

NIC New Report - Recommendations



The National Infrastructure Commission' announced a new report [\[Read here\]](#) on 17 November 2017 which makes recommendations for securing the Growth Corridor's long-term economic success, delivering improved infrastructure and new homes to create places where people will want to live and work.

Recommendation 1a: Government should progress work on East West Rail, the Expressway and new settlements through a single co-ordinated delivery programme, with cross-government ministerial commitment and oversight. The aim of this programme should be to unlock opportunities for transformational housing growth through the creation of well-connected new communities. As part of this programme Government should commit:

- £1bn to deliver the infrastructure necessary for a high quality and resilient rail commuter service between Bicester and Bedford, accelerating delivery of this section of East West Rail to a target date of 2023;
- I to accelerate work on the development of the new East West Rail line between Bedford and Cambridge, and commit to open the line by 2030; and
- I to deliver the 'missing link' of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, accelerating development work to deliver a clearly-defined and agreed route by 2025, enabling construction to begin as part of the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS 2) and be complete by 2030.

Key milestones and decision points in the development of East West Rail and the Expressway should be subject to "in principle" agreement to the development of significantly more ambitious proposals for housing growth in the corridor, including major new settlements and urban extensions, and subsequently, progress in identifying, evaluating and designating sites. "In principle" agreement should be provided within 12 months. The schemes should be futureproofed to ensure the potential for expansion and improvement is not permanently and prematurely closed.

Recommendation 1b: Government should seek to introduce fast, direct services to London to enable growth in the corridor between Bicester and Bletchley and improve connectivity between London and Aylesbury. Any such improvements should be contingent on local authorities' commitment to major development between Bicester and Bletchley and around existing settlements.

Recommendation 1c: Government should work with the private sector and the relevant local authorities to agree funding packages and progress schemes to support housing and employment growth now. These should include:

- essential works required to enable passenger services between Oxford and Cowley no later than 2019; and
 - the acceleration of East West Rail phase 3 works around south Cambridge to enable the delivery of a Cambridge South station in 2022 as part of Control Period 6.
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Substantial private sector and local contributions, reflecting the benefits that these parties gain, will be required to enable the delivery of these schemes.



Recommendation 2a: Government and local authorities should work together, through a robust and transparent process, to designate locations for new and expanded settlements by 2020. This should involve:

- commissioning formal studies to identify and assess options for new settlements required, and potential locations for these settlements;
- consultation with communities, statutory agencies, infrastructure providers, wider stakeholders and public examination of proposed sites; and
- formal designation of sites and the publication of such assessments as legally required.

The Commission is optimistic that Government and local authorities will reach agreement on the scale and location of new settlements in the national interest. However, if agreement cannot ultimately be reached, the Secretary of State should designate these new settlements.

Recommendation 2b: Government should:

- work with local authorities to establish appropriate delivery vehicles for new and expanded settlements across the corridor, considering the role that can be played by locally accountable Development Corporations, Mayoral Development Corporations, the Homes and Communities Agency and Urban Development Corporations.
- establish New Town Development Corporations to deliver larger new and expanded settlements. In so doing, it should:
 - work with local authorities to define and agree the objectives, membership and reporting arrangements for new development corporations;
 - provide a clear remit to support the economic success of large new settlements as centres of employment, and assist the development corporation by using wider policy levers to support local economic growth; and
 - explore the full range of options for funding development corporations' programme of land acquisition, including providing public funding with a view to unlocking substantial private investment, and balancing considerations of short term affordability and long-term value for money.

Recommendation 3: Government should work with local authorities to:

- put in place an independent design panel for East West Rail, the Expressway and new and expanded settlements across the corridor by April 2018. This panel should work in concert with existing infrastructure design panels and new development corporations to specify, scrutinise and challenge settlement designs, plans and delivery, with a view to:





- making most efficient use of new and existing infrastructure (including transport and utilities);
- supporting positive social outcomes (including better mental and physical health);
- achieving net gains in biodiversity and natural capital across the corridor; and
- improving quality of life for existing and future residents.
- establish arrangements for the long-term stewardship of valued community assets in each new or expanded settlement, placing responsibility and resources in the hands of the community – learning from both the Parks Trust in Milton Keynes and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation; and
- ensure that strategic infrastructure, including new elements of East West Rail and the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, are planned and developed to achieve net gains in biodiversity and natural capital across the corridor.

Recommendation 4: Government and local authorities should implement measures to increase certainty on the delivery of growth enabling infrastructure.

- Government should work with local authorities to establish an indicative, long-term pipeline of strategic national and local infrastructure investments, conditional upon specific housing delivery milestones, and with firm financial commitments made at the beginning of the relevant spending review, road investment or rail industry control period. This pipeline should be established and agreed by 2020.
- Local authorities should work with LEPs, local business groups, educational institutions and other key partners to formally agree robust and credible transport plans to enable the development of the corridor's key towns and cities. These should be agreed locally by April 2019. These plans should provide a firm basis for long-term growth and investment, and include plans for significantly upgrading public transport, integrating transport hubs and providing safe cycling infrastructure.
- Following agreement of these long-term transport plans, Government should develop deals, bespoke to this region, with local authorities in Oxfordshire and the central section of the corridor. These deals should extend powers over bus franchising, the introduction of smart ticketing, and give greater long-term certainty over future funding which authorities can use to fund, and unlock finance for, city-regional infrastructure improvements. Powers and resources should be devolved no later than April 2020.

Recommendation 5: Government should, through bespoke deals with local areas, make changes to the operation and application of CIL and s106 agreements across the corridor that will:

- give groups of local authorities, working together through appropriate governance structures, the power to levy a city-regional CIL; and
- remove restrictions on the pooling of section 106 revenues and on the forward funding of infrastructure against future receipts. These changes should be agreed by 2020.





Recommendation 6: government should consider the need for agreements extending flexibilities in the application of five-year land supply requirements. These agreements should only be considered in cases where local authorities agree deals to accommodate significantly higher levels of housing growth. Flexibilities should:

- help ensure that local areas are not exposed to increased risk of speculative development as a result of their commitment to additional growth; and
- be kept under review and made subject to local areas demonstrating progress in the delivery of major housing growth.

In all cases, agreement must preserve the requirement for local authorities to maintain a supply of land sufficient to enable house building at the rate that would have been required in the absence of any deal to support additional housing growth.

Recommendation 7: Government should work with local authorities across the corridor to secure agreement that:

- representatives of each of the corridor's defined sub-regions will work together at the corridor-wide level, and with Government, to develop an ambitious spatial vision covering the whole corridor area up to 2050, identifying locations for growth and investment and enabling infrastructure requirements. This work should be completed no later than summer 2019. This vision should be supported by a set of corridor-wide economic plans and an corridor-wide plan for strategic infrastructure; and
- local planning and transport authorities will work together, in defined sub-regions, to prepare statutory strategic spatial plans and submit these for inspection by April 2020. These should be underpinned by a clear investment strategy and a phased delivery plan, and shaped by the requirements of a robust integrated appraisal framework. Local Enterprise Partnerships and utilities providers should be included in the development of these strategic spatial plans.

Local authorities and LEPs should work collectively and seek to agree a definition for sub-regional planning areas by April 2018. If agreement cannot be reached by this date, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government should define the sub-regions based on consideration of the best areas for joined-up economic, transport and land-use planning.

Recommendation 8: Government should work with local authorities to put in place robust sub-regional and corridor-wide governance arrangements. This will include:

- reconstituting the Oxfordshire Growth Board as a planning joint committee by April 2018, ensuring it is empowered to take decisions on the development, adoption and delivery of a strategic statutory spatial plan;
- establishing growth board arrangements for defined planning areas in the central section of the corridor by April 2018, ensuring these are constituted as planning joint committees and empowered to take decisions on the development, adoption and delivery of a strategic





statutory spatial plan(s);

- I supporting the continued development of new and existing growth boards, with a view to their being constituted as statutory combined authorities, or mayoral combined authorities, as soon as possible and no later than 2022; and
- working with representatives of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Oxfordshire Growth Board and other growth board(s) across the corridor to establish an corridor-wide 'Strategic Partnership Board' by Summer 2018. This should include recruiting an independent chair to convene the board and provide a clear link to Government, and agreeing this appointment with local partners

Recommendation 9: Government should work with local authorities and any new delivery bodies from across the corridor to prepare and publish a six-monthly update, with the first being published in April 2018, enabling the Commission to assess the progress achieved in delivering the recommendations set out in this report.

