



Strategic Transport Forum

29th March 2019

Agenda Item 3: Oxford-Cambridge Arc Vision

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) Following the recent Spring Statement announcement, notes the Government's ambition, and the shared ambition of partners and Government for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, particularly noting the specific and significant role of England's Economic Heartland.**
- b) Note that the Forum's need to engage the wider stakeholder community as part of the development of the Transport Strategy provides an opportunity to contribute to the Government's proposed engagement exercise during summer of 2019.**
- c) Notes the Government's commitment to planning for natural capital in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, and the fact that the ambition to secure a zero-carbon transport system by 2050 (at the latest) will contribute towards this ambition.**
- d) Considers the emerging economic vision for the Arc and identifies any additional points that need consideration as part of the development of the Transport Strategy.**

1. Context

- 1.1. Alongside its Spring Statement, on 13th March 2019, the Government published its ambition for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and a joint declaration between Government and local partners (Annex A).
- 1.2. The document, co-signed by Ministers from four Government Departments (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Transport, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and HM Treasury) restates the opportunity that exists within the Heartland area to become an economic asset of international standing and the priority attached by Government to realising that. The joint declaration between local partners and Government, published on the same day, commits to help the region 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.
- 1.3. The joint declaration and Government ambition sets out a clear pathway to delivering the potential of the Arc and is to be welcomed by the Strategic Transport Forum.
- 1.4. Members will note that England's Economic Heartland is consistently identified throughout the publication as a key body for delivering the aims of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Named as the forum for providing leadership on strategic infrastructure (connectivity) across the Arc and beyond its boundaries, England's Economic Heartland has an important and defined role within the delivery of the Oxford-Cambridge Programme.

- 1.5. The Government's ambition and joint declaration confirmed four thematic areas of work that together form the established structure of activity that Government and local partners are taking forward to develop the Arc. These are:
- a) **Productivity** – ensuring businesses are supported to maximise the Arc's economic prosperity, including through the skills needed to enable communities to benefit from the jobs created;
 - b) **Place – making** – creating places valued by local communities, including through the delivery of sufficient, affordable and high quality homes, to increase affordability support growth in the Arc, as well as wider services including health and education;
 - c) **Connectivity** – delivering the infrastructure that communities need, including transport and digital connectivity, as well as utilities.
 - d) **Environment** – ensuring ambitions for growth are met while leaving the environment in a better state for future generations.
- 1.6. Of particular note is the emphasis placed by the Government on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. This should be wholeheartedly welcomed and supported by the Strategic Transport Forum. Crucially, the document sets out the Government's commitment to embed 'natural capital' thinking throughout the development and delivery of proposals for the region.

2. Connectivity Theme

- 2.1. England's Economic Heartland is responsible for the connectivity theme and for working with the other work stream leads to ensure activity is aligned to the shared ambition.
- 2.2. England's Economic Heartland operates on a larger spatial geography than the defined area of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The larger geography of the Heartland reflects the reality that consideration of wider strategic infrastructure operates at that larger scale. The Heartland geography also reflects the likely spatial impact and scale that transformational growth schemes (such as East West Rail) being delivered in the Heartland area are likely to, and should, have.
- 2.3. The Strategic Transport Forum, as the Sub National Transport Body, has already committed to the development of a Transport Strategy. This is being developed and will be published as a framework document in the summer of 2019 and fully developed (in partnership with businesses and residents) by summer 2020. The vision for the strategy is "Connecting our people and places with opportunities and services".
- 2.4. The vision for the Transport Strategy, and supporting activity around it (to be discussed during agenda item 7), is wholeheartedly consistent with the Oxford-Cambridge Arc programme. Fundamentally, England's Economic Heartland needs to remain focused on ensuring transport in the Heartland is about connecting people and places to economic opportunities and essential services. That Strategy must in turn be supported by the right level of investment, funding models, and certainty, to realise the shared ambition for the region.
- 2.5. The Government's ambition recognises the need to plan for and deliver substantial new infrastructure ahead of the arrival of new communities, including necessary transport infrastructure, utilities, digital connectivity, health and education. As noted in the previous Strategic Transport Forum, England's Economic Heartland is developing an initial strategic investment prospectus for the Heartland. This will ensure our long term transport investment needs across the Heartland are captured in one place. This approach will provide clarity and consistency and will allow England's Economic Heartland to hold informed, evidence based discussions with investors – in both the public and private sector.

3. Communication and Engagement

- 3.1. Communication and engagement with local people forms an emerging priority for Government in their documentation. It is the Government's ambition to launch a broad, joint, public engagement exercise over this coming summer (2019). The approach aims to engage with the public across the four themes of the Arc (paragraph 1.5) and will be used to help inform future plans for the region.
- 3.2. This Forum, as the Sub National Transport Body for the Heartland, will need to undertake a series of engagement activities as part of the development of the overarching Transport Strategy. This will be an opportunity to contribute to the Government's proposed engagement exercise. The EEH Business Unit will work with the other work stream leads to ensure this opportunity is realised.

4. Environment Theme

- 4.1. The Strategic Transport Forum has recognised the need to secure a net benefit for the environment to be central to the development of the EEH transport strategy. In December 2018, the Strategic Transport Forum agreed an ambition of a zero carbon transport network by 2050, demonstrating the Forum's commitment and focus on this agenda.
- 4.2. Furthermore, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc's commitment to natural capital, and specifically meeting the requirements of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, provides the right framework for the Strategic Transport Forum to embed these priorities within its activities. It also provides the right framework for the Forum to continue to review its environmental policy as we go through the development process of the Transport Strategy, ensuring it remains fit for purpose.
- 4.3. In the Government's document, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has set out its ambitions for an innovative project to capture an environmental evidence baseline which will be shared with partners, and used to inform decision making across the region. The Government has committed to work with partners to design the approach for capturing the environmental evidence baseline, including mapping, identification of environmental opportunities and risks and determining natural capital priorities. There is a linkage here with the work that the Forum has undertaken to develop the database (part of the Regional Evidence Base that is being put in place). The EEH Business Unit, on behalf of the Strategic Transport Forum, will look to ensure those linkages are maximised. A report on progress will be submitted to the Forum in July 2019.

5. Productivity Theme

- 5.1. From the outset, connectivity was identified by the National Infrastructure Commission as a critical determinant of the long term prosperity of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Indeed, while average GVA and productivity within the Arc is reported to be consistently above national average, they do not perform universally successfully in all locations. Connectivity plays a key role in breaking down links between locations in the Arc and ensuring communities and businesses are able to access the right opportunities, and labour markets to achieve their growth ambitions.
- 5.2. Four Local Enterprise Partnerships across the Heartland area are currently producing trailblazing Local Industrial Strategies. The Local Industrial Strategies will be published in the coming months and will set out how partners in the Heartland, as part of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc programme, can build on their local strengths and deliver a step-change in their contribution to UK national growth and the Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges.
- 5.3. Overarching the four Local Industrial Strategies will be an overall economic vision for the Arc.

5.4. Following a presentation from LEP colleagues, members of the Strategic Transport Forum are invited to identify any additional points that need to be emphasised as part of the development of the Transport Strategy in order to support the focus on economic prosperity. This is an ongoing process, EEH Business Unit will continue to work with Local Enterprise Partnerships across the region to ensure we are achieving and delivering on their prosperity ambitions.

6. Place Making Theme

6.1. Synergies between the place making and connectivity themes remain equally important – for existing and new communities. The previous meeting of the Strategic Transport Forum (25th January 2019) considered work to develop a deeper understanding of connectivity studies across the Heartland. In addition, the EEH Business Unit has recently commissioned a large review of First Mile Last Mile transport options for communities across the Heartland. This important work seeks to ensure that residents and workers across the Heartland are able to have choice in the transport decisions they make. A report on the first phase findings of the First Mile Last Mile work will be presented to the Strategic Transport Forum in May 2019.

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