POETS
Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably

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'*Oxford at risk of strangling itself*'

POETS' response to Oxford Growth Commission Interim Report

Voluntary thinktank POETS (Planning Oxfordshire's Environment & Transport Sustainably) say the Oxford Growth Commission must be much more ambitious in tackling key issues if growth is not to strangle the City and its surroundings.

The Commission's Interim Report was published in December 2025. It sets out what it sees as the opportunities for growth in Oxford and Oxfordshire and the issues to be tackled.

In its response published today, POETS have welcomed elements of the Commission's report, including the overall aim that growth should help tackle existing inequalities and that housing densities should be increased at key sites.

However, POETS say the report fails to address fundamental challenges such as:

- The serious lack of funding for infrastructure and affordable homes which gets scant attention in the report, without even embryonic solutions
- The major imbalance between employment and housing in and around Oxford, which looks set to be made worse, exacerbating both housing and transport problems
- The need to ensure that growth brings benefits for all the community, including the development of local skills particularly for the areas of significant deprivation
- The need to deliver balanced growth without undermining broader objectives on climate, health and sustainability.

POETS' Katie Barrett said: "We would expect the Final Report to contain much more about the step changes needed to bring about long-term investment in infrastructure and social housing, including innovative measures that could be tested here in Oxfordshire. Simply issuing targets for growth, identifying more land for development, reducing regulations and limited ad hoc funding will not work in the long-term. ***Oxford would be at risk of strangling itself by damaging the very assets that have attracted economic investment to Oxford and Oxfordshire in the past***."

POETS' own Vision for Oxfordshire's Future calls on development in Oxfordshire over the next 20 years to focus on addressing the existential threat of climate change. New housing and employment should be based around excellent public transport, cycling and walking provision. Reforms are also needed to provide a massive increase in social housing for rent to meet housing need.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The Oxford Growth Commission's vision is to '*to support the delivery of infrastructure, housing and employment to unleash Oxford's and Oxfordshire's economic power, accelerating growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, and driving economic growth across the UK*'.
   Its Interim Report was published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government on 15 December 2025. It is available here:
   https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-growth-commission-interim-report
   The Commission's full report is due in Autumn 2026.

2. POETS' full response to the Oxford Growth Commission's Interim Report is available here.

   POETS are a voluntary think tank of professionals providing analysis, commentary and ideas on sustainable planning and transport for Oxfordshire.

   Further info, incl. POETS Vision for Oxfordshire: www.poetsplanningoxon.uk

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