

ITEM FOR DECISION

Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework

Summary: This report provides an update on the progress of the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework following a recent review and recommends that the Council formally endorses a revised document.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the *Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework and Statement of Common Ground 2019* and the Agreements contained therein are endorsed by North Norfolk District Council subject to the modification of Agreement 10 as outlined in this report.**
- 2. That the Council supports and welcomes the commitment to continued co-operative working and periodic review of the framework and in particular would support further collective work in relation to climate change.**

Cabinet Member(s) –Cllr A Brown	Ward(s) affected
All members	All Wards
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1. Introduction

1.1 When preparing Local Plans, the Authority is subject to a number of legal and regulatory requirements. Amongst these the Council must discharge a legal 'duty to co-operate' with neighbouring authorities in relation to strategically important land use issues which cross administrative boundaries. The result of such co-operation is expected to be better planning outcomes. Compliance with this requirement is one of the legal tests which the Inspector will apply at Local Plan examination.

1.2 The Norfolk Authorities have a strong track record of working together with the most formal example being the preparation of a single Local Plan to cover Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk planning authority areas. There are many other cross boundary working arrangements such as the AONB Partnership, Biodiversity Partnership, Coastal Partnership East and a wide range of forums on which the Council is represented at either Officer or Member level. In 2015 a new county wide Strategic Planning Member forum was established with terms of reference to ensure that the Duty to Co-operate was effectively discharged.

1.3 All authorities in Norfolk including the County Council participate in the Member forum which is supported via an officer team drawn from the Councils. The forum sought and gained agreement from each of the partner authorities to prepare a planning framework document. Cabinet subsequently resolved to agree to co-operate on strategic planning matters through the preparation of a shared non-statutory strategic planning framework, now known as the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework and Statement of Common Ground (NSPF).

2. The Process of Preparation of the Framework

2.1 Following the agreement to prepare a shared Framework the authorities agreed to the appointment of project management resource to co-ordinate joint planning activity. This resource, which is hosted at Norwich City Council, commenced work in late 2015 and throughout 2016 co-ordinated the work of four separate task groups which drew together evidence relating to the local economy, housing, infrastructure, and environment and delivery matters on which the framework was to be based.

2.2 This process led to the joint Member Forum considering first drafts of a vision and objectives in October 2016 to guide the subsequent drafting of the document and a consultation draft of the Framework being agreed by the Forum in July 2017. A County wide consultation ran from the 2nd August to the 22nd September 2017. The Built Heritage and Planning Policy Working Party and Cabinet considered the Consultation Draft in September 2017 and it was subsequently endorsed by North Norfolk and all other partners as a basis for policy development in each of the authorities Local Plans.

2.4 The Duty to Co-operate is an on-going and continuous process and there is a need to ensure that the Framework remains up to date. A comprehensive review of the Framework is on-going and should be completed by the middle of next year. In the interim a revised NSPF was considered at the January 2019 Member Forum. At that meeting it was agreed that the NSPF would be reviewed in light of the governments then proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the standard methodology for calculating local housing need. The government published these changes in February and March and the NSPF has now been updated to reflect these. It has also been kept up to date with any other updates and changes that have happened since endorsement of the first version.

2.5 The key changes include:

- Highlighting that the document becomes the 'Statement of Common Ground' for Norfolk Planning Authorities – the preparation of formal Statements of Common Ground, which document how the authorities have worked together when preparing Local Plans, was introduced as a new requirement in the 2018 NPPF. The NSPF largely fulfilled this requirement so other than re-branding no significant changes were required.

- Changes to the formal Agreements contained in the Framework to include a new minerals and waste related Agreement and a new Agreement to formally commit to updating the document every two years. Neither of these matters had been previously addressed in sufficient detail in the original Framework.

- New information has been added on joint working including joint working beyond the county boundaries as the Duty to Co-operate extends beyond Norfolk.
- Changes to highlight the conclusions of the government technical consultation on the standard methodology for calculating local housing need and the most up to date figures for local housing need for each district.
- Updating the telecoms section of the Framework to represent the latest position regarding 5G and broadband provision.

2.6 As these changes are largely factual and do not alter the thrust of the Framework the forum resolved that pending the more comprehensive review there was no need to publish the revised Framework for further public consultation. The forum is therefore asking each member authority to endorse the revised Framework as an interim position following the completion of the wider ongoing review. In undertaking this wider review there is an acknowledgement that the next version will require a sharper focus on climate change issues reflecting the recent declarations by a number of Councils.

3. The Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework - Version 2 for Endorsement

3.1 The Framework sets out a number of agreements between the signatories.

These are intended to ensure that the planning authorities continue to work closely together where it is desirable to do so but not to be so prescriptive that they would limit the local production of development plan documents. The Agreements are listed below with areas of change identified in *italics*:

Agreement 1 - That when preparing new Local Plans which seek to identify levels of Objectively Assessed Need for housing the Norfolk Planning Authorities will produce documents which provide for the development needs of their areas until at least 2036. (*there are no proposed changes to this Agreement*)

Agreement 2 - In preparing their Local Plans the Norfolk Planning Authorities will seek to positively contribute towards the delivery of the following vision for Norfolk as a whole.

“By the middle of the 21st century Norfolk will be increasingly recognised nationally for having a strong and vibrant economy providing high quality economic opportunities for residents in urban and rural areas. Its settlements and key infrastructure will be physically resilient to the impacts of climate change. The natural, built and historic environments will be enhanced through the regeneration of settlements, safeguarding and enhancement of current assets and networks, improving both biodiversity and the quality of life for residents. Housing needs will be met in full in socially inclusive communities. The County will be better connected by having good transport links to major cities in the UK and Europe and excellent digital connectivity. A good relationship between homes and jobs will minimise the need to travel and residents will have choice about how they meet their demand for local travel.”

(*there are no proposed changes to this Agreement*)

Agreement 3 - By 2036, through co-operation between Local Authorities and preparation of Development Plans, Norfolk will seek to maximise the delivery of the following objectives (in no particular order):

- To realise the economic potential of Norfolk and its people.
 - To reduce Norfolk's greenhouse gas emissions as well as the impact from, exposure to, and effects of climate change.
 - To address housing needs in Norfolk.
 - To improve the quality of life for all the population of Norfolk.
 - To improve and conserve Norfolk's rich and biodiverse environment.
- (there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 4 –To produce and maintain an assessment of housing needs covering the three contiguous and non-overlapping broad market areas of Great Yarmouth, Central Norfolk, and West Norfolk. (otherwise referred to as Housing Market Areas, or HMAs). *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 5 - That Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn and West Norfolk will each continue to prepare separate Local Plans for their areas. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 6 - That Breckland and North Norfolk will continue to prepare separate Local Plans for their areas whilst Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council will co-operate on a new Greater Norwich Local Plan that will replace the current Joint Core Strategy and various other existing Local Plan documents in this area. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 7 - That, in view of the very distinct issues facing the Broads Authority Area, spatial planning matters will continue to be best addressed by way of a standalone Broads Local Plan. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 8 - The above list of locations are the Tier One Employment sites and should be the focus of investment to drive increasing economic development in key sectors, and protected from loss to other uses. (in North Norfolk Tier One sites are Egmore Business Zone and Scottow Enterprise Park). *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 9 - The emerging Local Plans for the area will include appropriate policies and proposals which recognise the importance of the above cross boundary issues and interventions. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 10 - When determining their respective Local Plan housing targets each authority, working together where desirable, will aim to deliver at least the local housing need as identified in the most up to date evidence (Table 9). Where this would result in unsustainable development, agreement will be sought with other authorities, initially within the same Housing Market Area, to ensure sufficient homes are provided to meet identified needs and demands in the area until at least 2036.

This agreement has been redrafted to take account of the standard methodology for assessing housing need introduced in the 2018 revisions of the NPPF. It requires each of the Authorities to address their own need unless the results would be unsustainable growth in which case agreements would need to be reached with adjacent authorities. Such an approach is in any event a requirement of national guidance. However, explicitly linking this Agreement to 'Table 9' which presents the current results of the standard methodology is not considered desirable for the following reasons.

- i. *Government is reviewing the standard methodology*

- ii. *The results of applying the methodology will change in Feb 2020 when the next affordability ratios are published. These affordability ratios are one of the key inputs in applying the standard approach. The framework will quickly become out of date.*
- iii. *The link to 'Table 9' arguably prevents any of the authorities making the case for a departure from the standard methodology if they can evidence an alternative approach to establishing OAN. Such alternatives are provided for in the NPPF.*

All three of these issues would be addressed if the Agreement were amended to remove the reference to Table 9.

Agreement 11 – The Broads Authority will meet its calculated portion of the wider housing requirement as far as is compatible with the protection of the Broads landscape and special qualities. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 12 – South Norfolk, Norwich City, Broadland, North Norfolk, and Great Yarmouth Councils will seek to include appropriate provision within their Local Plans to address the housing needs arising from the parts of the Broads Authority area overlapping their administrative boundaries if these cannot be met within the Broads Local Plan. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement – there has been a long standing arrangement with the Broads Authority that in the event it is unable to address its own housing need the adjacent authorities would make provision for any shortfalls in their local Plans on a pro rata basis. However the need in the Broads area is very small and is addressed in full in their current Local Plan)*

Agreement 13 – In addition to their OAN, Broadland, Norwich City, and South Norfolk Councils will seek to deliver an additional supply of homes within the Greater Norwich Local Plan to ensure the housing needs arising from the City Deal are met in full. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 14 - The Norfolk Planning Authorities will quantify the need for, and plan to provide for, the specialist accommodation needs of the elderly, students, gypsy and travelling show people, and those residing in other specialist types of accommodation and working together will ensure that the distribution of provision responds to locally identified needs. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 15 – All Local Planning authorities will produce their Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments to the standard Norfolk methodology. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 16 - To minimise the risk of slow delivery over the next plan period, where it is sustainable to do so, the following will be done:

- Housing strategies will seek to allocate a range of different sizes of sites, where such sites are available and would result sustainable development.
- Clear evidence and demonstration of ability to deliver development will be required prior to the allocation of larger sites for development. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 17 – Norfolk is identified as an area of serious water stress, the Norfolk Authorities have agreed that when preparing Local Plans they will seek to include the optional higher water efficiency standard (110 litres/per person/per day) for residential development. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 18 – The Norfolk Authorities, Anglian Water and Essex and Suffolk Water have agreed to provide regular and timely updates to each other on the delivery of development sites and proposed utility projects to ensure that development is aligned with water and wastewater infrastructure. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 19 - To maximise the speed of rollout of 5G telecommunications to Norfolk, the Local Planning Authorities are engaging with the telecommunications industry including Mobile UK to produce shared objectives for extending 4G coverage and the rollout of 5G infrastructure in Norfolk guidance on the location of base and booster stations for the 5G network, taking into account material planning considerations. The objectives will be agreed in the Summer of 2019. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement – the shared guidance referred too has been prepared and drafts will be presented to the Member Forum in October for initial consideration. Draft Policies SD8 and SD9 accord with the emerging guidance which is in large part based on the draft policies.)*

Agreement 20: The authorities agree to endorse the updated Planning in Health: An Engagement Protocol between Local Planning Authorities and Public Health and Health Sector Organisations in Norfolk and undertake its commitments. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 21: The Local Planning authorities will continue to work closely with the County Council and school providers to ensure a sufficient supply of school places and land for school expansion or new schools, and use S106 and / or Community Infrastructure Levy funds to deliver additional school places where appropriate. The authorities agree to continue supporting the implementation of the County Council's Planning Obligations Standards as a means of justifying any S106 payments or bid for CIL funds needed to mitigate the impact of housing growth on County Council infrastructure. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 22: In recognition of:

a) the importance the Brecks, the Broads and the Area of Outstanding National Beauty, together with environmental assets which lie outside of these areas, bring to the county in relation to quality of life, health and wellbeing, economy, tourism and benefits to biodiversity;

b) the pressure that development in Norfolk could place on these assets; and

c) the importance of ecological connections between habitats the Local Planning Authorities will work together to produce a GI Strategy for Norfolk which will aid Local Plans in protecting and where appropriate enhancing the relevant assets. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement – the first draft of the strategy referred too is in preparation and will be reported to a later Working Party)*

Agreement 23: It is agreed that:

a) It is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. The Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan will therefore enable Norfolk to continue to be self-sufficient in the production of sand & gravel, whilst making an important contribution to the national production of silica sand.

b) A steady and adequate supply of minerals to support sustainable economic growth will be planned for through allocating sufficient sites and/or areas in the Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan to meet the forecast need for sand and gravel, carstone, and silica sand.

c) Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation. Resources of sand and gravel, carstone and silica sand within defined Mineral Safeguarding Areas will be safeguarded from needless sterilisation by non-mineral development. Infrastructure for the handling, processing and transportation of minerals will also be safeguarded from incompatible development. Defined waste management facilities and water recycling centres will be safeguarded from incompatible development.

d) The Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan policies will enable the re-use, recycling and recovery of waste in Norfolk to increase, thereby reducing the quantity and proportion of waste arising in Norfolk that requires disposal, in accordance with the Waste Hierarchy.

e) The Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan will enable Norfolk to be net self-sufficient in waste management, where practicable and to enable sufficient waste management infrastructure to be provided, for Norfolk, to meet the existing and forecast amount of waste expected to arise over the Plan period.

f) The Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan will direct new waste management facilities to be located in proximity to Norfolk's urban areas and main towns. Priority for the location of new waste management facilities will be given to the re-use of previously-developed land, sites identified for employment uses, and redundant agricultural and forestry buildings and their curtilages.

g) The Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan will contain policies to ensure that minerals development and waste management facilities will be located, designed and operated without unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenity of local communities, the natural, built and historic environment, the landscape and townscape of Norfolk.

(This is an entirely new Agreement recognising that minerals and waste planning are matters to which the Duty to Co-operate applies.)

Agreement 24: In recognition of the benefits gained by co-ordinating and co-operating on strategic planning activities the signatories to this document agree to support the activities of the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum and to continue to appropriately resource joint planning activity. *(there are no proposed changes to this Agreement)*

Agreement 25: Norfolk Planning Authorities agree to maintain this Statement of Common Ground on a regular basis, reviewing it at least every two years to support the maintenance of up to date Local Plans across the county and ensure that the NSPF remains the most appropriate vehicle to address strategic planning matters for the county. Norfolk Planning Authorities agree to maintain the statements of common ground on a regular basis with publication dates to be linked to Local Plan publications of the various authorities involved. Reviews will ensure that each authority is able to meet its local housing needs and agreements are in place where this is not appropriate or achievable. *(New agreement to reflect the continuous nature of the Duty to co-operate)*

4. Conclusions.

4.2 Whilst in a number of sections the Framework may not be fully developed, and in places the Framework itself points to the desirability of further work, it nevertheless provides a sound basis for the on-going preparation of Local Plans and clearly demonstrates an on-going and effective commitment to joint working.

4.3 A full copy of the currently approved Framework is available here:
<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/partnerships/norfolk-strategic-planning-member-forum>

5. Recommendations

- 1. That the *Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework and Statement of Common Ground 2019* and the Agreements contained therein are endorsed by North Norfolk District Council subject to the modification of Agreement 10 as outlined in this report.**
- 2. That the Council supports and welcomes the commitment to continued co-operative working and periodic review of the framework and in particular would support further collective work in relation to climate change.**

6. Legal Implications and Risks

- 6.1 It is a legal requirement to co-operate with neighbouring authorities in relation to strategically important cross boundary land use issues when preparing a Local Plan. Failure to meet this requirement could render a Local Plan unsound and result in failure at the independent examination.

7. Financial Implications and Risks

7.1 The Council currently makes an annual contribution of £10,000 towards the work of the forum to fund project management and the procurement of jointly prepared evidence. Joint commissioning of evidence produces substantial savings for individual authorities.