Press Release Issued on 27 March 2023

POETS slam Oxford city council's housing consultation

The POETS group (Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably) have strongly criticised Oxford city council's latest consultation on housing. The consultation proposes a large amount of building in surrounding districts to meet Oxford's needs.

POETS are concerned that the city has used the same consultants who produced the earlier Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA). This assessment was widely discredited for hugely over-estimating the amount of development required. It led to a stand-off with other district councils, and, amid calls for a peer review of the forecasts, the abandonment of the Oxfordshire Strategic Plan.

POETS view this latest consultation as seeking to attract unnecessarily high levels of growth into the county.

POETS' Katie Barrett explained "This seems to be an attempt by the city council, in concert with Cherwell district council, to force the rest of Oxfordshire into taking endless cycles of job-led growth which attracts people to the county and makes it increasingly difficult for local people to find truly affordable housing.

"Worse, the city council protects many of its brown field sites for yet further employment, while expecting most of its housing need to be found on greenfield sites outside Oxford. It will lead to more commuter traffic and seems to be an attempt to preempt the decisions of other councils. The city council should look to meeting more of its housing need within Oxford and we have suggested some ways of doing this."

The POETS response explains why this strategy - a continuation of the 'growth at any cost ' approach - acts against the need to take action on both climate change and the need to look after local people's health and services. They urge the city council to discount the highest growth projections which would be up to twice the level of growth achieved over the last 10 years. They say that such high levels are 'unrealistic, unsustainable and undesirable', and run counter to the government's levelling up agenda.

POETS' Richard Tamplin, a retired government planning inspector added, "Unconstrained growth is a choice – and comes with many downsides. The Oxford Local Plan should be seeking the best ways to satisfy the city's existing housing needs, rather than fuelling yet further growth which is likely to result in yet further unmet need."

POETS also ask that the city council move away from a blinkered GDP oriented approach to growth in favour of a more benign, people and planet friendly approach such as 'doughnut economics' developed by Oxford academic Kate Raworth.

ENDS

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You can find POETS response to the planning application consultation at https://www.poetsplanningoxon.uk/poets-oxford-local-plan2040-housing-needs-consultation-response-260323.pdf

For further information about POETS, including its membership, go to:

www.poetsplanningoxon.uk

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