Answers to Qs in Oxford-Cambridge Arc consultation

Vision:

1. **What kind of place could it be? What words come to mind?** - A sustainable area of sustainably retrofitted communities which have made use of brownfield sites, spaces around and above car parks, industrial estate and science park empty spaces and the existing built environment to provide homes at very low cost to users: council, housing association and keyworker shared ownership options. Complete area with strong emphasis on working from home. Moving from carbon neutral to zero carbon to carbon negative all before 2040.
2. **If you can, we would love you to tell us more about your vision for the Arc to 2050:** A sustainable area of sustainably retrofitted communities which have made use of brownfield sites, spaces around and above car parks, industrial estate and science park empty spaces and the existing built environment to provide homes at very low cost to users: council, housing association and keyworker shared ownership options. Complete area with strong emphasis on working from home. Moving from carbon neutral to zero carbon to carbon negative all before 2040.
3. **How do you feel overall about the future of the Arc? What are your hopes and fears?** Present plans are unsustainable and incompatible with reducing carbon emissions or the enhancement and retention of biodiversity, land for food production or recreation. Emphasis on surface transport by road particularly unwelcome, and new buildings do not have either zero carbon or water re-use regulations. Complete failure to make use of the existing built environment and urban spaces, preferring instead obliteration of greenfield sites/spaces with other purposes.
4. **What do you think are the most important things that the Spatial Framework needs to do, as a strategic plan, to make the most of the area’s unique potential for economic growth to 2050 and beyond**? A) ANSWER: Environment.
5. **If there is anything you would like to add, we would love you to tell us:** Building a Green economy, creating useful employment, requires better priorities: not adding to carbon emissions by creating new buildings/ infrastructure. We need prosperity for all, not conventional polluting economic growth. Priorities, taking these comments into account, should include adaptation to Climate Change using nature-based solutions as often as possible; resilience of society and environment to the shock events of extreme weather events and wetter winters/hotter summers.

Green Spaces, Nature and Biodiversity:

1. Very important.
2. Very Important.
3. Neutral – as growth is not a priority
4. **Anything else to add about your vision for green and blue spaces, nature, and biodiversity?** A tax base equal to our needs is a basic requirement for our environment. An Environment Agency cut by 75% in 10 years is an example of the many environmental failures of Govt. The employment potential of a Green economy with fully funded local government through Land Value Taxation is substantial. Electronic Road Pricing could reduce traffic and emissions/air pollution. Eco tourism, biodiversity, local organic food production for local consumption, working from home instead of commuting.

Climate Change resilience and Net Zero:

1. Very important
2. Very important
3. **Anything else to add about your vision for climate change and/or the contribution to net zero?** The IPPC reports have indicated more must be done to save lives and species from the effects of the Climate Emergency. Deep cuts in emissions across the Arc require: re-use of the built environment over new build; radical cuts in surface transport journeys, no aviation expansion and reducing scheduled flights, grants for heat pumps for homes & insulation, solar PV on existing buildings, rewilding and the goal of a carbon negative society no later than 2040.

Air Quality and waste:

1. Very important
2. Very important
3. Very important
4. **Anything else to add about your vision for air quality and waste?** The WHO puts UK air pollution deaths at c64,000 per year. Only pedestrianised areas with absolute zero tailpipe and non-exhaust emissions protect people from air pollution, so these must be expanded in the most polluted and congested locations. A circular economy, with re-use and better kerbside recycling options could offer a significant increase in Green economy jobs throughout the UK. Rather than increasing consumption, empty slots in shopping centres should be for non-retail services/homes.

Water:

1. Very important
2. Very important
3. Very important
4. **Anything else to add about your vision for water?** The Oxford and Swindon water catchments reached capacity usage in 2020. One million homes added across the Arc raises major questions about water supply with wetter winters but hotter, drier summers. Sustainable regeneration of areas should occur where actually needed, and be determined by objective evidence about current and long-term water supply. One million homes in the Arc and a further one million homes in the Thames Gateway, both by 2050, takes no account of water supply.

Economy:

Education and Training:

1. Very important
2. Neutral
3. **Anything else to add about your vision for education and training?** Growth is not compatible with sustainability. We need a wide range of economic, social and environmental indicators to demonstrate progress or the lack of it - not GDP. A Universal Basic Income and a Living Wage (at least £12 p/h) are both needed to support people whilst they are in education/training from age 18.

Jobs and Business:

1. Not important

2. Not important

3. Very important

4. Not important

5. **Anything else to add about your vision for jobs and businesses?** Enhancing poorer parts of the country is of far more important than making richer areas richer. So growth is only appropriate where Green economy jobs are most needed. More work spaces are not going to be needed if far more people are supported working at home, and if given a statutory right to flexitime as well. They will not need to live in or commute to the Arc to be employed there. They could live in parts of the UK where housing is cheaper, and where digital infrastructure is best.

Connectivity:

Infrastructure:

1. Neutral
2. Very important
3. Very important
4. **Anything else to add about your vision for infrastructure?** A Zero carbon infrastructure will be a contribution to a future carbon negative UK. Consequently, growth is not an issue relative to best use of the existing built environment and its empty slots. The entire process of obtaining materials for sustainable retrofitting or modular construction on empty brownfield sites has to become carbon neutral as an initial goal. Ordinary cement and steel have to be phased out rapidly and replaced by sustainable alternatives.

New Development:

1. Neutral
2. Very important
3. Very important
4. Very important
5. **Anything else to add about new developments in the context of connectivity and infrastructure**? New development can only be considered if all options for re-use of the built environment in a given council area have been sustainably retrofitted and put into use. It can only occur on existing brownfield sites not in efficient use: building around, above surface level and across car parks; using empty spaces in industrial estates and science parks. Height restrictions should be minimal to ensure best use of space. Walking and cycling, and electric buses are critical for climate and envt.

Getting Around:

1. Not important
2. Very important
3. Very important
4. Very important
5. **Anything else to add about your vision of getting around?** Travel to work areas pre-pandemic show almost no cross Arc travel to work, with employment concentrated in Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. So there is no need to emphasise such journeys. East-West Rail completion and electrification is sufficient. Funding active travel at c£2bn a year in England is needed for the Climate Emergency and health promotion. UK targets to cut surface transport, especially cars, are needed - included by the use of Electronic Road Pricing.

Place making:

Location of Growth:

1. Very important.
2. **Anything else to add about your vision for location of growth?** Growth is a priority for those parts of the country with the poorest facilities and limited useful employment. It is not a priority within the Arc. Sustainable locations for population will have best access of existing facilities, good long term water supplies, zero environmental impact and car free developments to help reduce car use. Greenfield site development should be prevented.

Homes in your area:

1. Very important.
2. Neutral.
3. **Anything else to add about your vision for homes in your area?** Demand is wildly over-estimated and takes no account of concentrations of empty homes and brownfield sites in poorer parts of England. Within the Arc, the existing built environment should be the main source of homes, with councils funded to buy homes on sale to meet demand for very low cost housing. 'Affordable' means too expensive for many households in the Arc, causing losses of nurses and teachers - as examples - from Oxford and a permanent shortage of care workers in Oxfordshire.

Design of new developments and streets:

1. Very important
2. Very important
3. Very important
4. Very important
5. Very important
6. **Anything else to add about your vision for the design of new developments and streets?** New development is very low priority compared to making best use of the existing environment. However, additional and new homes should be car free developments to reduce traffic, and allow the retention of space for green spaces and biodiversity corridors, good walking and cycling network extensions. Shade and water features, green walls and roofs and solar PV should be dominant features.

Delivering the Spatial Framework:

Engaging communities:

1. Social listening
2. Yes
3. **Do you have anything else to add on engaging communities?** We do not live in a democracy: we do not have proportional representation for all elections. If we did, many proposals to over-develop areas would disappear. We do not have a large enough proportion of public spending for local government, with increased powers to deliver sustainability, emphasising the need for Land Value Taxation, Electronic Road Pricing and much higher taxes on highest incomes. We can engage with the public better if their local community has more power/resources.

Commitment to data/evidence:

1. Strongly disagree.
2. **Do you have anything else to add on data, evidence and digital tools? The Arc idea relies on ignoring key issues and evidence**. Ignored: adaptation to Climate Change; biodoversity especially rewilding; future generations; serious insecurity of water supply; post Brexit and other skills shortages; exceptionally high home prices and private rents; the implications of Climate and ecology issues nationally and globally for energy and food transformations towards sustainability; the need for reductions in surface transport, aviation and shipping movements.

Scoping report for Sustainability Appraisal:

1. Neutral
2. **Are there any other strategic issues and/or opportunities that need to be considered in the appraisal?** The strategic issues as presented in the SA scoping report have unaddressed incompatibilities. "Sustainable economic growth" is an assumption ignoring the need for contraction in those aspects of society incompatible with the Climate and ecological emergencies. The SA does not address adaptation to Climate Change, future generations or long-term issues like food and water supplies.
3. **Are you aware of any additional strategic data that we should take into account as part of the sustainability appraisal?** The Sustainable Development Goals; the recent IPCC report and the two others to be released next year; poverty and inequality data since 2010 and particularly if the cut in Universal Benefit goes ahead; shortage occupations data and the general unwillingness of Govt to bring in people from abroad to meet skills shortages; IUCN data on specie losses at c150 per day at present; numerous estimates of the potential for Green economy employment throughout the UK, not just in the Arc.
4. **Are you aware of any additional plans or programmes you think will be important to consider within the sustainability appraisal?** The general impact of EU policies upon the Arc since the EU is the UK's main trading partner and potential source of investment. The idea of Strategic Economic Evaluation which has not been applied to the Arc for scenarios to 2050, and to 2100 - at least.
5. Strongly disagree.

Steve Dawe, COWLEY AREA TRANSPORT GROUP – 19th September 2021