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Date	6TH June 2019		
Report Originator	HEAD OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING & DELIVERY UNIT		
Title	OXFORD-CAMBRIDGE ARC UPDATE		

1. <u>PURPOSE OF REPORT</u>
1.1 To update the Joint Delivery Committee on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the implications for North Northamptonshire and update on progress with a Growth Deal.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Joint Delivery Committee (JDC) and Joint Planning Committee (JPC) considered the implications of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor (now referred to by Government as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc) at meetings on the 15th March 2018. The resolutions of the Joint Committees can be summarised as follows:

1. Both committees agreed that all North Northamptonshire (NN) local authorities should be part of the Corridor, subject to NN being recognised as a distinct planning and delivery area;
2. The JDC agreed to initiate discussions with Government and Homes England over a bespoke housing and growth deal for NN, and to commission further work in respect of the prioritisation of infrastructure projects and other investment needed to accelerate the delivery of existing commitments;
3. The JPC agreed that officers should engage with Government, Homes England and other local authorities to start work on the Corridor-wide vision to 2050, and that work should be commissioned in respect of longer-term growth options for NN.

2.2 This report provides an update on the above, focusing on the second action regarding discussions with Government and Homes England over a bespoke housing and growth deal for NN, and the further work commissioned to support this.

2.3 The Joint Planning Committee was updated on the Arc at its 25th April meeting with the [report](#) focusing on the third action in respect of strategic planning issues and the impact on the timing and nature of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS). A report on revising the JCS, including proposed timetable will be reported to the 25th July 2019 meeting of the JPC.

3. GEOGRAPHY OF THE ARC

3.1 The National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) report "*Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc*"

(November 2017) set out an ambition to build up to one million high quality homes by 2050 to maximise the economic potential of the Arc. It made recommendations as to how this ambition can be realised, including through new and expanded settlements.

- 3.2 The NIC's report was vague on the geography of the Arc. The supporting technical studies included Wellingborough and the southern part of East Northamptonshire, but not Kettering or Corby.
- 3.3 The Government has subsequently clarified in its [response to the NIC report](#) (October 2018) and the [statement of Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners](#) (March 2019) that the Arc includes the whole of North Northamptonshire (see below). This is helpful clarification and future work will proceed on this basis.



4. NN HOUSING AND GROWTH DEAL

- 4.1 The JPDU has initiated discussions with MHCLG and Homes England, working through a Steering Group of senior officers. This has included discussions with the OxCam Unit at MHCLG, and a tour of NN on 3rd April 2019 for senior officials from MHCLG, Homes England, SEMLEP and England's Economic Heartland. The purpose of the tour was to familiarise key delivery partners with NN, including the scale of committed and potential growth, the challenges affecting delivery, and the support that is needed to address these. Feedback has been very positive. The tour will provide context for ongoing discussions over NN's contribution to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the tailored package of support needed to unlock the area's full potential. It is proposed that a similar tour is undertaken for Members of the Joint Committees.

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- 4.2 Planning and development consultants Lichfield's were commissioned to prepare a North Northamptonshire Investment Framework (NNIF) setting out measures to accelerate housing and employment delivery and identifying priorities for future funding. This was discussed at a seminar for members of the Joint Committees on the 17th January 2019. The final NNIF and background information is set out for the JDC's consideration under Item 5 of this agenda.
- 4.3 Members may recall that the original aim was to prepare a proposal for a housing and growth deal with Government that could be included in the 2018 autumn statement. However, MHCLG advised that this would not be possible (no new growth deals were announced) and a letter of intent was instead sent to the Secretary of State in October 2018 to highlight NN's ambition to secure a growth deal. This proposed that, in return for a commitment from Government to a substantial package of support, in addition to existing funding streams and commitments, NN could offer:
1. Accelerated economic development and housing growth based on an up-to-date joint strategic plan to 2031 (the Joint Core Strategy), to deliver 20% above Local Housing Need (LHN); and
 2. A commitment to a rapid review of the JCS in line with the strategic vision for the Corridor to 2050.
- 4.4 The expectation was that this offer and potential asks would provide the basis for negotiating a bespoke housing and growth deal along the lines of that secured in Oxfordshire. However, it is evident from subsequent discussions that MHCLG is seeking to move away from locality-based deals towards a more coordinated Arc-wide approach to securing Government funding and prioritising investments.
- 4.5 The JPDU has sought clarification on the process and timescale for this Arc-wide approach and the potential, within it, to secure a tailored package of support for NN to accelerate the delivery of committed growth and give NN partners (and unitary authority) the confidence to plan for increased levels of development in the longer term. The NNIF provides a strong evidence base for this. Any initial package of support is likely to be based on specific, worked-up projects that can be delivered within the spending review period (by the end of 2022/23) to support housing and economic delivery (rather than some of the wider growth deal 'asks' previously identified).
- 4.6 The Committee will be updated on these discussions. If Government support cannot be secured, the urgency of revising the JCS will diminish and the amount of new housing and jobs growth to be planned for in the future will need to be re-appraised.

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5. CORRIDOR-WIDE VISION TO 2050

- 5.1 Alongside the Spring Statement, the Government published a [statement of Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners](#). The joint declaration is set out at [Appendix 1](#). It recognises that meeting ambitions for the Arc requires a long-term view, at least to 2050, and for collaborative working across geographical, political and thematic boundaries. This will involve considering appropriate planning approaches and flexibilities, which “could include considering the role of a spatial vision or strategy for the Arc as a whole, as well as the most suitable delivery vehicles for specific developments.” Milestones to be completed by Government and partners within the next 12 months are set out in the document and at [Appendix 2](#) of this report.
- 5.2 Paras 5.1 to 5.17 of the report to the 25th April 2019 JPC on the Arc provide an extensive overview of the background and current position regarding the Corridor-Wide Vision and the implications for North Northamptonshire. The JPDU is working proactively with other planning authorities across the Arc to consider these issues. It is, however, evident that a spatial vision/strategy for the Arc will not be available in Summer 2019 as recommended by the NIC. The impact of this on the timetable for updating the JCS will be considered by the JPC at its meeting on 25th July 2019. The delay in progressing a spatial vision for the Arc emphasises the value of NN’s offer, in return for necessary investment, to deliver accelerated growth based on an up to date JCS.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Following the JDC’s consideration of the emerging Oxford-Cambridge Arc proposals in March 2018, the Government has confirmed that the whole of North Northamptonshire lies within the Arc. This is helpful clarification and work will proceed on this basis.
- 6.2 Progress on discussing a growth deal has been slow but good relations have been established with MHCLG and Homes England, and the JPDU and partner authorities will continue to press for a tailored package of support to accelerate the delivery of committed growth, and give NN partners (and unitary authority) the confidence to plan for increased levels of development in the longer term. As discussed in Item 5, the NNIF will be an important part of the evidence base for this. If Government support cannot be secured, the urgency of revising the JCS will diminish and the amount of new housing and jobs growth to be planned for in the future will need to be re-appraised.
- 6.3 It is unclear whether a pan-Arc spatial vision is to be prepared and, if so, what the process and timescale will be. The JPDU will continue to engage positively to progress this work. However, the delay will impact on the timescale for updating the JCS and for preparing other statutory plans across the Arc. This emphasises the value of NN’s offer, in return for necessary investment, to deliver accelerated growth based on an up-to-date JCS.

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7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Head of the NNJPDU recommends that the Joint Committee:

- 1. Notes the updates on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the implications for North Northamptonshire;**
- 2. Agrees that a study tour of North Northamptonshire developments should be arranged for members of the Joint Planning Committee and Joint Delivery Committee;**

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Appendix 1: Joint Declaration of Ambition between Government and the Arc

Appendix 2: Extract from Government Statement - Milestones to be completed within the next 12 months

Appendix 1

Joint Declaration of Ambition between Government and the Arc

This joint declaration has been agreed between the Government, local authorities across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, the Arc's four local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), and England's Economic Heartland.

We, the parties mentioned above, recognise that the area incorporating the ceremonial county areas of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire forms a strategic belt, which we refer to as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc ('the Arc'). We also acknowledge the vital links beyond the Arc: for example, there are important relationships with the Midlands, with the M4 corridor and Heathrow Airport, with London and the Greater South East, and with the rest of East Anglia.

We recognise that the Arc is first and foremost an area of significant economic strength and opportunity, which can further benefit its existing and future communities and businesses by realising its potential. It has a population of over 3 million and a Gross Value Added over £100 billion per year. Building upon strengths in individual parts of the Arc, especially in science, technology and high-value manufacturing, there is the long-term potential to transform the Arc as a whole into a world-leading economic area, acting as a testbed for innovation. Because of this potential, the Government has already designated the Arc a key economic priority. We jointly set out to meet its full economic potential, building on forthcoming Local Industrial Strategies, for the benefit of existing and future local communities and businesses, and in the national interest.

We acknowledge that meeting this economic potential will demand our collective determination, over the long-term, to deliver significantly more homes in the Arc, of the right quality and in the right places to meet its needs. We recognise that this could include the development and expansion of existing, as well as new, settlements. This will be needed both to address the housing affordability issues already felt in many parts of the Arc, and to provide places to live for future communities attracted by the Arc's economic opportunities.

We know that meeting our long-term economic and housing delivery ambitions for the Arc will require long-term commitments to provide the enabling infrastructure, in the widest sense, that communities and business will need. We support the delivery of transport links such as East West Rail and improvements to the strategically important roads network, and remain committed to involving local communities and businesses in helping to decide where and how infrastructure is built. We recognise the need to plan for and deliver substantial additional infrastructure ahead of the arrival of new communities, including necessary transport infrastructure, utilities, digital connectivity, health and education.

Crucially, we value the natural environment highly, and aim to meet our economic and housing ambitions while overall improving, rather than degrading, the environment in the Arc. We want better places to live, which are beautiful and inspiring, to benefit the Arc's residents today as well as tomorrow. The Government has already set out its intention for the Arc to embody England's 25 Year Environment Plan, which we will work together to deliver, including through planning for local natural capital. We want new developments to use intelligent and sensitive design to create or enhance habitats and improve habitat

connectivity, in situ and in the surrounding area. We also want to improve access to the environment for existing and new communities in order to improve health and wellbeing.

We recognise that meeting all these ambitions for the Arc requires us to take a long-term view, at least to 2050, and for us to work collaboratively across geographical, political and thematic boundaries. Doing so will require open thinking and dialogue without harming the ongoing plan-making process. While extant local development plans and joint plans must evidently retain their integrity whilst they are in place, we will consider what planning approaches and flexibilities may be appropriate in future, within and across the Arc, to better support meeting our overall ambitions. This could include considering the role of a spatial vision or strategy for the Arc as a whole, as well as the most suitable delivery vehicles for specific developments. We recognise that resources would need to be available for this work.

We agree that a collaborative approach to meeting our ambitions also means changing the way we work, as organisations and collectively. The Government has established a cross-cutting portfolio and delivery team for the Arc, bringing together departments, agencies and projects, with common high-level reporting lines at a ministerial and departmental level. Local authorities and LEPs have established Arc-wide coordination groups both for council leaders and LEP chairs, and for council and LEP chief executive officers. England's Economic Heartland provides a single local voice for strategic infrastructure across the Arc and beyond its boundaries. Both within Government and locally, we have organised our work relevant to the Arc across four thematic areas, reflecting our ambitions set out in this joint declaration:

- **Productivity** – ensuring we support businesses to maximise the Arc's economic prosperity, including through the skills needed to enable communities to benefit from the jobs created;
- **Place-making** – creating places valued by local communities, including through the delivery of sufficient, affordable and high-quality homes, to increase affordability and support growth in the Arc, as well as wider services including health and education;
- **Connectivity** – delivering the infrastructure communities need, including transport and digital connectivity, as well as utilities;
- **Environment** – ensuring we meet our ambitions for growth while leaving the environment in a better state for future generations.

To act as a bridge between Government and the Arc itself, the Government has committed to establishing a joint Advisory Group comprising experts and leaders across these themes, led by an independent Business Chair. Their role will not only be to provide expertise, but to be a figurehead for the Arc nationally and internationally, galvanising the necessary leadership and support to help realise our ambitions across these four thematic areas.

Our ambitions for the Arc are long-term, and while we believe it is right to maintain pace of delivery on existing commitments such as East West Rail, we recognise the need to plan to meet our full ambitions for the Arc in an integrated and inclusive way. As a next step, we are therefore going to launch a broad, joint, public engagement exercise over Summer 2019. This will engage with the public across the four themes above and will be used to help inform our future plans for the Arc and ensure they benefit existing and new communities and businesses.

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Appendix 2: Series of milestones to be completed by Government and partners within the next 12 months

4 Conclusion and Next Steps

- 4.1 This document has set out our ambitions for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc; it shows how we are working together across central Government and with local partners through a strategic focus on productivity, place-making, connectivity and the environment in order to achieve economic and social prosperity across the area.
- 4.2 We want to support businesses and skills-development in the Arc, create places that are valued by local communities, deliver the infrastructure that communities need, and ensure we leave the environment in a better state for future generations.
- 4.3 Over the course of the next 12 months, there will be a series of key announcements, some centred around Government fiscal events, that will set further direction for this work, including opportunities for communities, businesses, and universities to contribute to and inform these long-term plans in collaboration with central and local government. Key next steps over the course of the next 12 months are set out below.

How we work together

- 4.4 The Government will:
 - Appoint an independent Business Chair for the Arc shortly, who will provide expert advice on how Government and local partners can meet our ambitions for the Arc, and to galvanise national and international support;
 - Establish an Arc Advisory Group by late Spring 2019, comprising experts and leaders, and led by the independent Business Chair;
 - Launch a broad, joint, public engagement exercise over the summer of 2019;
 - Support additional stakeholder engagement, utilising the breadth and depth of our networks of leaders and local partners, as well as Government departments and their agencies, to drive conversations and engagement with groups, communities and businesses across the Arc.

Policy Pillar 1: Productivity

- 4.5 The Government will:
 - Continue to engage with universities in the Arc, building on the recent increased level of coordination between them, and explore opportunities for maximising cutting-edge innovation focused on the four Grand Challenges of the Industrial Strategy;
 - Publish the final report of the economic study of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc commissioned by the Government in the summer of 2019;

- Support the finalisation and publication of the four LEPs' Local Industrial Strategies by summer 2019. The Government and local areas will work together to deliver the priorities of the Local Industrial Strategies.

Policy Pillar 2: Place-making

4.6 The Government will:

- Complete the analysis into new or expanded settlements and consider where economic and housing growth, including through locally-led plans, could maximise the benefits of new road and rail infrastructure;
- Consider how the design of new settlements can support the Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges, through the demonstration and deployment of new technologies;
- Complete underway assessments on Garden Communities bids, and announce successful proposals in spring 2019;
- Work with the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission to gather evidence on design and quality place-making in order to identify opportunities to promote improved design quality and greater community consent; the Commission will publish an interim research report by July 2019;⁸
- Work with local authorities to consider what planning approaches and flexibilities may be appropriate to better support planning and increased housing supply over the long-term.

Policy Pillar 3: Connectivity

4.7 The Government will:

- Begin consulting on the route options for the Expressway in the autumn of 2019, with a decision on, and detailed development of, the preferred route to be undertaken in the early 2020s;
- Work with the East West Rail Company to continue developing route options for East West Rail Central Section, with a preferred route announcement expected later in 2019;
- Work with local partners to create a step change in digital infrastructure provision by exploring how best to embed the principles of the Government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review in new development, ensuring that the ambitions of significantly increasing housing and world-class digital infrastructure are aligned.

⁸ Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission: draft terms of reference, 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/753671/Building_Better_Commission_Submission_-_ToR.pdf

Policy Pillar 4: Environment

4.8 The Government will:

- Identify opportunities to explore biodiversity net gain, meeting the aspiration of the 25 Year Environment Plan;
- Develop a local natural capital approach in the Arc;
- Embed sustainability in place-making and establish strong, effective partnerships with local bodies.