

NNGO Local Industrial Strategy - Letter to Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Dear Greg Clark MP

Re: Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy - put local people in charge

Need Not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO) is a coalition of 36 groups from across the county, together representing thousands of community members.

We are concerned that the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy is not being subject to democratic process and ask for your help in changing this situation.

The current strategy is being prepared by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. There is no process for public consultation and it appears will only receive final endorsement from the Oxfordshire Growth Board *after* it has already been approved by Government.

As one of just three pilots across the county, this needs to be a strategy of which we can all be proud. However, local residents are not being given a say.

Please will you ensure that the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy is subject to full public consultation?

Background

We welcome and support the need to plan appropriately for a healthy Oxfordshire economy.

In particular, NNGO supports the idea of a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) which:

- Is led by democratically elected and accountable bodies
- Prioritise local needs, ahead of arbitrary growth targets, and gives adequate consideration to supporting existing local industries including farming and food-production
- Keeps environmental and social considerations at the heart of decision-making such that they are not compromised for economic growth but are recognised as significant objectives in their own right, without which any growth strategy will not be sustainable.
- Is integrated into, but does not dictate, the Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (part of the Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal)
- Is subject to full public consultation.

It is impossible to comment in detail on OxLEP's proposed Local Industrial Strategy as it not yet publicly available. As we understand it, this will remain the case until *after* it has been agreed with government. However, it appears that as planned, the current LIS will fail many, if not all, of the above criteria.

Prioritising local needs

We believe the starting point for the LIS should be identifying what local employment needs are, both now and in the future, and planning accordingly, including taking into account environmental sustainability. This would help to ensure the appropriate co-location of housing and jobs.

Unfortunately, the opposite approach appears to be in place, with exaggerated job targets being proposed that are likely to encourage a considerable in-migration to Oxfordshire and/or a rise in commuting, putting enormous strain on infrastructure and services.

We reject entirely the proposal that the Local Industrial Strategy 'aligns to the vision of the Ox-Cam growth corridor' as the latter has yet to be subject to public consultation or strategic environmental assessment. It proposes levels of growth that would lead to the complete transformation of Oxfordshire's character, undermining the sense of place that we believe OxLEP acknowledges as a key component of our currently successful economy.

Local democracy

We question OxLEP's right to be deciding an economic strategy for Oxfordshire rather than this being led by locally elected and accountable representatives. (We are aware that local council leaders sit on OxLEP's Board, but they are a minority group and anyway should not be acting in this unilateral way.)

In particular, we question how such a strategy can be agreed without full public consultation.

Environment & Rural Sustainability

The need to plan simultaneously for economic, environmental and social gains lies at the heart of sustainable development. It is not clear how, or indeed if, the Local Industrial Strategy has taken this into account. For example, as yet there is no indication of how the requirements of the Government's recent 25 Year Environment Plan will be taken into account, including the 'net gain' principle.

Since the Local Industrial Strategy will be a fundamental plank of the forthcoming Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, we believe it is vital that it is integrated into this process in order to ensure that it provides for a realistic and appropriate approach that will best suit the needs of Oxfordshire's residents. Full public consultation is an essential pre-requisite to a successful outcome.

We are therefore writing to you to ask you to ensure that the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy is subject to full public consultation.

Yours sincerely

Peter Jay

On behalf of Need not Greed Oxfordshire



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

Coalition Secretariat, c/o CPRE Oxfordshire, First Floor, 20 High Street, Watlington, Oxon OX49 5PY.

Website: www.neednotgreedoxon.org.uk