new posts. CSP's need to be secured from major developments together with some financial funding that are essential to their delivery;
- **Respond to change:** The Plan should be an 'enabler of growth' and include some built-in flexibility to be able to respond to changing circumstances. Whilst trends and patterns of growth and behaviour can be estimated for the next 5 to 10 years, it is very difficult to anticipate with any certainty what will be required in the 10 years towards the end of the Plan period;
- **Sustainable development:** Is an essential approach for the future provision of housing and jobs which should be as near to Oxford as possible. The development of Witney over recent years has successfully accommodated growth whilst still maintaining the essential character of the town;
- **Public transport:** solutions need to be more radical and be able to accommodate the scale of the growth forecast but should be even more responsive to climate change / pollution. Greater use of electric vehicles;

Timetable

- **Evidence gathering:** underway now
- **Vision consultation:** July / August 2016
- **Preferred options consultation:** June/July 2017
- **Draft Plan consultation:** June/July 2018
- **Submission:** Dec 2018

Action: All companies and businesses represented by the Group were encouraged to take part in the various consultation stages. Rachel offered to provide a 1.2.1 presentation for individual organisations if they wish please contact Sebastian Johnson to arrange.

4. Update from the LEP and SEP refresh

Richard Byard provided an update on the LEP and SEP refresh aided by some slides that will be circulated with these minutes. In brief there is now a new LEP Team in place. Recent figures suggest that the number of jobs has increased which is already running above target of 85,600 new jobs in Oxfordshire by 2031, the majority of this increase is taking place in Oxford. Unemployment has dropped again adding to the tightness of the local labour market, which has prompted the development of a new Skills Strategy. The Strategy will be developed in July and likely to be taken to Skills Board to be signed off in September.

The other strategies currently being developed include: Oxfordshire Green Plan, Innovation Strategy, Strategic Environmental and Economic Investment Plan (SEEIP), Culture, Heritage and Tourism Investment Plan (CCHTIP) and European Structural Investment Fund Plan (ESIF).

The latest round of the Local Growth Fund (LGF3) is currently being prepared by the LEP in consultation with other partners. The deadline for first submission is the 24th June, followed by a presentation to Government in July. At present the bid has 48 projects costing an estimated £400m investment.

The public response from the workshops and publicity on the SEP refresh has now been received and is being summarised, together with responses to comments made. There were a considerable number of responses from the 'Need not Greed' campaign but fewer from the business community.

Action: The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) will be redrafted in response to the public comments received but it does need better engagement with business. It was suggested that it could be a theme for one of the forthcoming Oxford Business Forum events.

5. Business Engagement Updates:

Business in Oxford event: This event held earlier in April this year was widely considered to be a success and thanks to Richard Rosser for organising the event. There was a brief discussion amongst the Group about any suggestions for next year.

Talk of the Town: Laurie Taylor reported that the latest events had been well attended with a good range of businesses being represented.

Oxford Business Forum: The next event will be held on Monday 13th June at the Four Pillars Hotel in Abingdon Road with the theme being 'The future of transport in Oxford'. The take-up so far had been very encouraging with some 86 people accepting invites to listen to a good range of speakers. Anyone from the Group who wished to attend but hasn't already expressed an interest was asked to contact Tom Morris.

6. Venturefest 2016

Lynn Shephard reported that take-up for this event had been very strong but given the size of the premises at Kings Mead Centre in Osney there is still an opportunity for anyone who wished to attend are encouraged to do so and register for the event.

7. Smart Oxford Competition

Sebastian explained that the Smart Oxford Project Board is seeking to raise £50k to launch a Smart Oxford Competition. This will be an open competition for a project that catches the imagination - it needs to be fun; interactive; informative; accessible to all who live, visit and

work in the city; creative; sustainable; relevant and of impact; Smart; and innovative. It will raise the profile of innovation, smart technology, internet of things and data and the benefits this can have to people who live, work and visit the city. We need to engage all elements of our city community to help them to understand the benefits and to engage in identifying and being part of the solutions to the challenges the city faces around, for example, transport, environmental issues, health.

8. Next meetings

The dates for the next meetings in 2016 were confirmed for the following:

- 8th September 2016, 10-12, Long Room, Oxford Town Hall – Centre for Cities Presentation
- 8th December 2016, 10-12, venue to be confirmed