

This question is in relation to Items 16 and 18a on the Agenda.

The background to the question is that on 28 Apr 2022 Cllr Bridget Smith posted the following statement on her Facebook Page immediately prior to the Local Election at which she was a candidate.

“Councillor Bridget Smith - Gamlingay - 28 April 2022

A few people have asked me what ‘The Arc’ is as a result of a rather strange flyer entitled 'Stop the Arc' being put through some letter boxes in the village.

So in a nutshell - this was a Government Project launched in 2017 which now appears to have been completely ditched by Mr Gove MP. It was never really clear what the scheme was about but the Government did back track pretty quickly on discussion of 1 million new homes to create a UK Silicon Valley between Oxford and Cambridge when they realised that every council, including South Cambs, opposed it.

You won't be surprised to learn that this is all a nonsense and I am at a loss to understand why this anonymous group thinks it is worthwhile to leaflet Gamlingay.”

Cllr Smith was the nominated South Cambs DC representative on the Arc Leaders Group and the leader of the Environmental Working Group. She was therefore part of the Management Group responsible for deciding what the Arc was about.

The original National Infrastructure Commission sponsored 2018 report (extract attached) suggested that Cambridgeshire (excluding Peterborough and Fenland) needed 80k houses for Natural growth and 128k houses for the Transformational growth to meet the so-called Arc objectives by 2050. An additional 63k houses were expected to be forced on Local Authorities by land shortages. The South Cambs/Cambridge City share of these figures (53% based on 2021 census) over the 32 years are 1.3k houses Natural growth and 2.1k houses Transformational Growth (Total 3.4k houses) per annum. Their new Local Plan proposes 57k houses by 2041. This is 3.56k per annum. Cllr Smith and colleagues would therefore be on target to achieve their share of the 1 million houses allegedly required for the transformation - which she says they do not support. However there is no government funding in the Partnership for the necessary infrastructure and services – water, sewage, GP surgeries, schools etc. which are already inadequate for the current level of development.

In view of this background and with the benefit of hindsight would Cllr Smith now consider her Facebook post above to be at least misleading? And also explain what development the proposed Oxford Cambridge Partnership is seeking to deliver if not the excessive housing her Local Plan proposes?

Mr Nick Burton – StopThe Arc Group