

25th March 2019

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

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group

150 Edinburgh Avenue ■ Slough

Berkshire ■ SL1 4SS

Tel: +44 (0)1753 870500

Fax: +44 (0)1753 870501

Executive Assistant: Madhu Hafiz: +44 (0)1753 870582

Email: chiefexec@tvchamber.co.uk

www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk

submitted via: info@oxfordshireplan.org

Dear Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Team,

‘Introducing the Oxfordshire Plan 2050’ Consultation (March 2019)

Thank you for the invitation to respond to your consultation documentation, published in February 2019. We have taken the opportunity to review the documents and provide our initial response in this letter. Whilst this response is made generally on behalf of the Thames Valley Group it is specifically on behalf of Oxfordshire and Swindon Chambers of Commerce.

We commend the efforts of the Oxfordshire authorities to commence the production of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, a real step in the right direction towards:

- Setting the framework for fulfilling the Housing and Growth Deal plans for delivering affordable housing, infrastructure and economic growth to the county.
- Strong, joined-up, strategy planning with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership’s (OxLEP) local industrial strategy (LIS).

Our support is rooted in our own policy statements for the County. Each year our local Chamber, in consultation with its members and key stakeholders, reviews its priorities and publishes a local policy priority statement¹. We consider that the voice of business needs to be prioritised within the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (LIS).

We believe strongly in the value and importance of the business voice to help shape and frame important strategic documents of this nature. We therefore invite you to engage the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC), and our membership in its further developing and future delivery moving forward from this time. We draw your attention to several of the priorities within the document, which are of relevance to the Consultation:

- Ensure that the area continues to have the appropriate financial injection and operational leadership to manage, maintain and improve services and associated infrastructure.
- Encourage investment into the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Growth Corridor whilst noting that Swindon also aspires to be part of this grouping
- Support access to new housing developments to ensure good connectivity by public transport.

We would also like to draw your attention to the TVCC’s Business Manifesto 2019². which sets out the opportunities

¹ <https://www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk/policyrepresentation/local-chamber-policy-priorities/>

² <https://www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk/policyrepresentation/business-manifesto/>

and challenges our membership want to champion and which we believe will have the most impact.

We offer our broad support for the approach taken in preparing the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The 'lengthier' timeframe affords the potential to consider and include the strategic vision to plan for the County that can best deliver the key strategic priorities that can help maximise the potential of the County in delivering the future economic and productivity growth projections outlined in the OxLEP LIS.

Nonetheless, we would like to see a stronger focus and emphasis on the following:

- Ensuring a 'better than good', accessible supply of quality employment land in a range of locations across the County. This includes strengthening the key assets (e.g. Harwell, Begbroke) with appropriate investment (in infrastructure).
- Connectivity and Movement: we support the three overarching themes outlined in the topic paper. However, we would encourage (a) a stronger commitment / statement to delivering significant road improvements (i.e. to motorway standard) along the A34 (T) knowledge spine to the M4; (b) more explicit reference to the benefits of infrastructure improvements along the Thames Valley corridor (e.g. Crossrail; Western Rail Link to London Heathrow; 3rd runway expansion; M4 smart motorway) which will have a direct impact on the County and its future. We would also add our strong commitment to re-Trunking/upgrading the A420 to improve connectivity between the Oxford and Swindon, particularly noting the significant economic linkages between the two towns/cities and the overlapping of housing market areas.
- Economic Land Availability: we note the topic paper states, "the Plan is likely to focus on development of significant scale, such as a major infrastructure project ***should the housing need assessment justify it.***" This statement appears to be housing, rather than economy, led. We would encourage a stronger approach to planning for economic development to help delivery and support economic/productivity growth targets.
- Ensuring that the housing developed is situated in sustainable locations, such as urban extensions of Oxford at Grenoble Road and Kidlington / Water Eaton.
- Keeping businesses and residents 'on side' and demonstrating how the growth agenda set forth in the Plan will be inclusive and of benefit to all.
- Support Economic Growth: we cannot object to the two objectives (5 and 6) outlined within the Plan. However, we do want to see, and will be happy to support, the specifics and tangible proposals that develop this policy area in the future – so business really knows, and hopefully can support, what is planned. Included within the OxLEP LIS, an example may include a commitment for the timely delivery of a new Oxford railway station development to unlock economic potential and transform this important gateway.

We would also like to accentuate the importance of and require that transparency on government funding opportunities is present, in order to make the most of every opportunity and for businesses to help shape & benefit from this.

As the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is in alignment with our own local policy priorities, we welcome every opportunity to not only be consulted, but to be involved as a key stakeholder in future work, helping to further shape and frame the proposal. On account of this, we look forward to hearing from you shortly.


Yours sincerely,



Paul Britton
Chief Executive



Phil Southall
President, Oxfordshire Chamber Council



Les Durrant
President, Swindon Chamber Council

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.