



Report to Cabinet

Date:	28 th September
Title:	Buckinghamshire Council consultation response to the Oxford Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework Vision
Cabinet Member(s):	Martin Tett - Leader
Contact officer:	Lisa Michelson Service Director Economic Growth and Regeneration
Ward(s) affected:	none specific
Recommendations:	Cabinet are RECOMMENDED to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree the draft response to the Oxford Cambridge Arc consultation• Delegate responsibility for submission of the final response, incorporating any further changes after the Cabinet meeting, to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
Reason for decision:	To ensure Buckinghamshire Council's view is submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for consideration prior to the consultation deadline of October 12th.

1. Executive summary


- 1.1 Following the launch of the Oxford Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework policy paper in February 2021, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government launched the first of three proposed consultations.
- 1.2 This first consultation focuses on '*Creating a Vision for the Ox-Cam Arc*' and the proposed scope of the sustainability appraisal.
- 1.3 This report sets out the context of the consultation and the proposed response from the council. The draft response is attached to this report.

2. Content of report

Background and Context

- 2.1 The Oxford to Cambridge Arc was conceived in 2017 as a nationally strategically significant knowledge- intensive economic region offering huge potential for future economic growth. The economic prospectus for the Arc was launched in October 2020. Local authorities in Buckinghamshire had been party to local government discussions about the Arc up until August 2020 when Buckinghamshire Council withdrew its support for the Arc and left the Arc Leaders Group (along with the University and Local Enterprise Partnership) over concerns about the central imposition of housing targets and marginalisation of the views of individual councils.
- 2.2 In August 2021, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched the consultation '*Creating a Vision for the Ox-Cam Arc*' alongside a sustainability appraisal scoping document. The consultation aims to support the Government in producing a vision for the Spatial Framework, and therefore, guide the area's future growth to 2050. Buckinghamshire is included in the consultation content that makes up the Arc geography.
- 2.3 In February 2021 government made a commitment to develop a Spatial Framework, which will form national planning policy and transport policy for the Arc. This means local authorities must have regard to it when preparing plans such as the next iteration of the Local Transport Plan or new Buckinghamshire Local Plan. It is also suggested that the Spatial Framework is capable of being a material consideration in relevant planning decisions.
- 2.4 The current consultation poses a number of questions to establish views on what the Arc vision should be to 2050 and whether certain aspects should be prioritised. For example, addressing climate change, growing the Arc as a place of education, and making sure the Arc keeps growing as a place for business.
- 2.5 As Buckinghamshire Council and partners, including the Local Enterprise Partnership, withdrew from the Arc Leaders' Group and set a clear policy position on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc last year it is proposed that Buckinghamshire Council does not interact directly with the consultation questions and instead responds to the Minister responsible for the Arc to reiterate our position and set out a number of queries and concerns about the Arc proposals.
- 2.6 Additionally, the document and consultation questions fundamentally do not offer scope to understand and challenge the specific detail about the Arc and are fairly superficial.

The response

- 2.7 A proposed draft letter is attached to this report. The steer for this has been drawn from the Leader's recent press release about the Arc and letter to Town and Parish councils which set out the council's main concerns, alongside direct liaison with the Leader.
- 2.8 The headlines from the draft letter include:
- Reiterating our objection to the Arc proposals that will have undue influence on our ability to make plans for Buckinghamshire in Buckinghamshire
 - Reminding central government of our withdrawal from the Arc Leaders' Group
 - Highlighting the streamlining of local governance in Buckinghamshire and our desire to be in control of our own future
 - Disapproval that decisions which impact upon Buckinghamshire may be taken by areas geographically far away from Buckinghamshire or made in Whitehall
 - Reiterating our ambition to lead place-based recovery through setting out our own Strategic Vision and desire to agree an ambitious County Deal for Buckinghamshire with the Government.
- 2.9 In addition to the proposed letter, the attached draft response sets out headline comments received from council services including,
- Planning Policy,
 - Economic Growth and Regeneration,
 - Environment and Heritage,
 - Schools Commissioning, and
 - Transport Strategy
- 2.10 The appendix with technical queries, concerns, and priorities supports the political concerns and rationalise our unease at the Spatial Framework.
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3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Not to respond to the consultation – due to the significance of the central government’s proposals for the Oxford Cambridge Arc and the potential impacts on the local authority and Buckinghamshire as a place, this option is not recommended.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 The consultation response itself has no direct financial or legal implication.
- 4.2 It is currently unknown whether not engaging with the Oxford Cambridge Arc will have legal or financial implications.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 This consultation response itself has no direct corporate implications.
- 5.2 Should the Spatial Framework progress as proposed by central government it will have implications on Buckinghamshire Council and its future plans and strategies including the Buckinghamshire Local Plan.
- 5.3 It is also unknown how the Buckinghamshire position on the Arc may influence County Deal negotiation with central government

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 Further consultation is planned with the Leader of the Council. A briefing session for Parish Councils is planned for the 27th September.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 On the 4th August Buckinghamshire Council released a press release following the launch of the Oxford Cambridge Arc consultation. The press release reiterated Buckinghamshire Council’s position on the Arc.
- 7.2 On the 27th August, the residents’ newsletter reiterated our position on the Arc and provided a link to the press release.
- 7.3 Engagement is planned with parish councils to discuss the Council’s approach to the consultation in further detail.
- 7.4 Buckinghamshire Council will engage with partners of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board and seek to submit an overarching response on behalf of the Board and its partners. We understand that the LEP will work through the Growth Board to

respond to the consultation but other partners such as the NHS may make individual representations to emphasise their own needs and views.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 Any proposed amendments will be made, and the response will be submitted in accordance with the recommendation by October 12th.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 The consultation can be found here:

9.2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-vision-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc>

- 9.3 The Buckinghamshire Council press release can be found here:

9.4 <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/news/vision-for-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework-statement/>

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.