

To all members of Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire's District Councils and Oxfordshire MPs

6 April 2020

Dear Councillor

A Future Vision for Oxfordshire

At present everyone is understandably preoccupied with addressing the threat posed by COVID-19. As many commentators have said, it is a greater crisis faced by the UK than any since the Second World War, and people's health and wellbeing must come before all other considerations in the immediate future.

However, the pandemic also provides an opportunity to think about what sort of society and environment we want to see once the crisis is over. Indeed, there are parallels here with the wartime government. The 1942 Beveridge report led to the creation of the postwar welfare state, including the NHS, while the 1944 Education Act introduced secondary education for all. The wartime government also prepared the ground for the creation of National Parks and the passing of the Town and Country Planning Act immediately after the war.

One lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is that early action in response to the scientific evidence provides the best basis for bringing the crisis under control. In this respect there are parallels with the climate emergency. The scientific evidence on this is now indisputable, and there is widespread agreement (at least in principle) on many of the actions that are needed to address it. Yet many are still acting as though action can be delayed or, even worse, that doing more of the things that created the situation in the first place will make it better: expanding air travel, new road construction, reducing biodiversity. And some actions, such as building new houses that are energy-inefficient or failing to insulate the existing housing stock, as well as contributing to global heating, leave many households with energy bills they can ill afford.

We know that work is already underway in planning for Oxfordshire's development to 2050. As a contribution to that, we have prepared a short paper – A Vision for Oxfordshire's Future, which you can see by clicking here, www.poetsplanningoxon.uk/poets-a-vision-for-oxfordshire-050420.pdf - setting out some of the principles which we think should apply to that process. It is intended to promote discussion and debate, recognising the key democratic role that you play in representing the interests of Oxfordshire's residents.

Yours faithfully,

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