



Item

Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (Spatial Framework) Consultation and Arc Environmental Principles

Agreement of Consultation Response and Endorsement of Environment Principles

To:

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport

Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee 28 September 2021

Report by:

Stephen Kelly, Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

Tel: 01223 457009 Email: stephen.kelly@greatercambridgeplanning.org

Wards affected:

All

Non Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to agree Cambridge City Council's response jointly with South Cambridgeshire District Council, to the Government's **Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Consultation** for which the deadline for responses is 12th October. Also for Cambridge City Council to endorse the locally led **Environment Principles** produced by the Arc Leadership Group.

This report sets out, for both the Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Consultation response and the Environmental Principles

the key response points and elements for discussion, to be refined following the meeting and submitted in advance of the consultation deadline.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

1. To agree a joint response with South Cambridgeshire District Council to the Government's Creating a Vision Oxford-Cambridge Arc Consultation as set out in Appendix 1.
2. Endorse the shared Environment Principles at Appendix 2 hereto; and,
3. Support the development of an Arc Environment Strategy which will provide for how the principles can be delivered.

3. Background

Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework Vision Consultation

In February 2021, the government published a policy paper that set out how it intends to develop a Spatial Framework to progress the ambition to support sustainable economic growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc - the area that spans the five ceremonial counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire (see background paper – Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: an introduction to the spatial framework).

In July 2021, government published the current consultation document, Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, that sets out the government's first public consultation on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework (see background papers). The consultation is seeking views to create a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework, and in doing so guide the future growth of the area to 2050. The consultation closes on 12 October 2021.

Government have committed to ensuring sustainability is embedded in the Spatial Framework and are therefore producing a Sustainability Appraisal for which an initial scoping report has been produced. A Scoping Report has been prepared as part of this consultation with an associated Annex (see background papers).

The consultation is on both documents (the Vision and the Scoping Report) and it is intended to respond through the digital engagement platform once the draft response is agreed.

This consultation is being undertaken to inform the approach to the future of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, which has been identified by the government as a key economic priority and to guide the future growth of the area to 2050.

The Spatial Framework will form national planning policy and transport policy for the Arc and local planning and local transport authorities will have to have regard to it when preparing local transport and local development plans and policies and it will be capable of being a material consideration in relevant planning decisions in the area.

The consultation is broken down into eight sections which deal with each element of the spatial framework in high level to be commented upon individually. The main part of the consultation response is primarily a Likert Scale (Agree/Disagree) approach with options to add limited free text comments at the end of each of the eight sections. Our proposed responses to each of these are set out in **Appendix 1**.

The eight sections of the consultation are as follows;

- [1.Introduction: Creating a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#)
- [2.The Environment](#)
- [3.The Economy](#)
- [4.Connectivity and Infrastructure](#)
- [5.Place-making](#)
- [6.Our commitment to engaging communities](#)
- [7.Our commitment to data, evidence and digital tools](#)
- [8.How we will monitor and deliver the Framework](#)

General Comments

In line with broad discussion with partners in the OxCam Arc leadership group comprising representatives from all councils along the Arc geography, officers views are that the Councils should provide a high level joint response which seeks to align our aspirations and commitments for the emerging joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan with the emerging Arc framework and to signpost existing work including the Local Plan themes, policy direction, community engagement, digitisation and evidence base that is already in the public domain.

Although there are many broad principles which are welcomed within the emerging spatial framework vision, the amount and detail of information within the consultation is not sufficient or adequate in order to respond with any detail or certainty and significant further work will be needed in order

for the councils to fully endorse or provide meaningful comment to the emerging Spatial Framework.

It is not proposed to provide comprehensive answers to all questions within the consultation as the detail provided is not of sufficient depth to be able to be commented on with any certainty. However, we have where appropriate highlighted key areas for further work and signposted the consultation to our own emerging evidence in aligned areas which can provide the spatial framework team significant evidence concerning the Greater Cambridge area.

Environment Principles

In 2020 the Arc Leadership Group Environment Working Group agreed to produce a set of Arc-wide Environment Principles. The recommended principles are attached as **Appendix 2**. They are the result of a collaborative piece of work led by a range of partners and stakeholders including:

- Environmental NGOs (who drafted the first document)
- Local Nature Partnerships
- Local Government environment and planning policy representatives (we received responses from c. 20 local authorities, with representation from across the Arc)
- DEFRA
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- MHCLG (planning policy lead)
- University representative from the Universities' Environment Group
- A LEP representative
- Anglian Water
- An Energy Hub representative

The document at **Appendix 2** has been endorsed by the Arc Leadership Group Plenary on 09 March 2021. It is hoped by having developed consensus and support for these principles, including direct engagement with Government, that these will be used to support emerging environmental policies within the emerging Arc Spatial Framework. The agreed principles will be strengthened further after being publicly considered by every partner organisation. This report has been drafted as a standard report to be used by all councils or LEPs in seeking local endorsement.

The principles are not formal policy but rather a shared statement of ambition for the Arc. They are intended to:

- support the position with respect to the environment policies emerging from the Arc Spatial Framework
- allow use of the Arc as a place for DEFRA to test and apply its 25-year plan and funding through pilots and projects
- support Local Planning Authorities with a frame of reference to further develop the principles through Local and Strategic Plans at a local and sub-regional level.

The Arc Leadership Group will next be developing an Arc Environment Strategy which will provide the route map to delivering against these ambitions, including trajectories for meeting ambitious future performance targets.

There are five overarching principles:

- To target net zero carbon at a pan-Arc level by 2040;
- To protect, restore, enhance and create new nature areas and natural capital assets, including nationally and locally designated wildlife sites and priority habitats through the implementation of the spatial planning mitigation hierarchy of avoid, mitigate, compensate and gain;
- To be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development, in line with the ambitions set out in the government's 25-year plan. This will incorporate a systems-based and integrated assessment and implementation approach. To aim to go beyond the minimum legislated requirements for development;
- To ensure that existing and new communities see real benefits from living in the Arc;
- To use natural resources wisely.

General Comments

The environment Principles have been prepared collaboratively with input from all councils across the Arc and had officer and political input through both the environment working group and the Arc plenary and Leadership Group.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

b) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

The council has not prepared an Equality Impact Assessment because it is responding to a government consultation. However, government is expected to prepared an assessment as it develops the draft Oxford-Cambridge Spatial Framework.

d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The Climate Change Rating Tool has not been applied, as the report is responding to an external consultation. However, government has prepared a more detailed Sustainability Appraisal to accompany the vision consultation. There are no climate change or environmental implications directly arising from the report. However the environmental principles are likely to bring positive implications in relation to this area.

e) Procurement Implications

There are no direct procurement implications arising from this report.

f) Community Safety Implications

There are no direct community safety implications arising from this report.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

The council has not undertaken any consultation; this is the government's consultation and it is consulting widely and has shaped the consultation with the specific aim of making it accessible to the widest range of interest.

6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: an introduction to the spatial framework (February 2021) - [Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: an introduction to the spatial framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework)

Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (July 2021) - [Creating a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-a-vision-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc)

Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Sustainability Appraisal scoping report (July 2021): [Sustainability appraisal scoping report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-appraisal-scoping-report)

Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Sustainability Appraisal scoping report - Annex (July 2021): [Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Annex \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – joint response to consultation

Appendix 2: Oxford-Cambridge Arc Environment Principles

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report contact, Paul Frainer, Assistant Director Strategy and Economy
tel: 07711 918993, email: paul.frainer@greatercambridgeplanning.org