POETS

Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably

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Greater Oxford Development Corporation – a great development ruse?

Local thinktank POETS warn that the proposed Greater Oxford Development Corporation smacks of a ruse to circumvent local democracy and environmental factors in order to unleash a "growth at any costs" approach on Oxfordshire.

However, POETS do believe that a strategic approach to development in Oxfordshire is long overdue. They have drawn up a list of principles for the new Corporation, should it go ahead, which they believe would help to deliver a more democratic and sustainable approach.

Helen Marshall from POETS said: "**"We urge our current democratically elected representatives to do all in their power to ensure that, if the Greater Oxford Development Corporation goes ahead, it prioritises development that benefits the many not the few. This includes accountability and transparency, a focus on housing for social rent, a complete reframing of transport strategy and the recognition of Oxford's historic character and landscape setting as of national and international importance."**

Experience from Cambridge and other Development Corporations suggests that the Chair of the Board of the Corporation will not be elected but hand-picked from the development community while any representatives from local councils appointed will be accountable to the Secretary of State, not local people. POETS believe that broader representation is critical, from public interests including environment, affordable housing, agriculture/farming, heritage and civic society.

Whilst various housing figures are being bandied about, the ambition appears to be for a level of growth that will come close to doubling the number of houses currently within the Greater Oxford area within the next 15-20 years. Much less is said about who this growth will benefit or how matching infrastructure will be provided.

POETS argue that any development must be for the widest possible public benefit, with at least 50% of housing being made available for social rent.

In terms of transport infrastructure, growth on anywhere near the levels proposed would simply be undeliverable based on current policies. Radical change would be required to avoid gridlock and system collapse. A strategic mass transit network would be an essential first step.

Employment growth must be part of an integrated strategy which ensures affordable housing and infrastructure provision.

Essentially, the government, and any new development corporation, need to provide reassurance to residents of Oxford and Oxfordshire that their quality of life will improve and not deteriorate as a result of the new development that is proposed; that residents of the city and county will have some genuine say and input to the way in which development is implemented; and that key natural and cultural heritage assets will be identified, conserved and enhanced during the development process.

Helen Marshall said: “**Only by adopting principles such as these can we hope that Oxfordshire will avoid gridlock and untold environmental damage and instead benefit from a strategic and sustainable approach to development.”**

POETS’ full Briefing Paper on the proposed Greater Oxford Development Corporation is available on its website: www.poetsplanningoxon.uk

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Notes for editors:

1. POETS are a voluntary think tank of professionals providing analysis, commentary and ideas on sustainable planning and transport for Oxfordshire.
   Further info, incl. our **Greater Oxford Development Corporation Briefing Paper** and our **Vision for Oxfordshire**: www.poetsplanningoxon.uk linkedin.com/company/poets

   For further info on the existing Greater Cambridge Development Corporation see: **https://thecgc.org.uk/**

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