

7th October 2021

Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Team,
3rd Floor, Speedwell House,
Speedwell Street,
Oxford,
Oxfordshire, OX1 1NE

Submitted via: info@oxfordshireplan.org

To whom it may concern,

(Regulation 18 Part 2) Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Consultation (October 2021)

We thank you for the invitation to respond and please accept this letter as the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce's representation for the "Oxfordshire Plan 2050" consultation". Our representations are submitted on behalf of our regional, Oxfordshire Chamber.

We have taken the opportunity to review the plan and have consulted with members including the President of the Oxfordshire Chamber. Our response is not only drawn from this engagement, but also that of our own evidence base and local policy priority statement for Oxfordshire. Each year our local Chamber, in consultation with its members and key stakeholders, reviews its priorities and publishes a [local policy priority statement](#).

We commend the collective efforts and hard work of the Oxfordshire authorities to progress the Oxfordshire Plan 2050; we consider it a real step in the right direction towards helping:

- Fulfil the housing and growth Deal plans for delivering affordable housing, infrastructure, and economic growth to the County.
- Meet the future needs of residents and business community alike, placing sustainable development and solutions at the heart of the plan to achieve net-zero future.
- Deliver a strong, integrated, planning strategy that draws on an existing evidence and supporting documents such as those published by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (OxLEP).

We draw your attention to several of the priorities within the Plan:

- Ensure that the area continues to have the appropriate financial injection and operational leadership to manage, maintain and improve services and associated infrastructure.
- Encourage the investment into the OxCam Arc (Growth Corridor) whilst ensuring the Plan and the stakeholders concerned do not miss and fully appreciate the functional economic geography (FEG) that is the turbo-economy of the Thames Valley economy, which does include the opportunity to embrace Swindon.
- Support and invest in sustainable solutions and improving (public transport) connectivity across the County between existing and new housing developments to the nodes of economic activity and locations such as main railway station/s and crucially London Heathrow airport (see below).

Whilst we are not proposing to comment on specific sites we do wish to make the following broad comments on the Plan and its strategic approach:

- We have a strong view on function economic geographies (FEG) that drives the UK's true turbo that is the Thames Valley. Evidentially (e.g., business networks, supply chains, connectivity within/outside the regional boundaries) there is a strong business link across the Thames Valley that has made the region very successful. Oxfordshire has and remains at the heart of this success. Therefore, whilst maximising the opportunities for investment, regeneration, and place-shaping of the OxCam Arc (a 'political' structure), the Plan's vision and focus of decision makers should not be at the detriment, or expense, of the FEG that has long established the Thames Valley (with its proximity to Heathrow and London) as a distinct area to which business naturally business relates.
- The Plan proposes c. 100,000 new homes being built, and 85,000 new jobs being generated. We emphasise the importance of balancing physical and economic growth with the need and demand for sustainable development. Future proofing the County to deliver the sustainable communities and net-zero economy now demanded must be paramount. The timing of this Plan affords Oxfordshire a unique opportunity to be a leader. You may wish to note that our own business discussions, held during two [Windsor Debates](#) in 2021 confirmed the ambition and need for investment that focuses on/generates economic development and improves productivity whilst balancing the needs of a sustainable future and net-zero agenda to delivery.
- A case in question is out of town business parks and their relation, for example, to the concept of the [20-minute town](#). There is validity here in approach which will help deliver against the key themes of the Plan. As 'always' is the balance between delivering mixed use development and not creating future economic, social and environmental challenges / problems. For example, we must ensure homes are suitably connected to public transport (and cycling) networks to reduce environmental impacts, affordable homes are not located in 'less desirable' locations close to commercial uses and investment in schemes that deliver great environments are front ended and not seen as after-thoughts.
- As a driver of economic success, connectivity to London Heathrow must be a central part of the Plan. Investment in appropriate and sustainable transport road (e.g., County's public buses – see separate submission from the Oxford Bus Company) and networks (e.g., Crossrail, the [Western Rail Link to London Heathrow](#) (WRLtH), full electrification of the Great Western Railway line, Oxford central railway station) must be non-negotiables to ensure we improve and maintain the overall connections/connectivity of business to key hubs and drivers of economic growth/prosperity.
- We emphasise the importance of the WRLtH as a deliverable project 'now' not 'by 2050' which the Plan and key stakeholders across Oxfordshire need to reinforce as a key component of delivery the Plan's key themes.
- More broadly, we support proposals that secure a future resilient digital and infrastructure networks must be an essential part of the Plan. What does this mean? We would support the County:
 - And regional transport authorities to adopt and develop long term digital infrastructure strategy/ies for Oxfordshire and its towns which are supported by a pipeline of projects. We encourage 'cross-boundary' approaches where beneficial and appropriate.
 - Develop proposals that encourage sustainable, integrated, multi-modal travel systems, including a roadmap for the rollout, for example, of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and consideration of how/what other sustainable fuels may have during the lifetime of the Plan (i.e., also consider hydrogen).
 - Promote greater awareness of the need to safeguard our future water supply (see: Water Resources South East [WRSE]) and projects, such as a new reservoir, that meet these needs.
- The Plan needs to safeguard the County's employment assets and employment sites (which must not be lost to housing). Where there are potential challengers and challenges, we encourage economic development policy makers to 'be on the front foot', build the evidence base and ensure every effort is made to secure their long-term future. Oxfordshire has some key assets of global significance, especially in life sciences, space and space related technology, advanced engineering, and fusion

energy, which need to be protected and fostered. Oxfordshire's employment sites are instrumental 'vehicles' to ensure the County remains a driver of economic growth, wealth creation and productivity. We commend the work of the OxLEP in building an evidence base (e.g., see: [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)).

We commend our comments to the County Council and look forward to progress on adoption and the exciting implementation phases.

As the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is largely in alignment with our policy priorities, including those of our [Business Manifesto](#) and local policy priorities, we welcome this opportunity to not only be consulted, but to be involved as a key stakeholder moving forward.

Finally, we offer the open invitation to engage our members and update the business community in our membership of progress and implementation.

Yours Sincerely,



Paul Britton
Chief Executive
Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group



Phil Southall
Local President
Oxfordshire Chamber of Commerce

About the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce

The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) is one of the largest accredited Chambers within the UK and the only accredited Chamber of Commerce for the Thames Valley region. The Chamber is a proven centre of excellence for trade and inward investment services.

Representing over 4,000 companies in membership, with an economy estimated in size to be more than £83,848m (2015), it is home to over 115,000 businesses, including: 11 of the world's top 15 tech companies; the No.1 University in the world (Oxford); fastest growing city (Reading) in the UK (EY); once again, the two highest performing cities (Oxford and Reading) according to PwC; the second largest trading city in the UK (Slough); the most productive city per capita (Slough) (Centre for Cities) and the No.1 region, outside of London, for attracting inward investment. In addition, the Thames Valley Chamber credits a range of impressive statistics:

- 295,000 combined number of staff employed by members
- 5000+ number of active trade customers
- £1,692,474,094– the value of international trade enabled in 2018
- Average 150 new trade customers each year
- 178 countries trading with our customers
- 83 sectors represented by members and international trade customers
- Consistently one of the UK's most attractive locations for attracting inward investment
- 65% of international companies setting up or expanding in the Thames Valley have been supported by TVCC.