POETS

Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably

18 Jan 2026

Labour Together report "Project Hawking: Tripling the size of Ox-Cam by 2050"

POETS' comments – Chris Cousins on behalf of POETS

"Overall, while we welcome the proposals for land value capture, Labour Together's other proposals show a troubling disregard for addressing climate change, environmental protection and local democracy."

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The Labour Together report contains one idea that POETS would wholeheartedly support: capturing the value of land earmarked for development. This is something that has been widely advocated for many years, including by the Town and Country Planning Association as well as POETS; indeed the postwar Labour government legislated for it. In our view, land value capture should apply to most, if not all, development, and could pay for much of the country's need for public infrastructure and services.

However, the other main elements of Labour Together's report seem misconceived. It recommends "a single powerful development corporation that can bypass local politics", along with a streamlined regulatory process which takes powers "away from Natural England and the Environment Agency".

Labour Together are in essence advocating a supercharged version of the approach taken by the previous government; local residents may remember how Robert Jenrick, then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, directed South Oxfordshire District Council as to what its planning policies had to be. The unpopularity of this approach is at least partly reflected in the fact that the Conservative Party no longer controls any of the councils in Oxfordshire.

POETS support some growth, in particular that which will provide much needed housing at rents and prices which people on average and lower incomes can afford; the Government's arbitrary definition of "affordable housing" (rents or prices at 80% of market housing) goes nowhere near meeting this requirement. There is a particular need for social housing for rent, which is currently being provided in only tiny quantities.

However, POETS believe that growth needs to be balanced, with particular attention given to addressing both climate and biodiversity loss. The recent report by the Office for Environmental Protection demonstrates how badly the Government is failing to meet its targets.

The Labour Together report asserts that concentrating growth in the Oxford to Cambridge corridor will lead to greater prosperity for other regions. Chris Cousins of POETS said: "*There is no evidence that this will be the case. Indeed, recent history has shown how concentration of development in London and the south east has drained resources from other regions.*

"Overall, while we welcome the proposals for land value capture, Labour Together's other proposals show a troubling disregard for addressing climate change, environmental protection, and local democracy."

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