

Dear Growth Board Member

(cc Growth Board Scrutiny Committee, JSSP Officer Project Board, Rachel Williams)

## Introduction and Context

NNGO is a coalition of 35 groups from across the county, together representing thousands of community members. In principle, we accept that the JSSP strategy could deliver benefit to the county as a whole but – crucially - we believe this is critically dependent on the JSSP scope, structure and processes incorporating:

- 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.

I note that DEFRA presented a number of the same concerns and issues as NNGO at the last Growth Board meeting.

I would like to personally thank all of you who have kindly met me or corresponded with me over the last few months to discuss some of these concerns and to Cllr Hudspeth who generously gave time to speak at our annual NNGO review event in September. All these opportunities for constructive dialogue are very much appreciated and I am grateful to note the obvious personal interest many of you share for the issues we are calling for.

## Challenges and A Proposal

NNGO continues, however, to be concerned that the challenging timescales, and the need to integrate with and deliver on other strategies such as the OxCam expressway and Local Industrial Strategy, will mean that the JSSP will not be able to consider either the wider definition of growth needed for a sustainable outcome nor be able to introduce success criteria that are based on what Oxfordshire needs, and instead will be forced to follow a very rapid growth agenda that is set without mandate and representation from locally elected voice.

The Expressway specifically presents additional challenges on timescales for the JSSP strategy and is itself subject to legal and other challenges, including a call from your Chair for greater clarity. **Any opportunities for the Growth Board to press for a suspension to the JSSP project, or at least an extension to key milestone deadlines, such that valuable public resources are not wasted whilst second-guessing the scale and specific requirements of the Expressway plan would be a welcome step.**

An important additional benefit could arise from this. The Growth Board would have the space and capacity to develop public confidence in the engagement process and refocus the JSSP project to include social and environmental success criteria and thus identify the growth targets it believes the communities in the county actually need and for which it has the natural and other resources to deliver sustainably. This would not only provide the essential evidence that the Expressway and other strategies need from Oxfordshire, but also a more robust framework by which the Growth Board can in turn evaluate what benefits and risks other strategies and plans offer to the county and its own JSSP strategy.

DEFRA, AONB boards and other informed stakeholders could add value in bringing evidence and issues for consideration that are pertinent to this broader sustainability agenda for Oxfordshire actively into the decision-making processes. Your last meeting acknowledged this and **NNGO looks forward to hearing how it might be included as a relevant informed stakeholder in the project structure, as has been suggested could be an option. In particular, I hope that NNGO might be able to contribute valuable voice and appropriate insights about rural community needs and the rural economy of Oxfordshire, both of which are not currently explicit in the scope of the project.**

### **Summary**

I hope that some of these issues are of interest for further consideration by the Growth Board and officers and look forward to hearing from you about opportunities for further constructive dialogue and active involvement within the JSSP project that can be provided for representative(s) from NNGO.

With kind regards,

Sue Haywood,

For and on Behalf of NNGO