Oxfordshire 2050 Plan - Please support an Independent Peer-Review of the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA)

The Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment is the fundamental evidence document underpinning the growth options as set out in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Its objective is "*To identify a strategic level, long-term, **robust and transparent** methodology for assessing Oxfordshire's housing needs over the period to 2050*" (Page 7, OGNA Phase 1 Report).

The OGNA is fundamental to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 because the number of homes to be built affects every other aspect of the Plan and its sustainability.

After careful review, we have come to the reluctant conclusion that the OGNA is not currently fit for purpose.

This is because:

1. It deviates from the Government's Standard Methodology, using an approach that, unlike the Office for National Statistics (ONS) methodology, has not been peer-reviewed.

2. It arbitrarily increases the figures based on Patient Registrations, which are known to be unreliable (indeed the OGNA even says this itself, before going on to use them anyway).

3. It extrapolates forward recent and unusually high population growth rates, even though ONS predictions are that growth rates will drop by almost 50% by 2050.

4. The middle trajectory for housing need is disingenuously described as 'Business as Usual'. The report itself says that this scenario represents an 'extension of Oxfordshire's recent trend of accelerated growth' and 'this trajectory represents a continuation of Oxfordshire's recent (pre-Covid) economic performance, taking particular account of the robust growth delivered during the recovery from the 2008-09 recession.' 'Accelerated growth' and 'robust growth' following recession are not Business as Usual.

5. The variation across, and impacts on, different Districts, and the resulting implications for designated land such as Green Belt/Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, are almost completely obscured.

6. It relies on figures from the 'Annual Population Survey' for net in-commuting to Oxfordshire. However, ONS says that these figures are not reliable.

7. It relies on an inward rate of migration nearly 300% greater than in the past (increasing to nearly 500% for the 'transformational' growth option).

8. The Plan envisages that the number of dependents per 100 people of working age will increase from 29 to 43, by 2040, and indicates that this issue can be resolved by encouraging more people of working age to move to Oxfordshire. In fact, this merely moves the problem around, to the detriment of other parts of the country.

9. Despite the apparent wealth of information provided, the OGNA lacks transparency in failing to give the final level of population expected in Oxfordshire by 2050.

10. All the flaws are in an upwards direction, suggesting a possibly deliberate attempt to increase the figures.

Our overall conclusion is that the OGNA is sufficiently flawed that it can not reasonably be used as the evidence base for assessing Oxfordshire's housing needs up to 2050. It must therefore be subject to an independent peer-review and we ask you to support this request.

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