

Dear Councillor

Context

I am writing to you on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO) about the Growth Deal and Joint Strategic Spatial Plan (JSSP) coming into place in Oxfordshire and which will as you know potentially have the most significant effect on your authority of any strategy for the next three decades.

NNGO is a coalition of 35 groups from across the county, together representing thousands of community members. In principle, we agree that the JSSP strategy could deliver benefit to the county as a whole and also the district specifically. However, we also believe there are a number of significant implications that need to be appreciated and would welcome your locally elected voice to influence the development of the project in a positive way.

Why the JSSP needs your personal time and interest

Your colleagues on the Growth Board, its Scrutiny and the Sub Advisory Groups, along with your District Officers are obviously providing valuable representation of the District's values and needs and how these can contribute positively to the spatial strategy for the whole of Oxfordshire.

We still have significant concerns though that the challenging timescales, and the need to integrate with and deliver on other government strategies, will prohibit sufficient consideration of issues particularly important to your district, such as rural community needs, heritage and the environment, however strong the individual desire of the individual Growth Board members and officers to do so.

We accept that it is early stages in the project and the public "launch" has yet to happen, but **you are already making decisions that affect the terms of reference, governance and scope of the JSSP, which will shape the outcome and potentially unprecedented scenarios for growth and change that will in turn directly affect future local planning and other decision making in the District.**

For example, JSSP documents currently being approved at District Cabinet meetings include a diagram (see the attachment) that defines how the JSSP and other strategies and Plans are expected to relate to one another. It is concerning that some of these, such as the Local Industrial Strategy and Ox-Cam corridor, are shown to be explicitly integrated with the JSSP yet these have little or no transparency and accountability to local communities, especially rural communities such as those prevalent in the District, and their outcomes are not being determined with opportunity for local voices to be heard, nor that of our elected representatives.

Opportunity

NNGO believes that there are three key principles that must be meaningfully delivered in the JSSP strategy if it is to produce an outcome that is both sustainable and beneficial for the communities we represent:

- A restoration of planning principles, with a proper balancing of economic, environmental and social considerations.
- Local democracy, with planning control in the hands of locally elected and accountable representatives.
- Environment and rural sustainability, ensuring that our landscape, nature and rural communities are at the heart of decision-making.

We would therefore urge you, as someone who is locally elected and accountable, to become familiar with the emerging detail of the JSSP and associated strategies, and actively engage with your local communities about their needs and priorities for these, for communication into the JSSP process via your council representatives and the appropriate project processes.

This is the critical time and opportunity for you to work with and support your council's representatives on the Growth Board and your colleagues who are influencing the development of the JSSP to ensure that your collective expectations for the strategy, its outcomes and its governance and scrutiny, are delivered in practice. This will help to maximise opportunities arising in the JSSP strategy to address affordable housing and infrastructure needs in your district, whilst respecting and enhancing specific local priorities such as rural economy, heritage, environment and tourism.

Proposal

NNGO hopes that the issues raised here are informative and will generate constructive discussion that could support the delivery of a JSSP outcome that is both sustainable and appropriate for your local communities. I would be more than happy to speak with you on any of the information provided in more detail if that would be helpful.

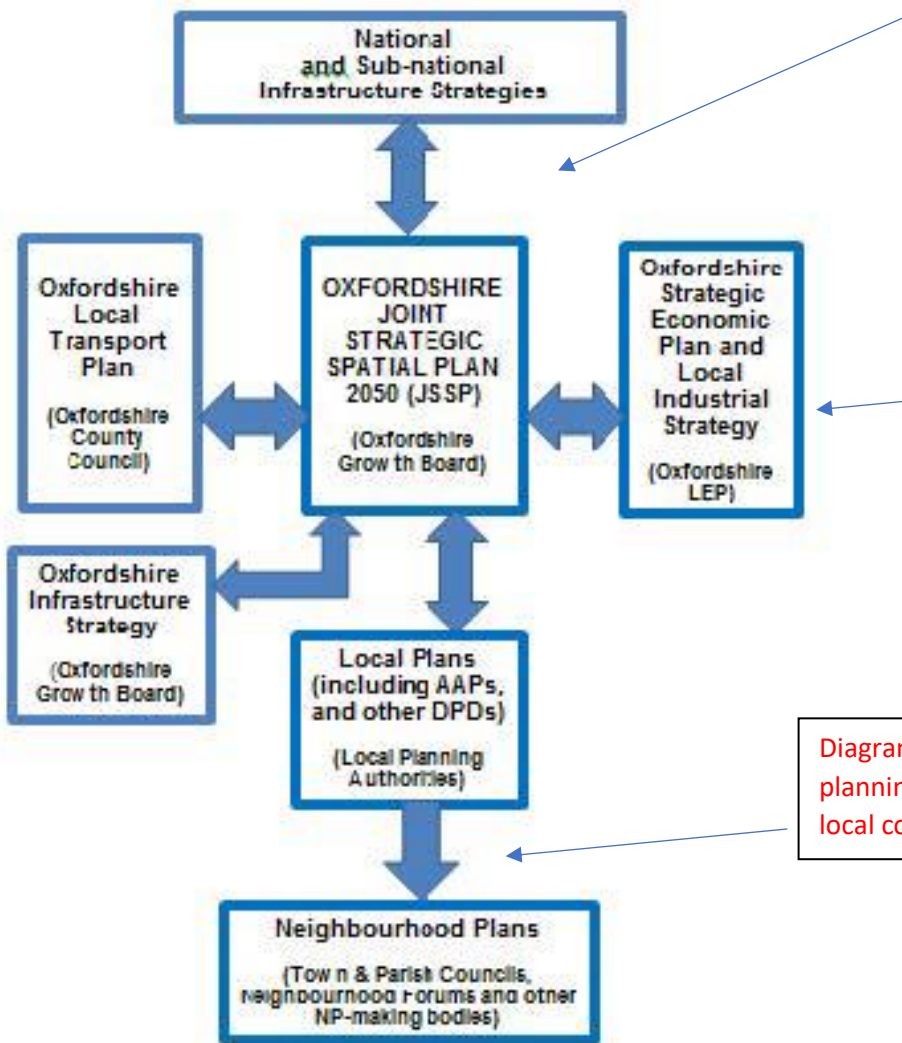
With kind regards

Sue Haywood,
For and on behalf of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire

Relationship between JSSP & Other Plans – extract from p.3 of Draft Statement of Community Involvement

Lack of clarity for OxCam corridor introduces risk to timescales and coherent outcome

No reference to any environmental input. Defra 25 Year Environment Plan should surely feature.



Local Industrial Strategy will not currently be subject to public consultation - risk of pre-judging JSSP outcomes, leading to public concern?

Diagram evidences top-down planning with little/no say for local communities