

Oxford Cambridge ARC Update

Conference Report

Tuesday, 22nd January 2019

Stadium MK, Milton Keynes

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Foreword



Keith Griffiths,
Managing Director,
Built Environment
Networking

Our conferences in the OxCambs Arc have become the place to be to keep your finger on the pulse if your business is interested in building, developing or growing across the corridor. The purpose of this latest edition was to give an update on all of the topics that were brought to the table at the hugely successful June 2018 edition of the event. Over 500 delegates joined us on that day and a similar number filed into Stadium MK with the aim of touching base with familiar faces and hearing what action needs to be taken to continue momentum.

The afternoon kicked off with a thought-provoking presentation from Helen Wylde, Chief Engagement Officer at Transport Systems Catapult one of the most eminent voices on all things ‘the future’ within the Arc. Helen paid particular attention to the need for developing places for the next two generations rather than the immediate future. Transport Systems Catapult were also our conference partners and played a key role in making it a success.

This time we decided to pioneer a ‘half day’ conference to ensure the agenda focused in on the most promising aspects of development. It was a highlight on one session to

see 7 of the region’s leading land owners and developers take to the stage and deliver rapid fire overviews of their forthcoming schemes and information on how the audience can get involved before taking questions from the floor.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Peter Brett Associates (now part of Stantec) for their input to this report. Their organisation has worked closely with us on several conferences this year, analysing everything our speakers say and adding their own valuable market intelligence into the bargain to give cutting edge insight.

Preparations are well underway for the third edition of this conference which will take place on 20th June 2019 at Stadium MK. Our team is already putting together an impressive line-up of speakers and making sure the content is as fresh as possible so be sure to book your place by visiting our website. Similarly, if you’d like to expose your business to over 500 delegates I would welcome a partnership focused conversation.

**Until next time,
Keith**

keith.griffiths@built-environment-networking.com



Foreword



OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE AND WHY YOU'RE INVOLVED WITH BEN

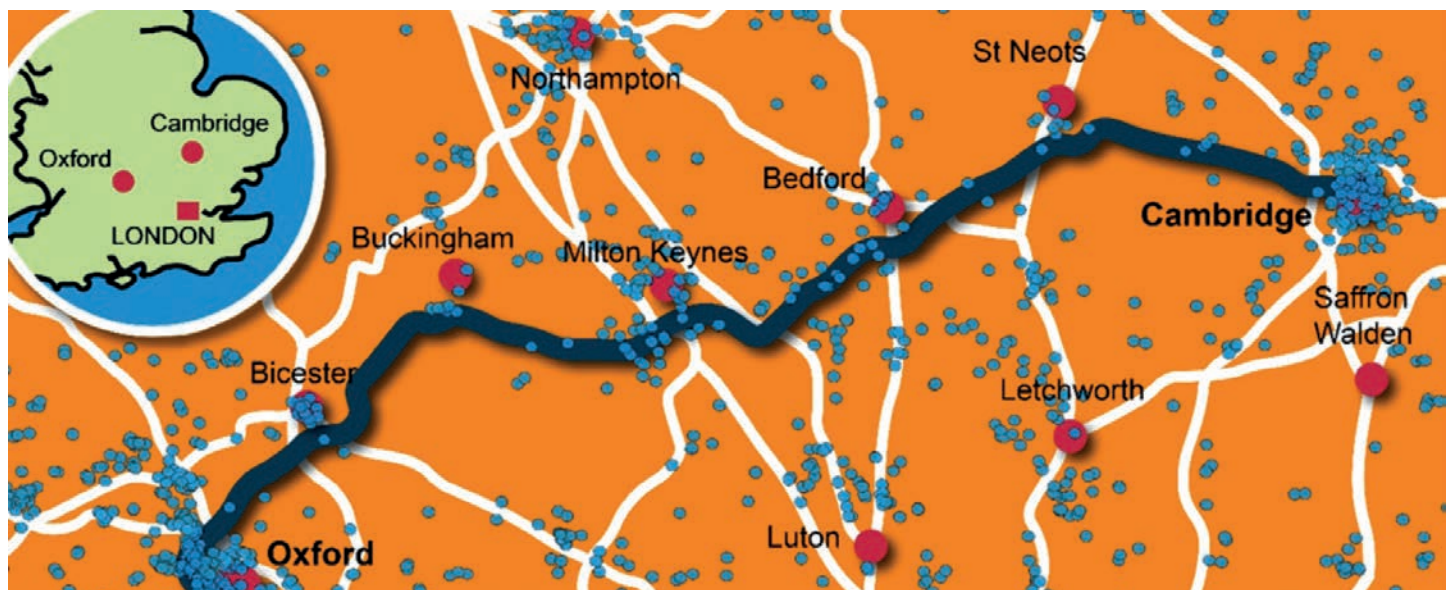
PBA (now part of Stantec) has a vested interest in the CaMkOx proposal, with a strong history and key presence across the Growth Area for decades. With a world class work force based in offices in Oxford, Northampton and

Cambridge, we have been (and still are) involved with some of the largest projects in the region, with successful delivery and value achieved for all stakeholders.



The plan (below) shows an amalgamation of our projects in region over the last 10 years and taking this as a general representation of development, interestingly it shows the

locations that have been bereft of development activity over the years, which the delivery of new strategic infrastructure can help to open up.



We had the chance to hear from some excellent speakers, with broad range of expertise from areas of academia, local

authorities, development and infrastructure. We also had some valuable contributions from a knowledgeable

audience. Areas covered included the need for a proper vision, spatial planning, governance, the scale of opportunity, how it will be delivered, phasing and timings, as well as aspects that are proceeding already. Indeed, there has been some progress since the event was held, with the announcement of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet route selection and also consultation has commenced for the East-West Rail (Bedford to Cambridge) route options. However, it was clear from the contributions that greater clarity and tangible progress is needed.

The importance of the growth area is massive for the economy and general public, with proposals for 1 million new homes, 1.1 million new jobs and £400bn GVA the positive contribution to the UK is huge. The large attendance from industry for this event shows the level of interest this opportunity is attracting. The opportunity is truly transformational - it is clear we can no longer just do what we did. We must change our thinking, moving away from the traditional processes and procedures, instead embracing innovation and positive disruption. We need to explore alternative methods of construction, challenging the usual delivery approach and most importantly how we live, influencing the right behaviours. The focus must be what opportunities are being created for existing residents, new communities and future generations. We need to be flexible, looking at how we deal with this over the long term - what new technologies, innovations and positive disruptions will emerge and how we progress with this in mind.

From the contributing speakers some interesting points were made. Suzanne Malcolm, Director of the Institute of



Economic Development, said; “there is a lot of uncertainty in local communities about the development plans for the corridor.” We need to bring the public along with us and public consultation needs to be improved in order to achieve that.

Professor Sir Peter Gregson, Chief Executive and Vice-chancellor of Cranfield University, told delegates that; “the corridor’s tertiary education institutions had come together with their partners in business and government over the last three to four months.” This is reassuring to hear that such progress is being made as it will need all stakeholders to work together to realise the vision.

We heard from various developers and with schemes like the O&H Marston Valley project (5,000 new homes), Smithson Hill’s Arc agri-tech scheme (which will accommodate up to 4,000 employees on about 1m sq.ft of development), the Urban Splash/PfP Campbell Park project, or Packaged Living scope for high rise development in Milton Keynes, these are all good examples of the opportunities and progress being made.

In summary, there is much enthusiasm and interest across the industry for the growth area proposals. Some good progress is being made, however we need to have some clarity with respect of key aspects such as the vision, funding, governance, where development will happen, and how delivery will be achieved. The next few months are key, public and private sector stakeholders need to come together to influence Government with a clear message and united voice.



OxMKCam Question Time: Latest from the Arc

Panel Members:



Phil Laycock (Chair)

Phil Laycock, Director,
Built Environment Networking
@BENetworking



Naisha Polaine

Director; Department for
International Trade
@tradegovuk



Suzanne Malcolm

Director, Institute of
Economic Development
@theIED

ACADEMIC MOOTS HIGH SPEED INTER VARSITY RAIL TUNNEL

The Chinese would solve the Oxford to Cambridge corridor's transport problems by building a new high-speed railway tunnel between the two varsity cities, the Vice Chancellor at the University of Northampton has said.

Speaking at our Oxford Cambridge Corridor Development Conference Nick Petford said that he was 'struck by the 20th century approach' that characterises thinking about the corridor's development:

THE CHINESE WOULD STICK A TUNNEL BETWEEN OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE AND HAVE A TRAIN RUNNING ALONG IT AT 350KM PER HOUR.

But Phil Graham, Chief Executive of the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), said the historic centres of the two cities limited the scope for such radical changes:

"We can't build new transport in central Oxford or Cambridge, they are beautiful historic assets that are part of what brings people to this corridor."

The answer to the corridor's transport problems is to optimise its existing transport networks instead, he said.

Graham also backed the Government's proposal to appoint a chair from a business background to drive the corridor's development, saying that setting up a new over-arching authority instead to spearhead the corridor's development could be a 'recipe for delay'. He said: "That's incredibly important and the bit that is still missing. Inevitably there are going to be different views and tensions and you need a single point of focus to provide leadership and really drive it forward. I really hope we will see the Government moving forward with that," adding that he welcomed moves by local authorities along the corridor to establish collaborative structures.

He defended the NIA's target for 1m new homes in the corridor by 2050, which has subsequently been adopted by the Government:

There isn't a map with a million homes on it because this is something that is proposed to happen over 40-50 years. If you want to maintain that kind of growth, it should be planned.

The 1m homes figures is based on an estimate of population growth that the corridor will experience if its recent economic success continues together with some population overspill from London and the South East.

He said the planning of the corridor's links had to consider how it links with adjacent areas and 'not treat it as an island', pointing out that one of the reasons for building the Expressway is to relieve pressure on the A34 from Oxford to Didcot. But responding to concerns that the corridor





Cllr Nigel Young

Executive Member for
Regeneration,
Bedfordshire Central Council

[@letstalkcentral](#)



Nick Petford

Vice Chancellor,
University of Northampton

[@UniNorthants](#)



Philip Graham

CEO, National Infrastructure
Commission

[@NatInfraCom](#)



more dwellings higher than if the council delivered over the next 20 years at last year's record rate of housing completions. Over the past five years, the council had delivered 7,200 homes.

Suzanne Malcolm, Director of the Institute of Economic Development, said there is a lot of uncertainty in local communities about the development plans for the corridor:

THEY SEE A NEW MOTORWAY LINKING OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE, DAMAGING THE GREEN BELT AND SENSITIVE LANDSCAPES, NOT THE OPPORTUNITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

But she said that the ability of local authorities to shape that growth is limited by the one third cut that their economic development departments have suffered in recent years.

Naisha Polaine, Director at the Department for International Trade, said that while there is 'lots of appetite' from China to invest in the UK, her team is having trouble finding projects to include in its soon to be published portfolio for the Oxford-Cambridge corridor.

The debate followed an opening keynote speech by Helen Wylde, Chief Engagement Officer at the MK based Transport Systems Catapult, in which she outlined her vision of how the corridor could be transformed within the next 20 years. "She said:

"WHEN YOU ARE PUTTING IN MOTORWAY YOU ARE BUILDING IT FOR AT LEAST 100 YEARS. WHATEVER WE DO IN OXFORD-CAMBRIDGE, WE ARE DOING 100 YEARS OUT."

should be widened out to incorporate areas to the east and west like East Anglian and Swindon, the NIC Chief Executive said:

Building a shared vision for a region is challenging and the further you expand the more stakeholders you need to involve.

The NIC will put pressure on the Government to make sure that the national infrastructure strategy is robust when it is published later this year: "Our job is to keep up pressure on the government to make sure that strategy is a set of clear edged proposals of what is to be done rather than a woolly statement of principles and identification of issues that the government will think about."

Cllr Nigel Young, Executive Member for Regeneration at Central Bedfordshire Council, warned delegates that the Government's new standard methodology for assessing local planning authorities' housing needs will require the borough's record annual completion rate to be to exceeded every year for the next two decades. He said the methodology stipulated that Central Bedfordshire should deliver 2,553 homes per annum, which works out at 51,060 over the next 20 years. This rate of output is 9,000

Sustainable Developments



**Ron Henry
(Chair)**

Director,
Midlands & East,
PBA now part of
Stantec

[@PeterBrettLLP](#)



Mark Latham

Regeneration Director,
Urban Splash

[@urban_splash](#)



Pippa Cheetham

Planning Director,
Varsity Town Planning

[@VarsityTownPlan](#)



Emma Fletcher

Managing Director,
SmithsonHill

[@SmithsonHill](#)

[@ARCCambs](#)

MAJOR UPGRADE PLANNED FOR MK STATION SQUARE

The sprawling square in front of Milton Keynes Central railway station is being eyed up for a major upgrade.

Speaking at our Oxford Cambridge Corridor Development Conference Maria Curran, Placemaking Executive at the Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP), said that Station Square has been identified as a 'priority project'.

Whilst the square already contains a multi-modal interchange, it has 'massive capacity' to handle more passengers, she said, pointing out that it serves fewer passengers than that outside Cambridge station even though it's six times bigger.

As well as improving the multi-modal interchange, the square project aims to create a 'positive impression' of Milton Keynes by creating a new gateway for the new town.

The corporation is planning a fresh round of consultation before Easter, which will inform a design and development brief for the square: "This creates a challenge about how to

balance the new town heritage with creating a place that is fit for purpose and enables and embraces future change."

The development of the station square is part of a wider effort to reduce the car's domination of central Milton Keynes, where the corporation owns about 90-ha. Curran said: "The centre of Milton Keynes is all about links and not about the place."

The MKDP initiatives include creating a new 'social heart' for activities in the town at Midsummer Boulevard Place with Milton Keynes Council. In addition, the partnership is supporting the development of a large mixed-use office and private rented sector scheme, which will be centred around a new public square.

Outside of central Milton Keynes, she said that the partnership has secured planning permission at Kents Hill for 148 new homes and a 49-bed private hospital boasting four operating theatres.

A £14m state-of-the-art emergency blue light centre is due to be completed in the summer, which will in turn free up public land for other uses.

Ed Ellerington, Chief Executive Officer of Packaged Living, said scope exists for high rise development in Milton Keynes, but the town must encourage younger people to work in the surrounding corridor's emerging tech economy by providing a more exciting mix of homes and amenities, he said:

IF YOU GO OUT ON A THURSDAY IN CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES IT'S NOT REALLY HAPPENING. THEY DON'T WANT TO LIVE SOMEWHERE THAT IS DEAD.





Sir Peter Gregson

Chief Executive & Vice Chancellor, Cranfield University
[@CranfieldUni](https://twitter.com/CranfieldUni)



Ed Ellerington

Managing Director, Packaged Living
[@PackagedLiving](https://twitter.com/PackagedLiving)



Maria Curran

Development Executive Placemaking, Milton Keynes Development Partnership



Ricky Darlow

Director, Darlow Homes
[@DarlowHomes](https://twitter.com/DarlowHomes)



Packaged Living has identified Milton Keynes as one of the first towns and cities to roll out its build to rent portfolio, with their first region scheme containing 294 apartments that range in size from one to three bedrooms – due to be available in 2021.

The development also boasts a 240sq m restaurant, 967sqm of rooftop gardens and external amenity space as well as 740 sq m of internal amenity space including a residents dining room, gym, flexible community space, a library and guest suites

Mark Latham, Regeneration Director at Urban Splash, agreed with Ellerington that MK's distinctive new town pattern of development could be intensified: "In Milton Keynes there is a heritage and a form of urban development that is respected and loved by some people but that can be changed to create an urban living that will attract young dynamic employees. People in knowledge industries like to get together. They don't want to go home to their suburban homes, they need the opportunity to mingle.

He added: "It (MK) needs some intensifying but done in way that is sympathetic to the heritage of Milton Keynes and what is valuable about the place."

Latham said that Urban Splash would roll out its range of new home types at Campbell Park which it is developing with the Places for People housing group. The company is currently developing its masterplan for the site with a view to submit applications for outline and detailed consent over the next year.

Emma Fletcher, Managing Director of SmithsonHill, warned that the growth of the area surrounding Cambridge is being held back by antiquated power infrastructure:

IN THE CAMBRIDGE AREA WE HAVE A WORLD WAR 2 INFRASTRUCTURE PUT IN FOR AIRBASES THAT HAS BEEN SWEATED TO COMPLETE DEATH. THEY (UTILITIES) DON'T HAVE TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY TO ANYTHING THAT IS SPECULATIVE. UNTIL YOU HAVE A TENANT, THEY ARE NOT LEGALLY OBLIGED TO SUPPLY ELECTRICITY TO THAT BUILDING.

Sustainable Developments cont.

As a result, power companies are not putting in electricity infrastructure upfront, putting the onus ‘very much’ on developers or public bodies to deliver it instead, she said: “We need to get to grips with it quickly.”

Fletcher also called for the cycles of local plan preparation to become more responsive to innovative sectors like agri-tech sector, which had not even existed five years ago:

WE NEED TO BE QUICKER ABOUT HOW WE PICK UP THESE NEW THINGS.

She said that SmithsonHill’s Arc agri-tech scheme, which will accommodate up to 4,000 employees on about 1m sq ft-of development, would have its own new electricity sub-station.

She added that the development will accommodate natural features like existing hedgerows and create significant landscape buffers with existing communities.

Pippa Cheetham, Planning Director at Varsity Town Planning, warned delegates that planning hurdles risk the delivery of the corridor.

Master developer O&H is planning 5,000 homes in a series of interlinked villages, which are separated from each other and existing settlements by a string of parks, in Marston Valley.

The development will be built along a 6km stretch of navigable waterway, which will eventually link up the

Grand Union canal and the River Ouse and create a sustainable urban drainage system to mitigate flood risks.

And she said the 120 has of tree cover, which will be either planted in the development areas or forming new woodland parks, complies with the local planning authority Central Bedfordshire’s requirement that 30% of the site should be woodland.

But despite tailoring the mix of homes to Central Bedfordshire’s assessment of local housing needs, the development still faced heavy opposition from existing residents, Cheetham said:

EVEN WITH THIS BESPOKE APPROACH TO HOUSING DELIVERY, WE ARE STRUGGLING TO MOVE THE RHETORIC.

Pointing out that the corridor needs another 195 similar scale developments to achieve the stated ambition of building 1m new homes by 2050, she said: “Navigating a planning application through the dynamic and evolving planning system is never straightforward. On paper we have a scheme that ticks so many boxes and O&H have a proven track record but we’ve not been able to convert the locals: the potential to delay delivery is great.”

Professor Sir Peter Gregson, Chief Executive and Vice-chancellor of Cranfield University, told delegates that the corridor’s tertiary education institutions had come together with their partners in business and government over the last three to four months.



Perspective on development requirements



now part of



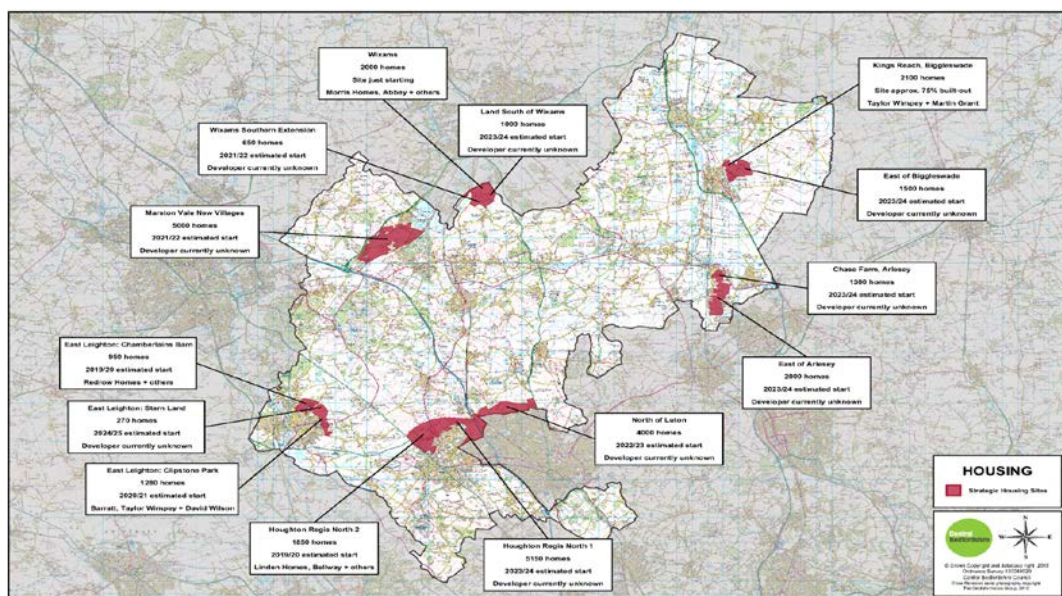
Stantec

USE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AS DEVELOPMENT ANCHOR

There is no question that the Cambridge – Milton Keynes - Oxford Growth Area offers a huge opportunity for the UK, now and for many generations to come. With proposal for new housing, employment and infrastructure planned in an area that has already been hugely successful, the future economic benefits are immense. Whilst figures for the Gross Value Added vary, the latest estimate is in the order of £400 billion, coupled with the target of 1 million new homes provides an indication for the scale of the opportunity.

Building on the strong foundation of education and research at Cambridge and Oxford, as well as Bedford, Buckingham and Milton Keynes, the opportunity to create and attract even more world class businesses is clear.

Developers will have a critical role in creating the new places where we are going work and live, in addition to enhancing life around our existing communities. Following Government announcements and dedicated work by the National Infrastructure Commission, there is now a great deal of enthusiasm across the industry in respect of what the growth area opportunities offer, now need to capitalise on this momentum and ensure there is confidence for the market, investors and stakeholders.



This is why a clear plan is needed around areas such as: spatial planning, infrastructure delivery, phasing, development types, placemaking, governance and funding. It will need a truly collaborative approach between the public and private sector, with developers working with local authorities to see this vision delivered in reality.

Infrastructure and Economic Growth

Panel Members:



Adrian Hames (Chair)

Director,
Head of Transport Planning,
WSP

[@WSP_UK](#)



Martin Tugwell

Programme Director,
England's Economic
Heartland

[@EconomicHeart](#)



Emma Fletcher

Chair, Community Land
Trust and Council Member,
Cambridge Forum for the
Construction Industry

[@SmithsonHill](#)
[@ARCCambs](#)

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT BODY PREPARES SPENDING REVIEW BID

The Oxford-Cambridge corridor's transport body will present the Treasury with an investment prospectus, its Chief Officer has revealed

Martin Tugwell, Programme Director of the England's Economic Heartland (EEH) partnership of businesses and councils, told the delegates at the Oxford Cambridge Corridor Development conference that the prospectus is designed to make the case for funds in the upcoming pan-government spending review: He said:

WE WILL BE PRODUCING AN INVESTMENT PROSPECTUS FOR THE SPENDING REVIEW WHICH IS AIMED AT INVESTORS AND WILL TREAT HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY AS ONE OF OUR INVESTORS BUT NOT THE ONLY ONE. WE NEED TO SET OUT WHAT INVESTMENT WILL DELIVER IN TERMS OF LEVEL OF SERVICE AND WHAT WILL UNLOCK NEW JOBS AND HOUSES.

He also urged the Government to show local people that it is committed to the corridor by producing a National Planning Statement (NPS) for the area: "If you are asking local communities and politicians to stand up and plan for growth, they need to know that Whitehall will be behind them in the future. The NPS is a powerful statement of intent of local and national policies."



And it would reassure long term investors, like pension funds, which are looking for returns over a 30 to 40 -year timeframe, he said: "The NPS allows us to join things up and accelerate delivery, where you start to gain confidence of elected politicians and communities that investment will be there when it's needed not after the event. We won't deliver all of the infrastructure we need if we just look to the public sector, it never has."

But Tugwell expressed frustration that the Government had not approved funding for two early road schemes EEH had identified even though it had given the green light to those prioritised by the equivalent regional transport bodies for the north of England and the midlands: "The longer that disconnect is between putting proposals forward and the investment decisions being made, we will lose the confidence of our local communities and business that ambitions are not being backed up with investment."

And he said that delays, like that affecting the A428 upgrade between Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbett, undermined confidence in delivery of the wider corridor: "If it's meant to be delivered in 2020 but we don't until 2023, the message to investors and individuals is that we can't deliver."



Rupert Waters

Head of Economic Research, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP

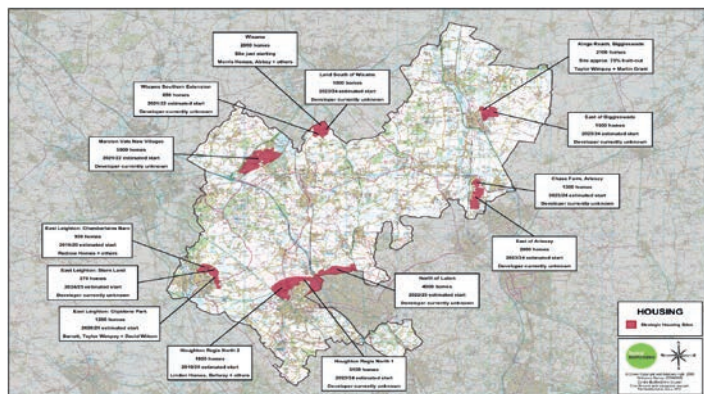
[@BTVLEP](#)

And adopting a programme approach would give infrastructure providers the confidence to train the workforce needed to deliver the corridor, he said, comparing the way the water industry delivers its five-year programmes with the more ‘stop and start’ approach to delivering transport projects. The sequencing of the corridor’s projects should be looked at ‘carefully’.

The construction of the next phase of the east--west rail, which he described as a ‘game changer’ because it will connect Oxford with Milton Keynes and Aylesbury, is due to commence the end of the year.

But he added that decisions about the route of the planned expressway road between Oxford and Cambridge should not be taken in isolation, adding that a similar approach will be taken to decide on the transport needs of the area to the east of M1 and central Milton Keynes:

IF WE WANT TO HIT THE MARK IN TERMS OF DELIVERING ON ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES, WE MUST NOT UNDERMINE THE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT PATTERNS WE HAVE BUILT UP THROUGH EAST-WEST RAIL.



But Tugwell said that competition rules get in the way of efforts to create joined up public transport services by preventing the same companies from running both bus and rail services at a local level: “If you are bidding for rail franchises you can put in your bid about how you will integrate local buses because the CMA is worried about monopolies.”



Christine Doel, Director of Economic Development consultancy SQW, agreed with Tugwell that transport decisions need to be made in a systematic way but that scale matters too.

Emma Fletcher, Council Member of the Cambridge Forum for the Construction Industry, said that the key is to make the city’s public transport system ‘simple to use and easy to understand.’ She said:

IN ONE OF THE SMARTEST CITIES IN THE WORLD, WE CAN’T DELIVER THIS STUFF, WE’VE GOT TO SORT THAT OUT BEFORE STUFFING MORE PEOPLE INTO THE SYSTEM.

Thought leadership on infrastructure

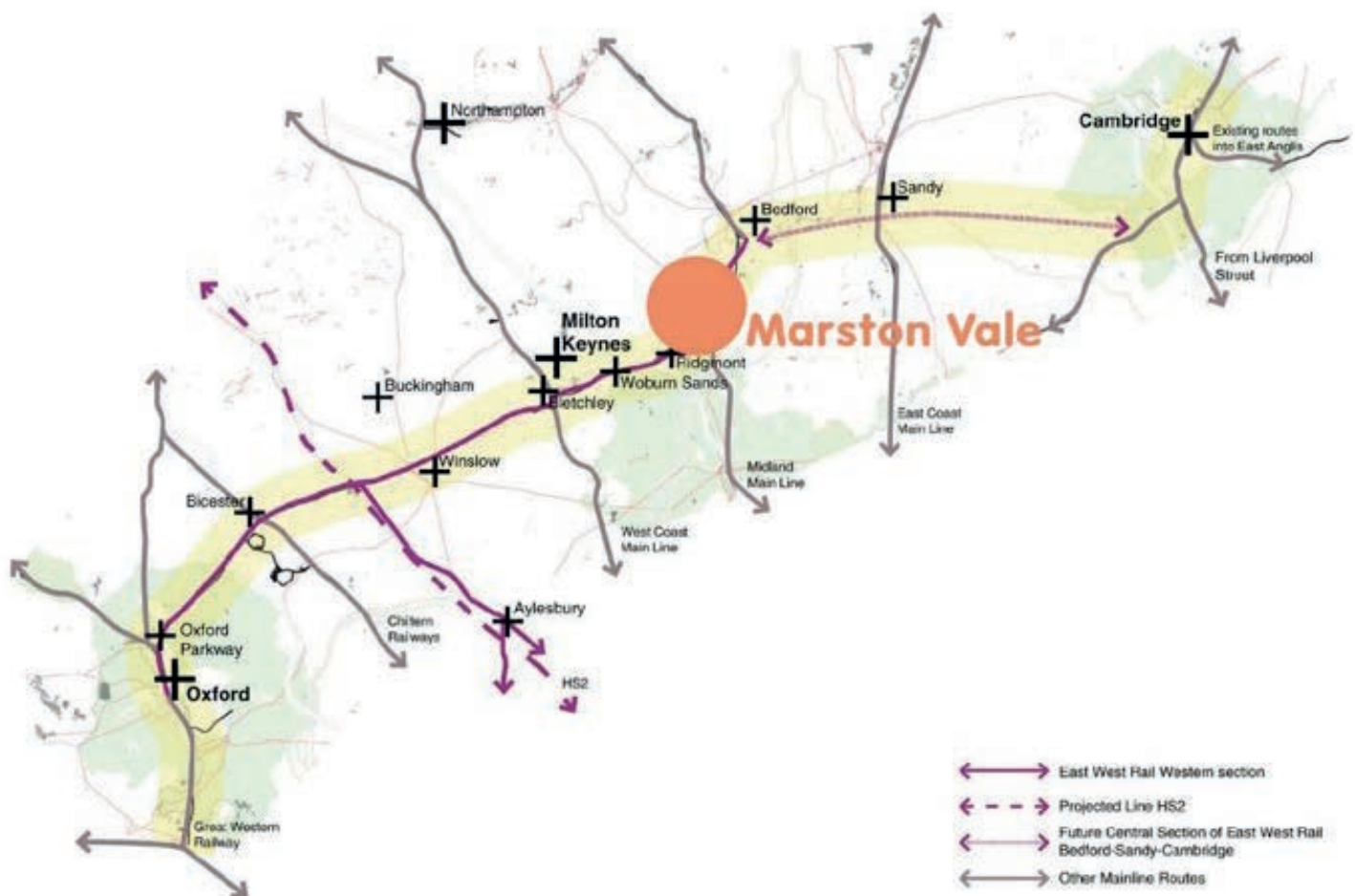


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BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SOCIAL VALUES



Over the last 10 to 15 years, the term infrastructure has become common lexicon amongst the general public and with this is the appreciation of the economic benefit infrastructure creates. Indeed, business cases are continually evolving, now assessing not only the economic and cost benefit, but the Social Value too. Coherent infrastructure delivery within the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford Growth Area is critical its success. Clarity on timelines for delivery of infrastructure and how it will be funded is required, this will provide confidence within the industry and allow for long-term planning to be carried out efficiently. Whilst we are familiar with plans to the strategic rail and road proposal (known as the East – West Rail and Expressway respectively) there is much more consideration required for a holistic infrastructure approach across the area. Some of the key infrastructure areas include; understanding movement

corridors, origin/destination patterns, enabling local movements, linkage to the strategic infrastructure (rail & road), detail of ‘Last Mile connections’, Public Transport (e.g. Buses), pedestrian and cycle facilities, ‘blue and green infrastructure’ (e.g. water and landscape), community infrastructure, utilities and digital infrastructure. Where appropriate, we need to understand how this infrastructure interacts, communicates and operates to meet our needs – hence holistic infrastructure. The proposals for a Digital Twincan help realise this need. We also need to consider how we will use our infrastructure in the future and in doing so need to understand not only future technologies (e.g. fuel types, modes of travel, travel trends, etc) but also how we will work and live, hence behaviour change is key, having a flexible system that can respond to and embrace innovation and positive disruptions.

Vision from the leadership

EXCLUSIVE INSIGHT: SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND THE ARC WITH COUNCILLOR BRIDGET SMITH

Cambridgeshire is a key strategic area for the UK. With a thriving University, an economy which is outperforming the wider UK marketplace and devolved powers enabling the region to acquire more funds and investment into the region it's clear why it's an attractive region to live, work and visit.

The proposed infrastructure set for the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge corridor will only accelerate the economic growth opportunities within the region, but that also leads to many challenges as well as opportunities which all need to be tackled and maximised. To do that the public and private sector will need to work in harmony to ensure the phenomenal 'once in a generation' growth will have positive impacts for communities within the region.

One of those involved in the making the corridor a success will be Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Built Environment Networking team sat down with Bridget to discuss the key issues that need to be addressed going forward:

South Cambridgeshire is consistently recognised as one of the top places to live and work in the country due to your thriving economy and quality of life. How are you managing to strike the right balance between growth and conservation in such a unique area?

Bridget: South Cambridgeshire is a fantastic place to live, work and learn. The thriving local economy and jobs being created here means we have a big challenge that most areas up and down the country would be envious of. However, it is a challenge we must address as it is vital to ensuring our communities continue to enjoy an excellent quality of life. One of the biggest issues for us is the cost of housing and delivering housing that is affordable to live in is one of our top priorities. This is not just the costs of buying or renting a home, which is very high here, but also include the costs of all your bills, so you have enough money left to have fun. We also know that where you live has a big impact on your health and wellbeing. Although the growth in the area means we need to deliver new homes, we don't want to provide housing estates. Instead



Vision from the leadership

we need to build real communities and are currently working with the NHS at Northstowe on how the town, and other developments, can be designed to help people live well for longer. It's not difficult to embed natural capital into planning. It just needs to be done well. We plan to do this by setting ambitious design standards for energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, sustainable travel, biodiversity and air quality.

You've recently adopted a new South Cambridgeshire Local Plan – tell us a little more about what the primary objectives and outcomes of the Local Plan are?

Bridget: The Liberal Democrat administration took control of the Council in May as people voted for change. The Local Plan was well advanced at that stage and we had a choice of starting again and subjecting our villages to years of potentially damaging and unplanned planning application or agreeing the plan and working our hardest to deliver it in the best way we can. The agreed plan will protect the green belt around Cambridge and focus the bulk of new homes at a new town north of Waterbeach, a new village at Bourn Airfield and to continue to deliver on plans at existing growth sites, such as Northstowe. Our primary objective now is to ensure that our existing communities, especially those living nearest to areas of growth, are at the heart of developing plans. Their views are really important to us and we need to make sure that their voice is heard. One of our other big priorities in the climate and environment and we have a fantastic opportunity to ensure that development of any kind has a positive legacy.

A new town (this is north of) Waterbeach and Bourn Airfield are just two of the huge schemes set to drive the delivery of new homes across the region. How are

you approaching these major new community developments to ensure they deliver the necessary schools, health facilities and more, alongside social mobility

Rural areas such as Cambridgeshire are historically under funded by Government when compared to cities. In fact, a recent cross-party Government report shows places like Cambridgeshire receive around £300 per person less funding each year for vital services when compared to London. This means we have to work even harder to make sure every penny available from a new town, such as Northstowe, delivers on the priorities for local people. There is no doubt this often means there is a delicate balancing act for us to work with developers on, but I am really pleased that we are learning the lessons of the past and making sure the heart of communities, such as hubs where people can meet and socialise as well as schools, are delivered as early as possible. Let's not forget that years of work takes place with service providers, such as the NHS, to make sure we are planning for their needs, and the new communities they will serve, from the very beginning.



To match the required need for housing within Cambridgeshire and the wider regions there is the need to accelerate the delivery of building. What role does Council Housing play in delivering much needed homes?

Bridget: We are looking at all the recommendations of the Letwin report to speed up the delivery of housing for our communities. We shouldn't underestimate the role that



Council housing has as we already have plans to double the number of houses we are currently building each year. In our area you can be on a higher than average salary and still have little chance of getting on the housing ladder or afford to pay a private rent. Until now we have been working with our hands tied by Government on building more Council homes as we have not been able to borrow money to deliver them. We are pleased the Government has listened and recently announced that they will remove the borrowing cap that was in place.



With the amount of development you have planned across the region there is obviously a lot of opportunity for investors, developers and others within the built environment to work alongside you. How do companies interested in working alongside South Cambridgeshire Council get involved and what values and ethics must those companies have?

Bridget: We want to put the heart into South Cambridgeshire and will welcome with open arms anyone who shares this vision. Since taking control of the Council in May we have been meeting with lots of developers and exploring opportunities on how we can support the right type of development in the right places. We believe all developers can play an important role in this. We are particularly looking for opportunities to work with small and medium sized house builders to make their contribution more significant in South Cambridgeshire.



Building on the success of this event the Oxford Cambridge Arc conference in June 2019 is set to bring together senior business professionals from both the public and private sector to discuss the key topics to maximise opportunities to grow the regional economy. Why is the event such an important date in the calendar?

Bridget: Delivering successful growth cannot be done by anyone in isolation. We are a new administration and we will be doing things differently and welcome the opportunity to share our vision on how we see the future with developers. Everyone needs to work together for the good of people living in the area now and in the future.



Rail to knit region together

OX-CAMS NEXT PHASE OF RAIL WORK MAY START BY AUTUMN

Work on the next stage of the new railway linking Oxford and Cambridge could begin as early as next autumn, the Government has signalled.

Martin Tugwell, Programme Director of the England's Economic Heartland (EEH) partnership of businesses and councils in the Oxford-Cambridge ARC, told delegates at our conference that the public inquiry into the Transport and Works Act application for the next stage of the east-west line is due to take place in February.

Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport, has made a commitment that work on the next stage of east-west railway should begin next autumn 'if possible'.

Tugwell also told delegates that the National Infrastructure Commission's recommendation that a national policy statement should be drawn up for the Oxford-Cambridge ARC is gaining traction in government – and he welcomed the reaffirmation of support for both the east-west rail link and road infrastructure in the recent Budget.

The major improvements planned to the corridor's transport infrastructure would transform the economy and housing market of the area, Tugwell said:

WHEN YOU CAN TRAVEL FROM OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE BY TRAIN IN AN HOUR AND TEN MINUTES, IT'S NO LONGER FIVE OR SIX HOUSING MARKETS, IT'S ONE HOUSING MARKET AND ONE FUNCTIONAL ECONOMIC AREA.

But when designing the Oxford-Cambridge ARC's new transport infrastructure, future technological developments had to be factored in, he said: "We need to recognise the changes in way we are working. These big infrastructure projects won't be delivered until early 2030s: if you think back ten years ago, it was pre-iPhone and apps. Longer term, we have to think about changes in lifestyles and workplaces. We have to be bold about adopting new ideas and opportunities: we won't double or treble the economy if we treat this as business as usual."

He said that to support the ARC's planning process, a regional database has been created that houses for the first time in one place all of the area's socio-economic data.

And EEH is working with Oxfordshire County Council to create a data hub that will enable the ramifications of the area's growth to be modelled.

Increasing capacity on the rail network in and round Oxford, including links with Didcot, could also ease congestion pressures, he said:

THIS NEEDS TO BE SEEN NORTH-SOUTH NOT JUST EAST-WEST.

Sue Halliwell, Director for Planning & Place at Oxfordshire County Council, said there should be a fresh look at the role of green belt: "There are ways you can enable positive growth that can achieve net positive gain in terms of natural capital."



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