

The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP  
The Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London SW1A 2HQ

By email: [public.enquiries@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:public.enquiries@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk)

16th January, 2018

Dear Mr Hammond,

### **CaMkOx Growth Corridor: Call for a Public Inquiry**

**On behalf of CPRE Oxfordshire, I am writing to ask you to consider the case for a Public Inquiry into the 'Growth Corridor Concept', as a necessary and proper process to ensure public confidence in the soundness of what is proposed.**

The Growth Corridor, as set out by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), is intended to generate population growth at approximately three times the rate indicated in the Government's own household projections in order to provide a workforce for new local businesses and to create housing growth at four times the natural rate to provide homes for migrants and reduce house prices for local people.

Not only is this plan extreme in itself, but it will have a compounding effect in two ways: first, the new higher baseline will itself generate higher 'natural growth' and secondly, population centres themselves attract inward migration.

The proposed transformation of the counties along the Corridor - predominantly rural - into 'England's Economic Heartland', with all that this implies for the character of the area, would prove a sea change, both transformative and irreversible.

**There has been no public consultation or discussion of any kind in respect of these intentions.**

**Nor is it clear that the plans as laid out would achieve their objectives in terms of population growth, housing and affordability, or hi-tech business development. These plans would achieve the very opposite, resulting in a commuting population and putting house prices further out of reach of local people.**

The engagement with the growth plans, promoted by Local Enterprise Partnerships and approved by Local Authorities, is driven, not through any conviction that this is the proper vision for the public they serve, but through Government coercion by way of substituting what was once general support for Local Authority activities into targeted bonuses for complying with specific top-down plans. Local Authorities know that they can only get funding to provide and maintain the infrastructure needed to support present population levels by signing up for a dash for growth, even though in the longer run this is bound to compound existing problems.

Before embarking on such transformative change to the environment, the present population is entitled to be consulted on the desirability of the proposals. Will those affected accept such fundamental change and be confident that the evidence to support it has been independently tested and found sound?

The present situation is that the National Infrastructure Commission report is being implemented without any public engagement. The evidence it contains, whilst broad in geographical scope and multiplicity of conclusions, is too shallow to be relied on.

The scope of this letter cannot be to lay before you the many causes for concern as regards the soundness of the NIC evidence, but the following may serve as examples:

- a. Contrary to the assumptions in the report, there is no evidence whatever that an uplift in house-building on the scale proposed would have any effect on house prices or the accessibility of houses. Kate Barker's report in 2004<sup>1</sup> proved that no level of uplift in house-building would reduce prices; developers will not "flood the market" with houses they cannot sell in order to reduce their own profitability. Local authorities cannot afford to take part in market engineering of this kind, and since the NIC report assumes that purchasers from outside the Corridor can be readily found to buy all the houses proposed, there is no conceivable justification for expecting house prices to drop.
- b. The NIC report estimates that 25% of the new houses would go to London commuters. There appears to be no firm evidence for this, nor how this average 25% might be spread. The percentage of London commuters across the Corridor might be very considerably higher, especially at the western end, given the two new rail links, first to Oxford and secondly to Aylesbury/Bletchley. If a high proportion of houses were taken by commuters, this would not only put them out of reach of local people but would not provide labour for the intended new Silicon Valley businesses.
- c. There is no obvious reason why university spin-off companies should be located nearby. They could just as readily and more beneficially be located in less expensive areas where there is need for employment, rather than in areas of over-employment.

**These factors lie at the heart of the proposal for the Ox-Cam Corridor, and none are properly evidenced. A Public Inquiry would require them to be rigorously and transparently justified. It is considered a necessary and proper process to ensure public confidence in the soundness of what is proposed, as well as public acceptance of the huge changes in the nature and character of their environment.**

Yours sincerely,

Dr Peter Collins  
Chairman, CPRE Oxfordshire

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<sup>1</sup> Barker Review of Housing Supply, 2004 -  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080107210803/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations\\_and\\_legislation/barker/consult\\_barker\\_index.cfm](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080107210803/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations_and_legislation/barker/consult_barker_index.cfm)