

Debate Pack

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Oxford Cambridge Arc

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Background

About the Oxford-Cambridge Arc

The area between Oxford and Cambridge, incorporating the ceremonial county areas of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire forms a core spine that the government recognises as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a globally significant place, home to world-leading technology clusters, two of the world’s leading universities.

The economic prospectus for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, published in October 2020, states that the area covered by the arc has 2 million jobs and generates over £111 billion of economic output per year.¹ The prospectus promotes the region as a “highly successful, fast-growing and productive network of places”, that with additional investment would be enhanced further.

In February 2021, the Government published its plan for developing “a spatial framework” for the Arc, including a timeline and how it will work with local partners. The plan cites studies suggesting large economic gains:

Forecasts vary, but successive studies have found that there is a clear transformational opportunity. With the right interventions and investment, economic forecasts suggest that by 2050 we would see economic output growing by between £80.4 billion and £163 billion per annum, with between 476,500 and 1.1 million additional jobs.²

The plan goes on to note that the Government has identified the Arc as a national economic priority area.³

National Infrastructure Commission

In March 2016, the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) was asked to “consider how to maximise the potential of the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor as a single, knowledge-intensive cluster that competes on a global stage, protecting the area’s high quality environment, and securing the homes and jobs the area needs.”

[The Commission’s final report, Partnering for Prosperity](#) (2017) identifies “opportunities to create well-designed, well-connected new communities and deliver one million new homes and jobs in the area by 2050, while respecting the natural environment and without making changes to existing Green Belt

¹ OXLEP, [The Oxford-Cambridge Arc Economic Prospectus](#), October 2020

² MCHLG, [Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: an introduction to the spatial framework](#), 18 February 2021, para 1.8, citing NIC (2017), [Partnering for Prosperity](#)

³ MCHLG, [The Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners](#), March 2019

protections”. The NIC says that “Central to achieving this vision are completion of the new East-West Rail line connecting Oxford and Cambridge by 2030 and accelerating the development and construction of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway.”

The [Government response to the NICs report](#) was published in 2019. In this response, the Government broadly endorsed and supported the NIC’s recommendations. The Government and local councils involved in the arc have also published a [joint statement](#), which (amongst other things):

- acknowledges the need “to deliver significantly more homes in the Arc”;
- recognises need “to plan for and deliver substantial additional infrastructure”, and in particular “supports the delivery of transport links such as East West Rail and improvements to the strategically important roads network”; and
- emphasises the need to “to meet our economic and housing ambitions while overall improving, rather than degrading, the environment”

Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Transport schemes

East West rail

The [East-West Rail scheme](#) will re-establish a rail link between Cambridge and Oxford to improve connections between East Anglia and central, southern and western England. The proposed East West Rail route falls into three distinct sections:

- [Western Section](#) (Oxford to Bedford and Milton Keynes to London Marylebone via Aylesbury), which is being delivered by Network Rail.
- [Central Section](#) (Bedford to Cambridge), which will be delivered by [East West Railway](#).
- Eastern Section (Cambridge to Norwich and Ipswich), options for which are being developed by the East West Railway.

East West Rail company

The Government established the new [East West Rail Company](#) on 14 December 2017 as a non-departmental public arms-length body “to accelerate delivery of the project and bring new drive and focus.” East West Rail says its role is to:

- build infrastructure which supports local and national strategies for the region
- safely deliver the infrastructure as quickly and as cost effectively as possible
- explore new ways to fund and finance the infrastructure

- explore improved ways of working across the rail industry
- design and integrate the infrastructure and train services, so passengers get a better experience
- ensure the new railway meets the needs of communities - during and after the build phases

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway

The Oxford-Cambridge expressway aims to address the poor east-west transport connections between Oxford and Cambridge. To this end, Highways England was commissioned to examine the costs and benefits of a new high-quality road link between Milton Keynes and Oxford, taking account of the views of local authorities and residents in the Arc. You can read about the options considered in [Highways England's 2018 Oxford-Cambridge Expressway booklet](#).

In the [Government's response to the NIC report](#), it said (p7):

The government is committed to the ambition of opening the 'missing link' of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and to accelerate development work. As announced at Autumn Budget 2017, the government has committed to funding the delivery of an Expressway of high-quality east-west roads between Oxford and Cambridge, key elements of which will be included in the second Roads Investment Strategy period, from 2020 to 2025.

The [project was subject to legal challenge in 2019](#), but the High Court found in favour of the Government.

The expressway project has now been cancelled. [Highways England explains:](#)

Through extensive analysis and local engagement, we developed and assessed the costs and benefits of a number of route options for the new the road link.

Our work identified that there is not a cost-effective option for the taxpayer. Based on our findings, the Government decided that further work cannot be justified on the expressway proposal and has therefore cancelled the project.

The Government is now continuing to work with us, local partners and England's Economic Heartland as the Sub-national Transport Body, to consider where targeted, localised road investment could be needed within the Oxford - Cambridge Arc, alongside other transport investment. We look forward to working together to explore these issues to bring forward plans that benefit the area.

Oxford-Cambridge Arc: planning

The Government's February 2021 policy paper, [Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#), states that realising the Arc's full potential "will require coordination of planning functions across the region." It sets out a road-map for developing a long-term Spatial Framework for the Arc, to be prepared by MHCLG in consultation with local stakeholders.

The Framework will, among other things, identify locations for new homes and new settlements and outline policies to enable them to be brought forward "at the scale and speed needed." Site allocations will not be included in the Framework, and the policy paper makes no mention of housebuilding targets. Housing Minister Christopher Pincher has previously stated that the National Infrastructure Commission's headline figure of 1 million new homes in the area by 2050 "is not a specific Government policy or indeed a target. However, we do want to maximise the number of homes that can be built across the country." ([HC Deb 9 June 2021 c394WH](#))

The Spatial Framework will have the same status as the National Planning Policy Framework. In practice, this means that local planning authorities in the Arc will need to take the Framework into account when producing Local Plans and making decisions. Commentary from the planning industry has focused on whether this signals a return to government-led, regional-level planning.

The first step of the road-map – a consultation on the vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – is expected in July 2021 (CLA, [Oxcam project update](#) [webinar], 14:22).

Opposition to the Arc

There has been opposition to the proposals for new housing development and to the plans for the expressway (now abandoned) on environmental grounds. Responding to the Government's announcement for a spatial planning framework, the RSPB issued a press release [calling on the Government to match its economic growth ambition with a target to restore nature](#). RSPB England Head of Policy & Advocacy, Alice Hardiman said:

Doubling the area of land managed for nature in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a perfectly achievable and appropriate ambition for a proposal that aims to double the economy of the Arc and embody England's 25 Year Environment Plan.

Compared to the Prime Minister's recent commitment to protect 30% of our land and seas for biodiversity this is a relative drop in the ocean, but for an area of the country with one of the lowest proportions of wildlife

sites in England outside our big cities, it could make a huge difference to people's quality of life and to the resilience of the natural world.

Ministers have been very clear about the scale of their ambition for economic growth. In light of the vital importance of the natural environment in underpinning our economy and prosperity, it is high time they set similarly ambitious goals for restoring nature.

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Parliamentary material

[East West Rail Route Consultation: North East Bedfordshire](#)

HC Debate

28 June 2021

[House Building Targets: North East Bedfordshire](#)

HC Debate

9 June 2021

[East West Rail: Aylesbury Spur](#)

HC Debate

24 May 2021

[Electrification of East-West Rail](#)

Early Day Motion

24 March 2021

[East-West Rail Link](#)

HL PQ

22 February 2021

[Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#)

HC PQ

22 July 2020

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Press material/Blog articles

[EWR challenged on environment, economy, electrification and plans for St Neots](#)

Hunts Post
6 July 2021

['Let's hear some ambition and positivity' about EWR plans](#)

Hunts Post
July 2021

[Ox-Cam Arc plans: what they mean for you, your community and your environment](#)

Stop the Arc Group
July 2021

[East-West Rail: Bedfordshire residents give their views on £5bn scheme](#)

BBC News
8 June 2021

[A proper gander at the Arc](#)

Nigel Pearce
Smart Growth UK
30 April 2021

[No Expressway group now plans to fight housing growth plans](#)

Oxford Mail
20 March 2021

[Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Are we witnessing the rebirth of regional planning?](#)

PBC Today
18 March 2021

[Bucks Council's delight as £3.5bn Expressway is scrapped](#)

Bucks Herald
18 March 2021

[Oxford-Cambridge expressway road scrapped after cost analysis](#)

BBC News
18 March 2021

[The Oxford-Cambridge Arc could be an exemplar for strategic spatial planning - but it needs serious commitment](#)

The Planner
1 March 2021

[Oxford-Cambridge Arc blueprint leads to worries about top down planning](#)

Oxford Mail

26 February 2021

[Climate and community need to be at the heart of government's Arc plans](#)

The Planner

26 February 2021

[Future of the Oxford Cambridge Arc:An interactive article about urban development modelling](#)

Arc Universities Group

24 February 2021

[Arc](#)

Simonicity

20 February 2021

[East-West railway 'should be electric not diesel'](#)

Oxford Mail

28 January 2021

[Oxfordshire leaders endorse economic plans for Oxford to Cambridge Arc](#)

Oxford Mail

4 November 2020

['Don't adopt this plan for a made up growth zone', writes countryside campaigner](#)

Oxford Mail

30 October 2020

[How did wildlife groups start collaborating in the destruction of nature?](#)

George Monbiot

The Guardian

24 June 2020

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Press notices

[Bridget Rosewell speech to Westminster Social Policy Forum: Next steps for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#)

National Infrastructure Commission

30 March 2021

The following is an edited transcript of remarks given by Bridget Rosewell, National Infrastructure Commissioner, at a virtual conference held on 26 March 2021 to discuss progress on the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Arc.

“As we gather again to discuss progress on the Oxford-Cambridge arc, it is perhaps helpful to remember the exam question the Commission was set when we first looked at how to maximise the economic opportunities of the area back in 2017.

Firstly, the clue is in the name – it is an arc, not a dumbbell with two large bits at either end. Many of the economic opportunities for the area can be found not just in Oxford or Cambridge, but in Milton Keynes, Cranfield, and Northampton to name a few.

Together, these are already successful areas, which we visited many times when we were undertaking this study. But they are also very expensive areas to live.

Our initial question of how to support the future success of the arc turned in to a question about how you create an effective labour market in which people will be able to afford to live.

Oxford and Cambridge themselves are some of the most expensive places to live in the country. That is particularly relevant not just to senior managers working in the high tech companies across the arc, but to post-doctoral students, nurses and teachers – all of the people you need to run a successful economy and a successful set of places.

Housing to support a flexible labour market

Our view was there is less pressure on identifying the space and other requirements for creating businesses; there was far more pressure on creating the housing needed.

Our assessment was that we needed one million more houses across the whole of the arc, over the course of a generation – a 30 year period – which was about twice the rate of development then being planned.

Now of course you could argue that this development should be concentrated around the most successful cities, by building on the green belt around

Oxford and Cambridge. This would, the argument runs, mean that we wouldn't need to build a railway, for instance.

But I think it is important to step back and think about that proposition. The reason we came to a different conclusion was in part because there are various other very successful places, which don't get the same headlines, but which are also growing and need to be enabled to continue to grow – such as around Milton Keynes and Cranfield.

But the other reason is that we need to create a successful labour market with flexibility that allows people to move and change jobs in different directions: a labour market which allows you to have a job in, say, Oxford, while your partner has a job in, say, Milton Keynes; or vice versa, and then later on you can both change jobs and reverse that pattern. There are all sorts of combinations of work and life that you make possible by improving the communications east-west across the arc.

Indeed, the Commission has recently shone a light on poor east-west connections in other parts of the country which have been pretty neglected over the last 50 years or so. This is not just between Oxford Cambridge, but Cambridge to Norwich, Oxford to Swindon, and further north, between the West and East Midlands. Everybody has been busy thinking about connections into London rather than connections across. Those strategic connections are some of the most important.

And while things have perhaps moved more slowly than we'd hoped, there has been progress.

We have had the consultation on the East-West Rail scheme route plus the announcement of £760 million of funding for the next phase of the East-West Rail scheme, between Bicester and Bletchley.

In our recent Annual Monitoring Report, the Commission has welcomed this and related announcements from government, and the confidence it has given to England's Economic Heartland.

Our most recent report also identified that a priority for the government this year must be to progress the work required to develop an initial draft spatial framework for the arc.

This has to work bottom up as well as top down.

This is crucial to ensure that growth is not just imposed on the region from Whitehall, but is worked on by local authorities and local communities with proper engagement between all parties.

That includes good design. The Commission's Design Group, whose design principles for national infrastructure were positively reflected in commitments

in the National Infrastructure Strategy, was partly born out of our work on the arc.

Infrastructure that is provided, and the places it supports, need to be well designed and produce the things that people actually want.

The role of transport

Transport was also an essential element of the Commission's work on the arc. Transport can have a catalysing effect for growth, alongside other interventions.

While transport is necessary, it isn't sufficient without the links between the transport infrastructure and the places.

One of the challenges for the arc has been deciding on the most appropriate linkages between transport and places. One of things we spent considerable time thinking about was the 'last mile' in the journey between home and work, and the best location for public transport infrastructure.

There is still quite a lot of work ahead to get to phase 3 of East-West Rail – the new line between Bedford and Cambridge.

The location of this link – and how it plays into the potential developments along the outline route – is fundamentally important to the whole Arc, not just the eastern section.

Making sure you get the right engagement with local communities to try and secure as much as support as is possible for the new piece of railway is going to be very important.

For Cambridge South station, the next step is for Network Rail to submit a Transport and Works Act Order to the planning inspectorate. This is a well embedded process.

But we still have the challenge of deciding what bits of road are still needed, even if we are not proceeding with the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway. I do think that, particularly as we move forward into a world of electric vehicles, people will still want to have access to roads. Roads are a fundamental piece of technology, which have been around for millennia. People will continue to need to use roads, not least for moving goods – your deliveries will still need to get to you.

Collaborative decision making

Making sure we get the right balance between what is happening in Whitehall and what is happening on the ground is vital.

We also need to think about the right use of development corporations. I do think they have a useful role, in bringing together powers in one place, particularly when it comes to linkages. But they need to be development corporations that are embedded in the locality.

In conclusion, we need to grow in the self-confidence that we can deliver on this work. Not everybody is going to like everything. There is a scale to housing challenge. But we are moving forward, and things are starting to happen.

We see it at the Bletchley Flyover, we see it at Cambridge South station, alongside the consultation on the completion of the East-West Rail link.

The arc is one of the most successful parts of the country and it needs to stay successful.

It needs to provide job opportunities for the children and grandchildren of the people who live there now. But of course, any plans need to be acceptable to the current communities and this is where proper engagement is so crucial.

It has taken a while, but that is not unusual – or necessarily a bad thing – when it comes to complex projects that involve so many people. Let’s hope we can continue to pick up the pace and help create a prosperous arc for the future.”

Government plan to transform Oxford-Cambridge Arc into UK's fastest growing economic region

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

19 February 2021

Spatial framework plan will help to create thousands of jobs, drive investment, protect and enhance the environment.

- Generational plan will unlock the long-term potential of the region, transforming the Arc into a world-class place to live and work sustainably.
- An intention to establish a new single voice for the area - an Arc Growth Body - to drive and support economic growth
-

An ambitious plan to unleash the economic and cultural potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, to transform it into one of the world’s premier growth corridors and a world-leader in sustainability, was yesterday announced by Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher.

The spatial framework plan will help to create thousands of jobs, drive investment, protect and enhance the environment, and provide the infrastructure and beautiful new places needed to make the area – which

spans the five counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire – an even greater place to live and work. The results, due to be published in 2022, will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help to ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.

The intention to establish an Arc Growth Body will also help unleash the area's potential as a global innovation powerhouse by promoting the Arc internationally.

With the right interventions and investment, local analysis suggests that by 2050 economic output could double to over £200 billion.

To realise the full potential of local economies and the Arc as a whole, the government is also considering how further investment could create jobs, support the delivery of more homes, and support local economic growth. Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP yesterday said:

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is already home to world-leading economic, cultural and scientific assets.

We know for instance Cambridge's rate of patent applications – a key indicator of innovation – is the highest in the United Kingdom, while nearby Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the country.

We want to take this region to the next phase of its renaissance by unlocking its full potential and our plans will drive investment where it is needed and ensure, as growth happens, we create well-designed, inclusive and vibrant places and communities.

The OxCam spatial framework will allow us to plan positively for growth and we look forward to working with our local partners over the coming months to strengthen our vision and approach to the Arc.

Councillor Barry Wood, Chair of The Arc Leaders Group and Leader Cherwell District Council yesterday said:

We welcome the continuing commitment from Government to the Oxford to Cambridge Arc through today's announcements.

We look forward to working together with local people and our local partners to deliver an economy that works for all, underpinned by a high-quality natural environment. This will include planning for and enabling development that is truly inclusive and sustainable which delivers real benefits for our communities and environment now and in the future.

The Arc already is home to over 2 million jobs and provides a place to live for over 3.7 million residents.

The Arc's success is key to the United Kingdom's national prosperity, international competitiveness, and ability to meet the challenges and opportunities the country will face over the next century, including climate change and supporting nature recovery technological change fighting COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.

This regional success will build on the work of the government that has helped millions of people continue to provide for their families as part of its [Plan for Jobs](#) to protect, support and create employment.

Further information

The [Oxford to Cambridge \(OxCam\) Arc](#) the name given to a cross-government initiative that supports planning for the future made up of the five counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. It includes:

- 3 county councils: Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.
- 17 district councils: City of Oxford, South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse, West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, Northampton, South Northamptonshire, Daventry, Wellingborough, Kettering, Corby, East Northamptonshire, City of Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire;
- 6 unitary authorities: Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Luton, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and City of Peterborough;
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc 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.

Oxford and Cambridge are world-leading centres of research and innovation. There are ten significant higher education institutions, including Cranfield University, with its world-leading specialisms in automotive and aerospace engineering, the Open University, and the world-leading centres of learning at the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge.

The Arc contains a vibrant natural environment and a rich cultural heritage, and it is home to some of the country's fastest growing and most innovative places.

Cambridge's rate of patent applications – a key indicator of innovation – is the highest in the UK, at over 12 times the national average. Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the country. Work on the COVID-19 vaccine, testing and treatment is the latest example of the Arc's unique innovation and business environment leading efforts to tackle a global challenge.

The Arc already is home to over 2 million jobs and provides a place to live for over 3.7 million residents.

With the right interventions and investment, local economic forecasts suggest that by 2050 we would see economic output doubling to over £200 billion. The Arc's success is key to the UK's national prosperity, international competitiveness, and ability to meet the challenges and opportunities we will face as a country over the next century, including climate change and

supporting nature recovery, technological change, fighting COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.

“The Arc” offers a significant opportunity for the government and partners to work together to support the harmonious delivery of improved connectivity, productivity and place-making, whilst ensuring pioneering environmental standards and enhancements are delivered and the government’s 25 Year Environment Plan is put into action.

The desirability of the Arc as a place to live, visit, work and invest is in part due to the quality of the local environment, the rich and diverse character of its landscapes, and the resultant high value of the area’s natural capital.

Spatial framework

The spatial framework will set a plan and policies with the status of national planning policy. Based on a long-term, strategic approach to planning for growth across the area, it will help to unlock the long-term potential of the area in a sustainable way, improving the Arc as a place to live and work. It will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help to ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.

We yesterday published a [policy paper](#), which sets out the approach we intend to take, including:

- a timeline for developing the framework,
- how we will engage communities and work with local partners, and
- the high-level scope of the framework, including the approach it will take to planning for the environment, infrastructure, economic growth, and new homes and place-making.

Growth body

- Capitalising on the globally renowned assets of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc can help to lead the UK’s economic recovery. That is why government yesterday (18 February) announced its intent to establish a Growth Body in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.
- This will give a clear economic leadership voice to the Arc. This announcement builds on government’s support for the region including connecting communities through East West Rail and supporting a long-term plan for sustainable growth with the spatial framework.
- Government will work with local partners to ensure that the Growth Body is tailored to the region’s unique opportunities.

[Government should rethink approach to Oxford-Cambridge Arc, says CPRE](#) **Campaign to Protect Rural England**

18 February 2021

Commenting on the [Oxford-Cambridge growth arc spatial framework](#), released today, Paul Miner, head of land use and planning at CPRE, the countryside charity, said:

‘The Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor is the first real test for the government’s ambitions to improve the quality of new housing and

developments. These developments should be low carbon, healthy, nature friendly and fit for the future.

While ‘sustainable transport’ is frequently mentioned in the Policy Paper, it is clear there is no real commitment to public-transport-orientated development. We risk creating isolated car dependent settlement in the middle of nowhere. Worse still, most of the proposed development would be on greenfield land, including valuable farmland, harming progress in tackling the climate and nature emergencies.

That’s why we’re calling on the government to fundamentally rethink its approach. This could be done by prioritising affordable homes on brownfield land that are linked with low carbon transport that are bursting with green space and nature.

Nature’s Arc – new principles to protect and restore nature, and set ambitious environmental standards, must be at the heart of any new housing developments

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire (WTBCN), the RSPB, and the Woodland Trust

15 June 2020

We amended this press release on 22 June 2020 to clarify our position on the Growth Arc and associated Expressway plans. The original release on 15 June 2020 should have set out our position more clearly and we apologise for any confusion it caused.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire (WTBCN), the RSPB, and the Woodland Trust have jointly published a set of principles for protecting and restoring nature and tackling climate change if large-scale developments get the go-ahead in the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Arc.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust has long campaigned against the Government’s proposals to build an Expressway between Oxford and Cambridge and has also fought plans to build a million new homes across the area without the proper public consultation and assessments taking place.

However, as the March 2020 budget indicated, the Government plans to press ahead with some level of growth. The nature charities have published their set of principles, Nature’s Arc, to highlight their concern that growth must not be at the expense of wildlife and precious natural greenspaces.

The key principles are:

Existing nature must be protected. Government must carry out an environmental assessment of the Arc proposals as a whole, protect existing sites and avoid the loss of irreplaceable habitats.

Nature must be restored across the arc. Government must establish a Nature Recovery Network to create bigger, better, and more connected places for wildlife.

New standards must be set for sustainable development. It must all be carbon neutral, nature-friendly, and improve the lives of residents. The charities are calling for any plans within the Arc to be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment involving public consultation, so that the full impacts of plans can be seen and discussed. To date, the plans have developed in a piecemeal way preventing proper scrutiny. Nature's Arc principles require plans to be made public so they can be challenged where necessary and nature put first. Any development that takes place across the Arc must avoid damaging nature, and instead be actively beneficial.

The Nature's Arc principles emphasise the importance of access to nature and natural greenspace for the health, well-being, and resilience of people and communities. Using these principles, Government can make a commitment to a new standard for sustainable development that will benefit wildlife, tackle climate change and build healthier neighbourhoods for people.

Investing in nature and increasing and enhancing the region's "green infrastructure" – its parks, trees, woodlands, nature reserves and other natural green spaces – would benefit local people, the economy and the environment, making the Arc a better place for people to live and work, and for businesses to invest.

The Nature's Arc principles can be downloaded on the RSPB website.

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Further reading/websites

Reports/Studies (2017-2021)

[Arc Investment Report](#), Bidwells, July 2021

[Oxcam project update \[webinar\]](#), CLA, 24 June 2021

[The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: An Environmental Catastrophe \[Video\]](#), Presentation to Friends of the River Cam Meeting by Professor David Rogers, Secretary - No Expressway Group, 21 April 2021

[Refloating the Arc](#), Carter Jonas, April 2021

[What is the Oxford to Cambridge \(OxCam\) Arc?](#) CPRE Bedfordshire, March 2021

[Oxford-Cambridge Arc: A long-term vision to secure sustainable growth and prosperity for all](#), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 18 February 2021

[Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Economic Prospectus](#), Oxford-Cambridge Arc, October 2020

[A sustainable Oxford-Cambridge corridor? Spatial analysis of options and futures for the Arc](#), Infrastructure Transitions Research Consortium, 2020

[Radical regeneration manifesto](#), Bidwells Architects et al, 2020

The overheated Arc [part one](#) and [part two](#), Smart Growth UK, 2019

[The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: government ambition and joint declaration between government and local partners](#), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government/HM Treasury, 13 March 2019

[Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford: a corridor of uncertainty for the countryside](#), CPRE, October 2018

[‘Partnering for Prosperity: a new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc’](#), National Infrastructure Commission, November 2017 – see also October 2018 [Government response](#)

Websites

[East-West Rail Company](#)

[National Infrastructure Commission](#)

[The Oxford to Cambridge Arc Universities Group](#)

Oxford Cambridge Arc

[Ox-Cam - Local Natural Capital Plan for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc](#)

[RSPB- The Oxford to Cambridge Arc](#)

[Smart Growth UK](#)

[Stop the Arc Group](#)

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