



PRESS RELEASE

Release time: 00.01 23 February 2019

THE "OXFORD-CAMBRIDGE ARC" – AN IDEA FOUNDED ON SAND

The so-called "Oxford-Cambridge Arc", which plans a million greenfield homes and motorway, was developed within Whitehall without consultation, without realising the huge damage it would cause and without consideration of alternatives, according to a new report.

The Overheated Arc - Part 1 is the first of two reports on the Arc being prepared by the Smart Growth UK coalition. It looks at the way the Arc was evolved behind closed doors in Whitehall and imposed on local communities by the Arc's main promoter, HM Treasury - which has now expanded the Arc to more than five whole counties.

The report says dreams of creating a world-class, knowledge-intensive Silicon Valley out of England's agricultural bread basket, just because it includes Cambridge and Oxford, is a fantasy. Many absurd claims are being made for the project but, in reality, there is no reason for treating this huge area of countryside as a comprehensive development zone.

"The plans are vague, unsustainable, uncosted and hugely damaging to the environment," says the report.

The study also examines the equally misnamed Oxford-Cambridge Expressway project which would punch a new motorway from Cambridge to Newbury through countryside including the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It would create the basis for a new "Outer M25" around London.

The Arc and Expressway would generate urban sprawl on an unprecedented scale. The Arc's promoters want to dump a million new houses – the equivalent of nine new Milton Keynes – on what is highly productive farmland. This would need at least four new cities and vast areas of urban sprawl.

The report looks at what's proposed, the damage it would do and the transport implications. It also lays bare the process by which it was evolved.

The second part of the report will ask whether, if the arc concept is a sound one, there are other UK locations where it could work beneficially without doing such damage. There are other areas which don't suffer Oxford and Cambridge's housing and labour shortages but which do need economic regeneration - and have great universities, brownfield land and public transport to underpin significant growth.

Notes to editors: The Part 1 report can be found at:-

http://www.smartgrowthuk.org/resources/downloads/Arc_Report_1.pdf

[Smart Growth UK](http://www.smartgrowthuk.org) is an informal coalition of national and local groups and individuals who support the "Smart Growth" approach to spatial, transport and community planning. This promotes compact and functional urban areas and sustainable transport options.

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