

DLUHC Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework consultation

October 2021

About the RTPI

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) champions the power of planning in creating sustainable, prosperous places and vibrant communities. As a learned society, we use our expertise and research to bring evidence and thought leadership to shape planning policies and thinking. As a professional body, we have over 25,000 members across all sectors, and are responsible for setting formal standards for planning practice and education.

This is the RTPI's response to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) [Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework consultation](#). This consultation seeks views on a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework and to guide the future growth of the area to 2050. The RTPI welcomes the work of DLUHC in preparing a Spatial Framework and consulting on a vision for the future long-term growth of the Arc.

General comments

Economy: The document recognises the Oxford-Cambridge Arc as a national economic priority area. It highlights its potential as one of the most prosperous, innovative and sustainable economic areas in the world with the ability to make a major contribution to national economic recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

It should however recognise that the economic success of the Arc is the result of deliberate and unconscious government policy over decades. 46% of research council funding for example is spent in Oxford, Cambridge and London¹, and yet these three cities have some of the biggest barriers to sufficient housebuilding. So, for decades government's research policy has not been in step with its housing policy

The document outlines the objectives of the Spatial Framework at a strategic scale. This will involve coordinating and focusing investment in the area, shaping future local planning decisions on how land is used, how the environment is protected and enhanced, where and what type of new development happens and what infrastructure is provided

Sequencing and consistency: How the Spatial Framework interacts with the 30 different local authorities producing separate plans and strategies at different times throughout the Arc is critical. The Framework should also support aligning the management of utilities, infrastructure, flood risk and air quality measures.

Champion: We recommend that a growth body be established as soon as possible with responsibility for delivery, championing the Arc and providing certainty over the scale and broad locations of growth. This is needed to ensure that delivery can be thought about alongside the

¹ Tom Forth, Open Data Institute Leeds Richard A.L. Jones, University of Manchester, Nesta (2020) [The Missing £4 Billion Making R&D work for the whole UK](#)

development of the Spatial Framework through the growth body which will play a key role in integrating this and managing the important sequencing process.

Agility: The delivery framework should remain a ‘live’ document that can be quickly updated to reflect changing circumstances as necessary such as in response to climate change, technological advances or public health. The Spatial Framework itself should guide the vision over a long period of time.

Health, wellbeing and climate change: The linking of human health and wellbeing to the urgency of addressing climate change is paramount. The Arc is ideally placed to act as an arena to develop ambitious policies to address these challenges.

Resources and skills: We recommend that local authorities including local planning authorities and all the necessary built and natural environment stakeholders such as Natural England and the Environment Agency are fully engaged throughout the process and appropriately resourced. A multi-disciplined approach is essential if growth is to be planned around places and not functions.

Creating the vision for the Arc

Q1. What kind of place could it be? What words come to mind?

Sustainable	Better transport
Sense of community	Better infrastructure
Equal / Inclusive	Thriving economy
Progressive	Better place
Collaborates for better outcomes	Better homes
More life opportunities	More available homes
Better environment	More affordable homes
Eco-friendly	Other - please specify
Connected	

We recommend that the Spatial Framework should be ambitious in identifying ways in which the Arc should aim to achieve all of the above objectives. In our April 2021 policy paper, we outlined how through planning we can create healthy and thriving communities that are more equal and economically robust, whilst tackling the overarching threat of climate change².

² RTPI (2021) [Planning for a better future: RTPI Proposals for Planning Reform in England](#)

**Q2. If you can, we would love you to tell us more about your vision for the Arc to 2050.**

Climate change, technological advances and public health will directly impact on the vision for 2050. With the vision being produced during a turbulent period, such forward thinking should demonstrate agility and an ability to pivot. In practical terms we recommend that the delivery framework remains a 'live' one with an in-built process to efficiently update it to reflect changing circumstances as needed. The Spatial Framework should guide the vision over a long period of time. The delivery framework and the interventions used will be subject to change over time. Monitoring against key measures of success, set out in the framework, and a robust risk management process will therefore be essential.

Central to developing a vision is being specific about the proposed improved outcomes. The Spatial Framework should be vision-led and outcome based to ensure all delivery partners are aligned on the objectives. Measuring how effective and aligned delivery partners are will be needed to demonstrate the added value delivered through the Spatial Framework. The needs of the existing communities in the Arc should also form part of the consideration. The Vision can be a robust basis on which communities, stakeholders and their representatives can hold Government to account.

Q3. How do you feel overall about the future of the Arc? What are your hopes and fears?

This question appears to be directed at the general public.

Q4. What do you think are the most important things that the Spatial Framework needs to do, as a strategic plan, to make the most of the area's unique potential for economic growth to 2050 and beyond?

Work at an Arc-wide level to tackle shared issues/ opportunities on:

- 1. Environment**
- 2. Economy**
- 3. Connectivity and growth**
- 4. Place-making**
- 5. Supporting monitoring and delivery**

We suggest that the above issues and opportunities are all essential to make the most of the area's unique potential for economic growth to 2050 and beyond.

Q5. If there is anything you would like to add, we would love you to tell us

We agree with the shared issues/opportunities identified.

The consultation document highlights the lack of affordability and availability of housing in the Arc and how that "*increases the need to make more polluting journeys for work and leisure, and making home ownership less likely for many*". We recommend that the Spatial Framework should support delivery of housing supply of all tenures including market housing. The significant role of the development industry in the future of the Arc should be noted. One possible way to support housing delivery could be by establishing an Arc wide developer's forum that would include SME builders in addition to larger scale developers.



Environment

Green spaces, nature and biodiversity

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Making sure the natural environment is protected, restored, and improved.

For example, improving new and existing green spaces.

Very important.

The Spatial Framework could support delivery of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan by recommending incorporating or cross-referencing the shared Arc Environment Principles³. This would have the added benefit of demonstrating an intention to deliver and be more ambitious than national policy on the environment and nature.

Q2. Making sure the most is made of the natural environment and that all people can have access to it.

For example, making improvements to woodlands, wetland, green space and water and making sure people can visit them if they want to.

Very important.

Professionals in the built and natural environment such as Natural England and the Environment Agency should be fully engaged throughout and appropriately resourced. The impact on Special Protection Areas should also be strategically addressed in the Framework.

Q3. Making sure new growth leaves the environment in a better state than before.

For example, keeping land in its natural state, and making it more wild, where appropriate.

Very important.

Q4. Anything else to add about your vision for green and blue spaces, nature, and biodiversity?

The Arc has an abundance of heritage as listed in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (paragraph 4.6 – 4.9). These include: *“The one UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Arc, Blenheim Palace, is located near Oxford. Cambridge’s historic and natural environment defines the character and setting of the city, with the exceptional concentration of collegiate buildings around the River Cam. Other notable towns within the Arc include Milton Keynes, a leading example of post-war architecture and place-making. Peterborough is an ancient settlement stretching back to prehistoric times, with the structures and street patterns, boundary walls,*

³ Environment Working Group, Oxford-Cambridge Arc Leadership Group (March 2021) [Shared regional principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#)



*buried archaeological remains and other features of the city evident*⁴. We therefore recommend that the Spatial Framework has clear policies to identify, enhance and protect such areas of national and international significance.

It would be encouraging to see more focus on the "living environment" for the existing population such as transport noise, air quality, access to amenities, schools and training. The framework should be able to demonstrate it will support delivery of these wider benefits.

Climate change resilience and net zero

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Making sure new development helps to achieve net zero carbon at an Arc level towards national net zero targets.

For example, through good design, sustainable travel choices, renewable energy and trapping carbon.

Very important.

Q2. Making sure that new development can respond to the current and future effects of climate change.

For example, through new carbon emissions, water use, waste disposal and renewable energy targets.

The Institute has suggested that smart energy and climate change should have equal status with the provision of housing, transport and economic growth in national policy⁵. We have also called for Local Planning Authorities to take appropriate action, including by setting targets which go beyond national standards. Policy should set clear metrics for carbon accounting, monitoring and reporting by Local Plans. With two-tiers in many parts of the Arc the role of the county councils is also key on sustainable transport, climate change, health and wellbeing. We recommend that to deliver an integrated approach is going to be delivered, all Local Authorities and partners will need to play their respective parts. The Spatial Framework should address the matter of viability and the expectations regarding carbon policies. It would also add value by highlighting the opportunities to join up where multiple benefits are available at the Arc scale such as on carbon offset and biodiversity net gain.

The RTPI have proposed Local Environment Improvement Plans⁶ to treat connected issues like water availability and quality, soil quality, flood mitigation, biodiversity and habitats together instead of separately.

Q3. Anything else to add about your vision for climate change and/or the contribution to net zero?

The Spatial Framework can add value by highlighting the leadership that it can show on delivery and by identifying where local authorities need support. It will be most effective where it shows

⁴ HM Government (2021) [Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#)

⁵ RTPI (2019) [Planning for a Smart Energy future](#)

⁶ RTPI (2021) [Local Environment Improvement Plans](#)



how it can address the multiple environmental challenges in the Arc such as nature recovery, carbon sinks, water management, flood risk and air quality. It should also be clear about the benefits of investment in place now as opposed to requiring costly regeneration and renewal in the future.

Air quality and waste

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Making sure new development helps to improve air quality within the Arc.

For example, through high quality design, low emission zones and sustainable transport.

Very important.

Q2. Taking a combined approach to air quality across the Arc.

For example, through being careful about where each land uses should go, supporting journeys via public transport and active travel and enhancing green spaces and routes across the area.

Very important.

Q3. Making better use of resources and managing waste.

For example, promoting the re-use of materials, and protecting and improving soil quality and minerals.

We recommend having waste local plans for each upper tier area and outlining how they should be related to each other.

Q4. Anything else to add about your vision for air quality and waste?

No answer proposed for this question.

Water

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Promoting a combined approach to managing water across the Arc, through protecting water resources, improving water quality and reducing the risk of flooding.

For example, treating wastewater, improving water storage, and reusing surface runoff.

The consultation document identifies the Arc as one of the most water stressed areas of the country. It is encouraging that water companies are collaborating on regional plans for integrated strategic planning and delivery on longer term timescales, however this collaboration is undermined by investment plans with much shorter time frames. We would welcome the framework enabling such long-term strategic thinking in managing water across the Arc.

**Q2. Making sure new development reduces existing flood risk and is resilient to future flooding.**

For example, through tree planting and multifunctional sustainable drainage.

We recommend a focus on natural flood management techniques such as green infrastructure and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs). These have the added benefit of contributing to improving biodiversity, reducing erosion, reducing urban heat islands, improving water quality, contributing to health and well-being and offering opportunities for learning and engagement from the local community. However, only 3 per cent of authorities reported receiving adequate information to appropriately assess a planning application for SuDs highlighting the skills gap within the development industry around natural flood management⁷.

Q3. Improving water availability and cutting the risk of drought.

For example, through new sustainable water resources and infrastructure, and measures which reduce water use.

We note with interest that Anglian Water in their evidence to the Climate Change Committee suggested the introduction of more challenging water consumption daily targets in areas of serious water stress (110 litres/head/day)⁸. We recommend that the Spatial Framework address matters such as the number and location of new reservoirs, Wastewater Treatment Works, Anaerobic Digestors, Solar Parks. An Arc-wide Infrastructure Delivery Plan should also be established which would sit alongside the National Policy Statement.

Q4. Anything else to add about your vision for water?

No answer proposed for this question.

Economy

Education and training

Q1. Making sure the Arc keeps growing as a place of educational excellence, partnership and research.

For example, through growth which helps existing universities and colleges.

Very important.

Q2. Making sure the economic benefits of growth are felt by all communities within the Arc.

For example, through putting new education and training facilities in places where more people can easily get to go to them.

Very important.

⁷ Landscape Institute and the Construction Industry Council (CIC), Flood Mitigation and Resilience Panel (2019) [Achieving Sustainable Drainage: A review of delivery by Lead Local Authorities](#)

⁸ Committee on Climate Change, [Written evidence submitted by Anglian Water \(PEG0190\)](#)



Q3. Anything else to add about your vision for education and training?

We propose Green Growth Boards (GGBs) to bring about the coordination of all the essential services necessary to support growth within an area, including skills, health care, public health, transport, utilities, housing and environmental recovery.

Provision should be made for GGBs to:

- Help join the dots from the outset between skills, environmental, transport, housing, water, energy, resource and health plans
- Help identify the best locations for development (Growth and Renewal areas) and protection, and to facilitate supporting infrastructure being in place on time
- Ensure plans that meet agreed criteria should be available to view as layers alongside environmental and social mapping on the shared geo-spatial platform.

Participating organisations would include local authorities, mayoral-combined authorities and Development Corporations where they exist, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and Health and Wellbeing Boards. In addition, it is necessary to include some links to the Department for Education which is influential locally despite being a national ministry. The planning of schools is probably the least strategic of all similar activities. Travel to schools and colleges is a key issue requiring careful planning.

Whilst we would envisage maybe at least three Green Growth Boards within the Arc area, each will need to relate to their adjoining areas. We need to have robust spatial 'building blocks' for the growth boards to operate on and be able to work with those that have wider strategic planning responsibilities (e.g., sub-national transport bodies) and at a more local 'strategic' spatial scale. For example, Oxfordshire as a core strategic planning 'building block' needs to be able to influence other spatial priorities in the Arc as well as with closer neighbours in Reading and Swindon.

Jobs and businesses

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Making sure that the Arc keeps growing as a place for business, science and technology, and innovation.

For example, through putting these types of new workspaces in places where they can make the most of cross-sector collaboration.

The Spatial Framework should provide leadership on supporting the economy in the most sustainable way and recognise that employment issues go cross boundary with commuters often living and working in different parts of the Arc. We recommend that it address inclusivity by encouraging sustained and sustainable economic growth. In practical terms, this should focus on facilitating stronger links between infrastructure, education, curriculum and the skills needed to drive green growth. This could provide more opportunities to those communities in the Arc who are currently being left behind. The Arc can play a critical role in supporting a national levelling up agenda although greater clarity on how it will do so, would be welcomed. In addition, levelling up within the Arc itself would be an efficient way to drive greater productivity and prosperity.



Q2. Making sure that existing industries keep growing within the Arc.

For example, through putting industries in the best places to suit their needs.

Very important.

Q3. Making sure the Arc builds upon and grows its skills, expertise and capabilities.

For example, through making sure people can get around easily to bring the right people to the right job locations.

Very important.

Q4. Making sure that the right types of buildings are provided in the Arc so that businesses can keep growing as well as supporting the green economy.

For example, through building new flexible and adaptable workspaces meeting the needs of a range of different businesses of different sizes.

Very important.

Q5. Anything else to add about your vision for jobs and businesses?

No answer proposed for this question.

Connectivity and infrastructure

Infrastructure

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Making sure planning takes a combined approach to new development by providing the infrastructure and services required at the right time to support growth.

For example, by planning for the need for utilities (e.g., water, energy, waste) and community infrastructure (e.g., schools, hospitals GP surgeries).

Very important.

RTPI research on planning for critical infrastructure in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority identified that⁹.

- There is a little confusion – particularly around transport – as to the respective organizational roles and responsibilities. This is partly viewed as the inevitable result of organisational set up, with clarity over roles and responsibilities expected to emerge over time.

⁹ RTPI (2021) [A Smarter Approach to Infrastructure Planning](#)



- There is clear consensus about the key infrastructure challenges facing the sub-region, particularly in respect of enabling infrastructure to support growth, address energy and water shortages, and tackle congestion and movement in and around Cambridge.
- Engagement with infrastructure providers is largely happening on an ad hoc basis, with some prior mechanisms for engagement with infrastructure providers having been recently receded. The potential for the CPCA to enable a strategic dialogue with infrastructure providers was seen as critical.
- The instruments to raise finance for infrastructure development at the local level (CIL where charged and S106) are widely considered ineffective and insufficient.
- A key challenge for infrastructure planning is perceived as both the knowledge required, and the human capacity needed, both within the planning community and by providers, to enable integration to happen more effectively.

Q2. Making sure new development makes the most of existing resources.

For example, through making sure that materials are reused, renewable energy supplies are used, and waste is properly planned for.

Very important.

Q3. Making sure that digital infrastructure is put in at the same time as other development takes place.

For example, speeding up the fitting of high-speed broadband to support home-based work and help new ways of learning.

Very important.

Q4. Anything else to add about your vision for infrastructure?

There is positive recognition in the consultation document that the Spatial Framework will need to help address the range of different infrastructure challenges across the Arc such as water capacity, provision of utilities and to provide leadership on transport policy e.g., net zero carbon transport. The Framework should also outline the necessity of linking growth with the provision of schools and hospitals.

Our research¹⁰ on net zero transport published in early 2021 focused on the need to maximise the potential for local living by ensuring that most people can access a wide range of services, facilities and public spaces by walking and cycling. It highlighted how increased home working, digital service delivery, and new forms of flexible work and community spaces will play a key role, alongside investment in place. We outlined how achieving this requires a decisive break with the conventional approach of meeting predicted changes in travel demand with new road capacity.

One of the central opportunities of the Spatial Framework is to commit to some longevity of infrastructure provision that allows for cross boundary cooperation over longer timeframes than local plan periods.

¹⁰ RTPI (2021) [Net Zero Transport: the role of spatial planning and place-based solutions](#)



New Development

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Making sure growth within the Arc is place around areas with better transport links.

For example, through having more development around stations and bus routes, supported by cycling and walking tracks.

Very important and the benefits of this approach is supported by evidence from RTPI research¹¹, which found:

- That large and compact settlement patterns support economic productivity by reducing the distances between homes and jobs and making efficient use of infrastructure networks
- Settlement patterns and urban forms that promote sustainable mobility play a critical role in reducing transport emissions, with larger settlements, higher densities and mixed land uses reducing the need to travel by car
- Larger settlements with higher densities and mixed land use improves public health by increasing physical activity, which helps to address the prevalence, severity and cost of chronic lifestyle-related diseases
 - Compact, medium density, mixed use and public-transport friendly settlements can encourage continued physical activity, economic participation and social interaction for an ageing population

Q2. Making sure new development cuts down the need to travel around the local area.

Very important.

For example, through promoting safe and easy walking and cycling routes to town centres, shops and schools. Our research¹² highlighted the need for the planning system to prioritise urban renewal that enables growth while achieving a substantial reduction in travel demand. This should focus on maximising the potential for local living by ensuring that most people can access a wide range of services, facilities and public spaces by walking and cycling. Increased home working, digital service delivery, and new forms of flexible work and community spaces will play a key role, alongside investment in place.

Q3. Making sure new developments reduce existing and future infrastructure demand and resources used.

For example, making sure that designs leave enough space for existing and future measures which reduce energy and water use, and cut down on waste.

Very important.

¹¹ RTPI (2018) [Settlement Patterns, Urban Form and Sustainability: An Evidence Review](#)

¹² RTPI (2021) [Net Zero Transport: the role of spatial planning and place-based solutions](#)



Q4. Making sure sustainable transport principles are included in the design of new developments.

For example, by designing new developments in a way that enables people to walk or cycle all or part of their journeys.

Very important.

Q5. Anything else to add about new developments in the context of connectivity and infrastructure?

No answer proposed for this question.

Getting around

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Creating better transport connections across the Arc and making sure they are provided in a way which supports sustainable new growth.

For example, planning for public transport and physical transport infrastructure requirements.

Yes, this is very important and see our answer to the 'New Development' section, Q2.

Q2. Making sure there are more opportunities for active travel such as walking and cycling across the Arc.

For example, wider pavements, segregated cycle lanes, improved network of cycle lanes, and better pedestrian crossings.

Very important.

RTPI research¹³ found that reducing trips and achieve modal shift away from vehicles, places need to be designed to make local living as easy as possible and to make active travel, public transport and other forms of shared mobility the obvious choice for journeys outside the local area. We recommended substantially increasing the amount of funding available to local areas to invest in creating active travel networks, including through more extensive implementation of 'quick wins' such as street closures, road space reallocation and low traffic neighbourhoods in addition to the planning, design and delivery of segregated cycle networks and e-Bike hire services.

Q3. Making sure that there is the right form of public transport in the right areas across the Arc and can be used by all travellers, including people with any particular needs

Very important.

¹³ RTPI (2021) [Net Zero Transport: the role of spatial planning and place-based solutions](#)



- Q4. Cutting down on the impact of cars and other private vehicles within the Arc.**
For example, by supporting more sustainable forms of private travel like cycling.

Very important.

- Q5. Anything else to add about your vision of getting around?**

RTPI research¹⁴ shows that stronger policy will be needed to ensure that development is compatible with legal obligations to reduce emissions from surface transport. The Framework should set out how local plans or individual applications should measure and demonstrate how they are contributing to the delivery of net zero. This should include a focus on reducing the need to travel, through home-working, digital services and local living.

Place – making

Location of growth

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

- Q1. Making sure new developments are built in the most sustainable locations, for the environment, the economy and communities.**
For example, by developing brownfield redevelopment and making sure they have good access to town centres, shops and schools.

Very important, see our answer in the New Developments section, Q1.

- Q2. Anything else to add about your vision for location of growth?**

The Spatial Framework should test different spatial options which deliver the same outcomes, to different degrees and identify the most appropriate level of intervention for the Spatial Framework on establishing sustainable locations that could contribute towards achieving national net zero targets. We recommend engaging with landowners especially the Oxford and Cambridge Colleges and the Church of England to ensure the success of the Spatial Framework.

Homes in your area

- Q1. Ensuring the right types of housing are delivered in the right locations to meet the needs of both renters and buyers.**
For example, family houses, first-time buyers, specialist housing, student accommodation and opportunities for people to build their own homes.

Very important.

¹⁴ Idid.



Q2. Increasing the amount and availability of affordable homes within the Arc.

Very important.

The RTPI has long argued that better planning can be an important way of solving the housing affordability crisis¹⁵.

Q3. Anything else to add about your vision for homes in your area? (optional)

No answer proposed for this question.

Design of new development and streets

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Q1. Making sure a coordinated approach is taken to the design and delivery of new developments to ensure they are supported by new and existing infrastructure.

Very important.

Q2. Making sure the environment and sustainability is at the heart of new developments.

For example, by improving the built and natural environment, making sure development complements surrounding areas, and is supported by the right level of infrastructure.

Very important.

Q3. Making sure there is the right mix of uses in new developments to help make high quality and thriving new places.

Very important.

Q4. Making sure new developments help support healthy lifestyles for existing and future communities.

For example, through walking and cycling, high quality green spaces, and accessible streets.

Very important.

Q5. Making sure new developments promote resilience to climate change.

For example, through green roofs, managing surface water, tree planting, storing rainwater and new green spaces.

Very important.

Q6. Anything else to add about your vision for the design of new developments and streets?

Quality design should be a key factor in formulating and implementing planning policies, given that it can help to improve health, create more environmentally sustainable places, attract

¹⁵ RTPI (2021) [Better Planning for Housing Affordability](#)



investment and support civic pride. There is an opportunity for the Spatial Framework to promote the Arc as a test bed for a more ambitious approach to design¹⁶.

The RTPI has no doubt that only a multi-disciplinary approach - involving planners, architects, developers, ecologists, highways authorities and communities - will lead to effective delivery of quality design outcomes. As a result of deep, post-recession cuts and reduced resources, there has been a hollowing-out of design capability and understanding within local government.

Delivering the spatial framework

Engaging communities

Q1. How can government engage with the public better? Rank these by dragging the boxes in priority order or by assigning an order number in the drop-down (1=highest priority).

We highlighted in our March 2021 policy paper¹⁷ how it is vital in future for those designing public engagement to think about what audiences want, rather than just what the promoter needs from them. Too often consultation and engagement activity can be seen as a list of questions that need responses. Creating a conversation that the community cares about joining and building in value-add activity for participants can help to reach the widest possible audience.

An RTPI report conducted by Grayling in 2020¹⁸ found that more than half (53%) of the general public surveyed agreed that changes to local places, spaces and services will need to happen to adapt to life post pandemic – and that they want to be involved in these decisions. It will be important for the Spatial Framework continue to embed this approach as the process develops.

Q2. Before this consultation, I was familiar with the area known as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

This question appears to be directed at the general public.

Q3. Do you have anything else to add on engaging communities?

Effective, proportionate engagement with communities that is representative of the population and businesses across the Arc that clearly explains the reasons for producing the Spatial Framework is key to promoting 'buy in'. Demonstrating what 'do nothing' i.e., no framework might look like is one way to show added value. This should involve emphasising how the Arc is a national economic priority area that could make a major contribution to national economic recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

¹⁶ RTPI (2021) [Net zero and nature recovery targets at centre of consultancy-led investigation into design codes for RTPI](#)

¹⁷ RTPI (2021) [Planning for a better future: RTPI Proposals for Planning Reform in England](#)

¹⁸ RTPI (2020) [More than half of UK public want to be involved in changes to their local community post-pandemic](#)



The explanation should include recognition of the need to encourage and nurture that position through forward planning and a proactive approach to current and future challenges. It could demonstrate its added value by being clear that the Framework can facilitate coordination, cooperation and collective awareness with a focus on investment throughout the Arc. It should articulate how it will help to shape future local planning decisions on how land is used, decide on how the environment is protected and enhanced, consider where and what type of new development happens and proactively assess what infrastructure is provided.

Underpinning the document will be a long-term vision to 2050, it is therefore important to acknowledge that large parts of the community being planned for up to 2050, do not yet have a voice. It is therefore prudent to understand, appreciate and address, where possible, the shorter electoral cycle timeframes with which local politicians operate under. There is also a need to provide politicians with richer data on community preferences to support them with their decision making.

The Framework will be most effective where it is clear on how it will operate within the wider areas outside of the Arc. This should include highlighting the cross boundary joint working arrangements such as Oxfordshire's relationship with Berkshire Unitary Authorities, Swindon and Cambridge's partnership with West Suffolk. The dynamics between the Arc and London, the Norwich to Cambridge corridor and Hertfordshire should also be factored in. Principally, it should build on the well-established work already underway across the borders through the joint planning processes. However, a challenge to overcome will be finding an appropriate way to engage with Buckinghamshire Council following decision by the local authority withdraw its support for the Arc.

Our commitment to data, evidence and data tools#

Q1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on data and evidence?

It is encouraging to hear that the Department are building an evidence base so that the Spatial Framework can be based on the latest and most reliable data and analysis available.

Q2. Do you have anything else to add on data, evidence and digital tools?

No answer proposed for this question.

How we will monitor and deliver the framework

Q1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on delivery and funding?

No answer proposed for this question.

Q2. Do you have anything else to add on delivery and funding?

We recommend that local authorities including Local Planning Authorities and all the necessary built and natural environment stakeholders such as Natural England and the Environment Agency are fully engaged throughout the process and appropriately resourced. A multi-disciplined approach is essential if growth is to be planned around places and not functions.



Q3. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on monitoring and evaluation?

The delivery framework should remain a 'live' document that can be quickly updated to reflect changing circumstances as necessary such as in response to climate change, technological advances or public health. The Spatial Framework itself should guide the vision over a long period of time.

Q4. Do you have anything else to add on monitoring and evaluation?

No answer proposed for this question.

Scoping report for sustainability appraisal

Q1. To what extent do you agree with the key strategic issues and opportunities in the proposed scope for the Sustainability Appraisal of the Spatial Framework?

These appear to be a positive starting point to begin the process of producing the Spatial Framework.

Q2. Are there any other strategic issues and/or opportunities that need to be considered in the appraisal?

Paragraph 1.61 of the scoping report provides welcome acknowledgement of the key role played by the aggregates sector. The supply of aggregates supply is becoming a critical issue nationally and the Spatial Framework will need to address this.

Q3. Are you aware of any additional strategic data that we should take into account as part of the sustainability appraisal?

No answer proposed for this question.

Q4. Are you aware of any additional plans or programmes you think will be important to consider within the sustainability appraisal?

No answer proposed for this question.

Q5. To what extent do you agree with our approach to the Sustainability Appraisal?

Planning plays a crucial role in the transition to a zero-carbon society, engaging communities and enabling environmentally friendly choices in everything from energy to transport. The consultation positively notes the opportunity for the Spatial Framework to lead the transition to net zero. The RTPI has previously outlined how planning can support the transition by minimising the carbon emissions of development through sustainable locations, which are integrated with low carbon infrastructure, ensuring design delivers climate adaptation and



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mitigation, and coordinating a national retrofit of our built environment¹⁹. This should be part of a wider democratic conversation with the local community, helping to both reduce emissions and build resilience to extreme weather events.

¹⁹ RTPI (2021) **Planning for a better future: RTPI Proposals for Planning Reform in England**