



Planning for Real **NEED** not Speculator **GREED** in Oxfordshire

5 October 2017

The Rt Hon. Sajid Javid MP  
Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

**Re: The Better Oxfordshire Unitary Bid - submitted to the Secretary of State (from Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council) on 3 March 2017**

Need not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO) is a coalition of over 30 community organisations that is campaigning for sustainable, democratically-accountable planning across Oxfordshire.

NNGO is deeply concerned about what we view as the 'forced economic growth agenda' for Oxfordshire, as outlined in the revised SEP, and the disconnect between the provision of housing and employment and the infrastructure to support them.

I am writing on behalf of the coalition, to raise our concerns about the **lack of adequate public consultation** on this proposal prior to submission and to the growth strategy on which it is based.

*Lack of consultation*

The submission (especially 'Other evidence', p.132) gives the impression that the Better Oxfordshire Unitary bid was the subject of widespread consultation and a high degree of public approval - this was not the case.

The public consultation that took place was devoted to the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal, which differs substantially from the more recent submission to the Government.

The Better Oxfordshire pitch was the result of a narrow consultation with 'stakeholders' - such as with local businesses and the Growth Board (itself an unelected body) - not with the general public. It therefore has not been endorsed by the people of Oxfordshire.

**We believe the much-amended Better Oxfordshire proposal should have been subject to proper public consultation and Public Inquiry before submission to Government.**

### *Growth Strategy*

It is self-evident from reading the proposal that its primary purpose is to save money on delivering services and on 'maintaining and **maximising** economic growth' (my emphasis).

NNGO is particularly concerned with this emphasis on maximising growth as there will be little benefit to the general public in Oxfordshire, a county which already has almost full employment and has no need of job creation, and much for them to lose - it is evident from the document that the primacy of the proposed economic growth will trump any real consideration for actual housing need or the environment.

It is clear from the statement below, that only the most important features of Oxfordshire's countryside will survive in the pursuit of 'maximising economic growth' - I quote: '*a single plan will take a strategic view of sensitive landscapes and environmental infrastructure to maintain environmental protection where it is most needed*' (my emphasis).

We are deeply concerned that there has been no public consultation whatever on the intention to transform Oxfordshire - the most rural county in the South East - into an industrial growth hub. The environment is a crucial element of what Oxfordshire has to offer its citizens and greatly benefits all who live and work here.

**We believe a full public consultation on the 'Better Oxfordshire' proposal is a necessity, in particular so that citizens can give their views on whether and/or to what extent, growth should be permitted at the expense of the environment.**

Yours sincerely,

Dr Helena Whall

On behalf of the Need not Greed Oxfordshire coalition



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