

Thursday, 2 September 2021

Dear Parish Councillor,

Re: Oxford-Cambridge Arc public consultation – closes on 12 October 2021

On 20th July, central government published a consultation to engage with local communities about the future of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, seeking views to help shape a vision for the Spatial Framework.

It's about this consultation that we write today, as we urgently want to make sure as many people have the opportunity to contribute to this consultation. We are particularly keen to hear from those communities that may be traditionally less well heard or have little experience of engaging with government and consultations. We are therefore asking if you could help to share information about it among residents, businesses and local organisations. For example, you could share information in your resident newsletters, on your Facebook page or on your noticeboards.

Consultation information:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1003974/Creating a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1003974/Creating_a_vision_for_the_Oxford-Cambridge_Arc.pdf)

Consultation responses online submission: <https://placebuilder.io/futureofthearc>

Background

The Arc spans the five counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. This forms an 'Arc', which provides a place to live for approximately 3.7 million residents and supports over 2 million jobs

It is a unique place, home to cutting-edge research, globally renowned science and technology clusters, and some of the most productive towns and cities in the country. It contains a vibrant natural environment, world-leading universities, and a rich cultural heritage, all of which makes it a desirable place to live, visit, work and invest. The Arc is home to one of the fastest growing economies in England, and has been designated by the Government as an area of national economic importance.

We have an opportunity to benefit communities by better connecting people, places, services and businesses through more sustainable transport and ensuring development across the area is truly sustainable. However, if we are to meet the challenges that come with growth and protect and enhance the Arc's heritage and environment, we must plan better across administrative boundaries and seek to provide for future needs, delivering the right development and supporting infrastructure in the right places at the right times.

In February this year, the Government [published details](#) about the intention to create a long-term strategic plan for the Arc, called a 'spatial framework'. This Spatial Framework will provide a vision for the future of the whole area to 2050 and beyond, in order to better coordinate and focus investment and shape 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. It will set national planning policy and national transport policy for the Arc, helping to guide strategic development in the area in a way that supports sustainable economic growth and benefits communities across the Arc.

Consultation

This consultation is the first phase of the Government's work on this Spatial Framework and brings a different approach to how and when central government engages locally on what will be national policy. The Government is engaging at this early stage to make sure those who live, work or have an interest in the region can have a meaningful voice in the development of the Spatial Framework, and that it can be built upon the aspirations and needs of the people it will serve.

This first consultation is seeking views from the public about their vision for the area, and their priorities for the Arc in the years to come.

These views will help shape the vision for the Arc Spatial Framework, ultimately guiding future growth in the Arc to 2050. Alongside the consultation to create a vision, the Government is also seeking views on its initial plans for the Framework's Sustainability Appraisal - its process for ensuring that any policy going into the Framework is developed with environmental, economic and social sustainability at its heart.

This consultation marks the first of a three-stage process for the development of the Spatial Framework, as outlined by the Government. There will be two further consultations and other opportunities to liaise with central Government on the future of the Arc across the two-year project

Maximising participation

It is important that the vision for this Spatial Framework reflects the aspirations and priorities of those living, working, or with an interest in communities across the Arc. This is why we ask directly for your help in bringing this consultation to the attention of your residents and networks, particularly younger people and people who wouldn't normally engage in processes like this.

To this e-letter, we attach a poster and some promotional materials that you could share online.

The government has also created an [online toolkit](#) which can be used by councils and local organisations to help inform discussion about what the Spatial Framework will be and about the key themes in the consultation. The central government team has engaged with the communications teams and representatives of the County, Unitary and District councils across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc on this consultation and toolkit.

We expect that local councils will be submitting individual responses to the consultation, as well as a joint response through the Arc Leadership Group. We encourage all Parish Councillors and councils to respond also.

To gather views from residents and local businesses, the Government has launched a new online tool, designed to make it as quick and easy as possible for residents and members of the public to make their voice heard. This can be found here:

<https://placebuilder.io/futureofthearc>. Alternatively, written submissions can be sent in also. Details about this can be found in the [consultation information](#).

Yours faithfully,

Bev Hindle,
Executive Director, Oxford-Cambridge Arc Leadership Groups

Lucy Wilkins,
Deputy Director, OxCam Unit, MHCLG