

Cabinet

Agenda

Members of the Cabinet:

Cllr J Fuller (Chairman)	Leader, External Affairs and Policy
Cllr K Mason Billig (Vice Chairman)	Governance and Efficiency
Cllr A Dearnley	Finance and Resources
Cllr R Elliott	Customer Focus
Cllr G Minshull	Clean and Safe Environment
Cllr L Neal	Stronger Economy
Cllr A Thomas	Better Lives

Date & Time:

Monday 31 October 2022
9.00 am

Place:

To be held in the Council Chamber at South Norfolk House, Cygnet Court, Long Stratton, Norwich, NR15 2XE

Contact:

Claire White tel (01508) 533669
Email: committee.snc@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk
Website: www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE:

This meeting will be live streamed for public viewing via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZciRgwo84-iPyRlmsTCIng>

If a member of the public would like to observe the meeting in person, or speak on an agenda item, please email your request to committee.snc@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk, no later than 5.00pm on Wednesday 26 October 2022.

Large print version can be made available

If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting, please let us know in advance.

AGENDA

1. To report apologies for absence;
2. Any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency pursuant to section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972. Urgent business may only be taken if, “by reason of special circumstances” (which will be recorded in the minutes), the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency
3. To receive Declarations of interest from Members
(Please see guidance – page 3)
4. To confirm the minutes from the meeting of Cabinet held on 17 October 2022
(attached – page 5)
5. Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan Submission
(attached – page 15)
6. Business Rates Pool Projects and Expenditure
(attached – page 103)
7. First-Class Customer Service – Customer Experience Phase One
(attached – page 109)
8. Using Intelligence to achieve a First-Class Customer Service
(attached – page 119)
9. Peer Challenge Feedback and Action Plan Report
(attached - page 133)
10. Cabinet Core Agenda
(attached - page 171)

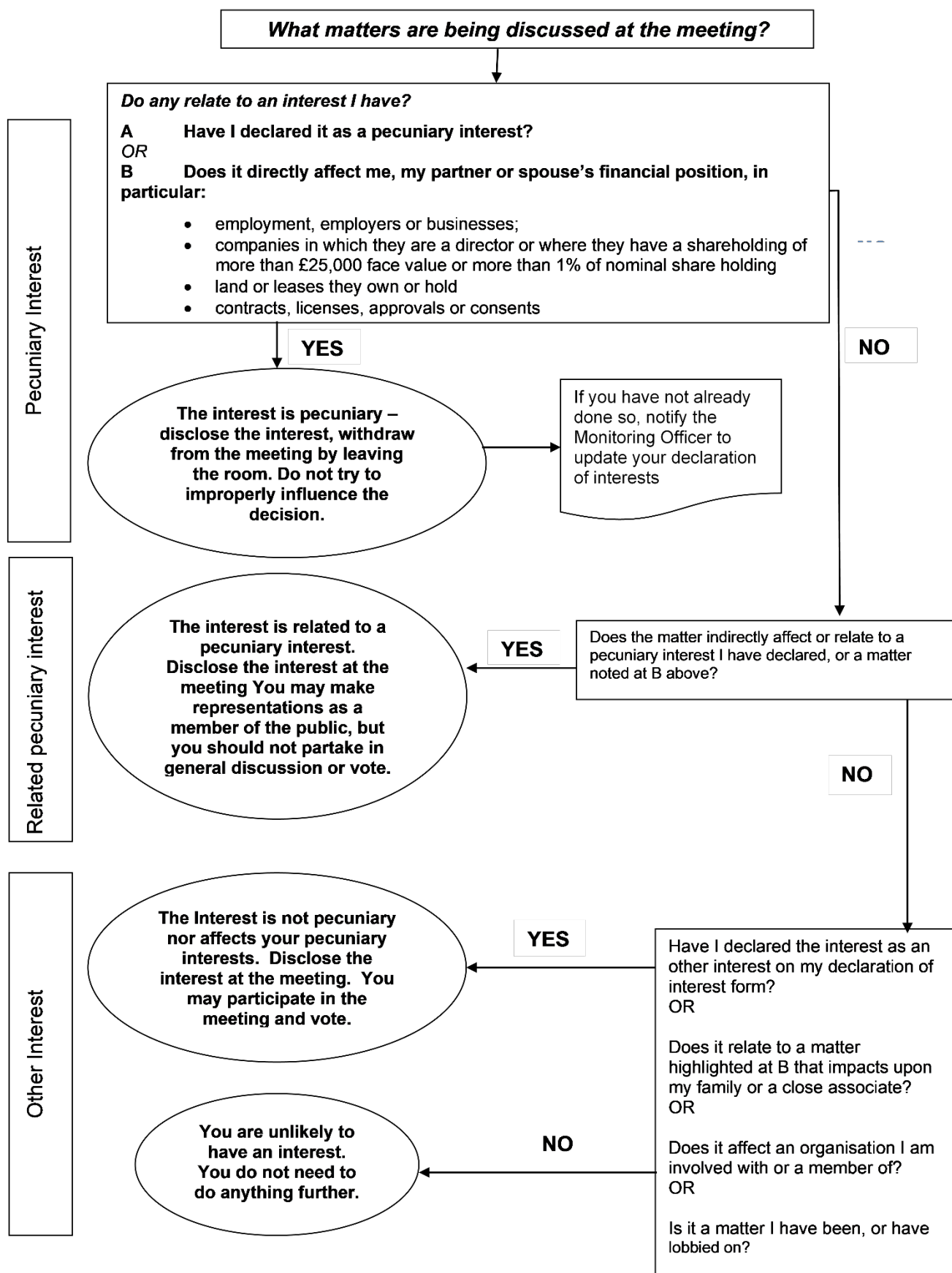
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

When declaring an interest at a meeting Members are asked to indicate whether their interest in the matter is pecuniary, or if the matter relates to, or affects a pecuniary interest they have, or if it is another type of interest. Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote. If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed. If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting. Members are also requested when appropriate to make any declarations under the Code of Practice on Planning and Judicial matters.

<p>Have you declared the interest in the register of interests as a pecuniary interest? If Yes, you will need to withdraw from the room when it is discussed.</p>
<p>Does the interest directly:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. affect yours, or your spouse / partner's financial position? 2. relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or your spouse / partner? 3. Relate to a contract you, or your spouse / partner have with the Council 4. Affect land you or your spouse / partner own 5. Affect a company that you or your partner own, or have a shareholding in <p>If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, it is likely to be pecuniary.</p> <p>Please refer to the guidance given on declaring pecuniary interests in the register of interest forms. If you have a pecuniary interest, you will need to inform the meeting and then withdraw from the room when it is discussed. If it has not been previously declared, you will also need to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.</p>
<p>Does the interest indirectly affect or relate any pecuniary interest you have already declared, or an interest you have identified at 1-5 above?</p> <p>If yes, you need to inform the meeting. When it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but you should not partake in general discussion or vote.</p>
<p>Is the interest not related to any of the above? If so, it is likely to be an other interest. You will need to declare the interest, but may participate in discussion and voting on the item.</p>
<p>Have you made any statements or undertaken any actions that would indicate that you have a closed mind on a matter under discussion? If so, you may be predetermined on the issue; you will need to inform the meeting, and when it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.</p>

**FOR GUIDANCE REFER TO THE FLOWCHART OVERLEAF.
PLEASE REFER ANY QUERIES TO THE MONITORING OFFICER IN THE FIRST
INSTANCE**

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



Agenda Item: 4

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk Council, held on Monday 17 October 2022 at 9.00 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), A Dearnley, R Elliott K Mason Billig, G Minshull, L Neal and A Thomas

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors: D Bills, C Brown and S Nuri-Nixon

Officers in Attendance: The Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby) the Director of Place (P Courtier), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer) the Assistant Director of Finance (R Fincham), the Assistant Director for Planning (H Mellors), the Place Shaping Manager (P Harris), the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager (R Dunsire), the Governance Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer (L Mockford), the Strategy and Intelligence Manager (S Carey), the Senior Community Planning Officer (R Squires), the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer (S Crook), the Community Safety Interventions Lead (T Munro), and the Democratic Services Manager (C White)

3035 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr A Thomas declared an other interest with regard to minute number 3044, the Annual Re-Ratification of Strategy for the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance, in that she had been adversely affected by the flooding in December 2020.

3036 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 11 July 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

3037 STARSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – CONSIDERATION OF EXAMINER’S REPORT

Members considered the report of the Senior Community Planning Officer, which presented Cabinet with the Independent Examiner’s report and proposed modifications, with regard to the Starston Neighbourhood Plan.

The Senior Community Planning Officer presented his report, explaining that the proposed modifications from the Examiner were only minor and in the main addressed the concerns previously raised by South Norfolk Council. In response to a query, he explained that should Cabinet agree with the Examiner’s Report, then the Plan would proceed to referendum, and that this was likely to take place on 8 December (date yet to be confirmed).

The Chairman commended the Plan and the time and effort that had gone in to producing such a comprehensive and quality document. He felt that the proposed modifications added clarity, and did not detract from the Plan’s main aims.

It was

RESOLVED:

To approve each of the modifications to the Starston Neighbourhood Plan, as set out within the proposed Decision Statement (Appendix 3) and to publish this statement, announcing the intention for the Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to a referendum, subject to these modifications.

The Reason for the Decision

Cabinet is satisfied with the recommended modifications from the independent examiner.

Other Options Considered

None.

3038 TIVETSHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – CONSIDERATION OF EXAMINER’S REPORT

Members considered the report of the Senior Community Planning Officer, which presented Cabinet with the Independent Examiner’s report and proposed modifications, with regard to the Tivetshall Neighbourhood Plan.

The Senior Community Planning Officer presented his report and explained that the Parish Council and the Tivetshall Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had been satisfied with the Examiner’s modifications and had felt that the spirit of what they had wanted to achieve had been retained. He explained that the referendum was likely to be on 8 December, but this date was yet to be confirmed.

Cabinet agreed that the document was an excellent, thorough and well thought out plan, which had been a pleasure to read. Referring to the modifications, the Chairman felt that these had only been minor and added clarity in some areas.

It was

RESOLVED:

To approve each of the recommended modifications to the Tivetshalls Neighbourhood Plan, as detailed within the examiner's report, and publish a Decision Statement setting out the Council's response and announcing the intention for the Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to a referendum.

The Reason for the Decision

Cabinet is satisfied with the recommended modifications from the independent examiner.

Other Options Considered

None

3039 DISS & DISTRICT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUBMISSION

Members considered the report of the Senior Community Planning Officer, which presented Cabinet with the latest version of the Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan and sought agreement to take it through to the next stages of consultation and independent examination.

Members noted that the Plan covered seven different parishes, two district councils and straddled two counties, which made the Plan particularly complex and unique. It had been in the planning for approximately seven years, and Cabinet commended its depth and complexity, and congratulated all those who had been involved in its production.

In response to queries, the Senior Community Planning Officer explained that a programme of activity had been established with colleagues in Mid Suffolk, to ensure that the appropriate decision making and consultation were in sync.

With regard to CIL, the Place Shaping Manager explained that he expected any funds due to be paid to the individual town or parish, and that there was no indication at present, that they were looking to pool funding. However, there was scope to negotiate joint projects, if required. The Chairman stressed the need for clarity and for ground rules to be set at an early stage.

A member referred to the proposal within the Plan to include the Mid Suffolk parishes of Brome, Oakley, Palgrave and Sturston in South Norfolk Council's affordable housing cascade, and queried whether this was feasible. In response, the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager explained that this was possible and could be achieved, but would require officers to work with the

neighbouring authority to ensure that there was a fair distribution of houses and was in the best interests of all residents.

During further discussion, the Chairman referred to the reference made in the Plan to the Greater Norwich Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy, and he advised that this had recently been updated by the GNDP. He also drew attention to Allocation DDNP16, the Feather Mills site, south of Park Road, in Diss. He had heard that the owners of the site had gone in to liquidation, and suggested that as a material change to the ownership of the land, this required investigation. The Senior Community Planning Officer agreed to raise this as part of the consultation process.

It was

RESOLVED:

To agree:

1. That the submitted Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of Part 6 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. That the Neighbourhood Plan can therefore proceed to consultation, in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and subsequently to an independent examination.
3. That the proposed South Norfolk Council response, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report, is formally submitted as part of the Regulation 16 consultation report (subject to minor amendments).

The Reason for the Decision

The Plan has met the assessment criteria and should therefore progress through to the next stage of consultation and independent examination.

Other Options Considered

None.

3040 UPDATE TO THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Members considered the report of the Place Shaping Manager, which proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme (LDS), to reflect changes to the timetable for the Greater Norwich Local Plan, the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) and the East Norwich Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The Place Shaping Manager reminded members that this was a procedural document, and it was a statutory requirement to update the LDS regularly.

It was

RESOLVED:

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the LDS reflects the amended timetable for the production of the Greater Norwich Local Plan, the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocation Plan, and also the East Norwich Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document.

Other Options Considered

None

3041 SOUTH NORFOLK ALLOCATIONS SCHEME: FAMILY CONNECTION

Members considered the report of the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager, which proposed an amendment to the South Norfolk Allocations Scheme, to allow applicants to qualify for the scheme, via a South Norfolk family connection.

The portfolio holder, Cllr A Thomas outlined the proposed amendment, explaining that this need had recently come to light due to some unsuitable placements that had been made through the Ukraine Family Scheme. This amendment would allow the Council to provide support to Ukrainians in such circumstances, and also bring the Scheme in line with Broadland District Council's policy. She stressed that this change would apply to all applicants, not just Ukrainians.

Cabinet recognised the need for the amendment and the Chairman warned that more people would be requesting help from the Council due to the cost of living crisis. He explained that there were over 100 staff, employed by the Council and other agencies, available to assist those in need across the South Norfolk District.

RESOLVED:

To agree the proposed changes to the South Norfolk Allocations Scheme as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report.

The Reason for the Decision

The amendment will support and prevent homelessness to Ukrainian guests, and provide equity of service over South Norfolk and Broadland.

Other Options Considered

None

3042 AWARDING OF CONTRACTS IN RELATION TO THE MOBILISATION OF THE HORIZON CENTRE

Members considered report, which sought approval for a delegation to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to award contracts in relation to the mobilisation of the Horizon Centre.

The portfolio holder, Cllr K Mason Billig reminded members of the background to the report and explained that following the decision to purchase the Horizon Centre, and relocate the Council's office, there was a need to procure the fit out and other contracts associated with the mobilisation. The report sought delegation to award these contracts, so as not to impede on the project's timescales, especially in light of escalating costs. She stressed that contracts could only be awarded within the budget which had already been agreed at the Council meeting held 16 May 2022.

The Director of Resources added that each contract would be subject to a strict procurement framework process.

During discussion, the Chairman suggested that it would be appropriate to also consult Cllr Mason Billig, as the portfolio holder for Governance and Efficiency, regarding the contract awards. It was also suggested that the wording of the decision required amendment to clarify that the contracts concerned would only be those relating to the mobilisation of the Horizon Centre.

Cabinet agreed to these amendments, and it was

RESOLVED:

To agree to the delegation to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Governance and Efficiency and the Leader of the Council, to award contracts for the fit out of the Horizon Centre and other contracts related to these activities, that are over £100,000, as long as they are within the overall budgets as outlined in section 2 of this report.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Horizon building can be occupied as soon as possible, and to avoid ongoing revenue costs.

Other Options Considered

None

3043 USING INTELLIGENCE TO ACHIEVE A FIRST-CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE

Members considered the report of the Strategy and Intelligence Manager and the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer, which outlined proposals to use data and intelligence to drive delivery of the ambitions, as set out in the Council's Strategic Plan 2020 -2024, to ultimately deliver a first-class customer service for communities and businesses.

The Strategy and Intelligence Manager outlined her report to members, explaining that business intelligence involved the use of data, assets and technology, to drive strategic decision making. Members noted that intelligence and data was critical to the Council as it would help it better manage demand, identify savings and make more accurate forecasts for the future, both in terms of finance and performance.

Cabinet acknowledged that the proposals would enhance the Council's service, however, concern was expressed that it was a little early to be requesting a budget for 2023/24, in light of other budget pressures that also required consideration.

In response to a member's request for more information on the savings to be made, officers explained that it was very difficult to confirm cost savings, until new processes were in place. The portfolio holder, Cllr Mason Billig suggested that more examples of where the proposals would benefit different services across the Council would be helpful, along with details of the actual savings made by other councils.

The Chairman stressed that he was not discarding the proposals but suggested that it would be more appropriate to consider the matter at Cabinet's next meeting, alongside the CRM system. Cabinet agreed that a new report was required for consideration at the meeting on 31 October, addressing the points made and also illustrating more explicitly how the proposals would ultimately benefit residents.

It was

RESOLVED:

That the decision regarding the funding of the proposed Business Intelligence Service is deferred to the 31 October meeting of the Cabinet.

The Reason for the Decision

To seek clarity regarding the benefits of the proposals.

Other Options Considered

To recommend that Council agree to the requested funding

3044 ANNUAL RE-RATIFICATION OF STRATEGY FOR NORFOLK STRATEGIC FLOOD ALLIANCE

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director of Regulatory which presented Cabinet with an updated Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy, for ratification. The report also outlined how the Council and wider Alliances were delivering against the Strategy, alongside evaluating further community needs in areas that faced potential threats of flooding.

The portfolio holder, Cllr G Minshull, introduced the report and members noted the progress made by the NSFA on a range of flooding actions, both within the district and more widely across Norfolk.

Cllr Minshull explained that a new flooding hotline for Norfolk had been introduced, the details of which were regularly detailed in the Link magazine along with information concerning riparian rights and responsibilities. The Director of Place added that the leaflet detailing the contact details of various agencies would be recirculated, and he informed members that the Flood and Water Management Officer, Nathan Harris, was now in post, and would be working with communities to promote and enforce where necessary. One of the post's responsibilities was also to establish a multi-agency working group on riparian responsibilities.

The Chairman expressed his concern regarding the Local Lead Flood Authority's (LLFA) role in the planning process. The Director of Place confirmed that the LLFA was very much involved in the workings of the NSFA and had been working alongside Anglian Water to resolve issues in the flood priority areas. It would be good to see more engagement from the LLFA in the planning process, especially with regard to smaller sites, but acknowledged that this was a resource challenge for the County Council. He explained that the LLFA was about to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council on riparian rights and both organisations were considering more joint enforcement.

Members agreed that the ratification of the Strategy was important, to ensure that the issues around flooding remained high on the agenda, and agencies remained proactive.

RESOLVED:

To ratify the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance Strategy 2022 as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, and to note the progress being made.

The Reason for the Decision

There are strong benefits in taking a multi-agency approach through the NSFA and keeping flooding action high on the local, regional and national agenda.

Other Options Considered

None

3045 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER - DOG FOULING

The Community Safety Interventions Lead introduced the report which presented the proposed new dog fouling and dog restrictions Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014.

During discussion, the Community Safety Interventions Lead explained that additional signage from the Council was available for Parish and Town Councils if required. With regard to exemptions from the Protection Order for those with hearing impediments with assisted dogs, she explained that the exemption did not apply to the clearing up of dog fouling, and she agreed to reword the definition in the Order, to provide more clarity.

It was

RESOLVED:

TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the Public Space Protection Order No. 3 as proposed in paragraph 4.7 and Appendix 1 of the report (subject to a minor amendment) over the geographical areas identified in Appendix 2 for a period of three years.

The Reason for the Decision

The adoption of the Public Space Protection Order No.3 as proposed will deter dog fouling offences by irresponsible dog owners and enable enforcement under specific legal requirements.

Other Options Considered

None

3046 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

3047 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

3048 STRAY DOG COLLECTION CONTRACT

The Director of Place introduced the exempt report which detailed the proposed stray dog collection contract for South Norfolk Council. Members noted that the Council had a legal obligation to provide provisions for stray dog collections.

It was

RESOLVED:

To agree the recommendations as outlined at paragraph 8.1 of the report

The Reason for the Decision

Appointing the contract will provide a quality service, protect the Council's residents and satisfy the Council's statutory duty for stray dog collection and kennelling.

Other Options Considered

None.

3049 OPTIONS ON PROVISION OF A FUTURE FRAUD SERVICE

The Assistant Director of Finance introduced the exempt report which provided options on the future resourcing and delivery of a fraud service for South Norfolk and Broadland Councils.

It was

RESOLVED:

To approve the recommendations as outlined at paragraph 8.1 of the report

The Reason for the Decision

The proposed fraud provision would provide the Council with a full fraud service with expertise and resilience.

Other Options Considered

None.

(The meeting concluded 10.33 am)

Chairman

WYMONDHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUBMISSION

Report Author(s): Richard Squires
Senior Community Planning Officer
01603 430637
richard.squires@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

Portfolio: External Affairs and Policy; Stronger Economy

Ward(s) Affected: South Wymondham; North Wymondham; Wymondham Town (Central)

Purpose of the Report:

Wymondham Town Council has re-submitted its proposed Neighbourhood Plan, along with necessary supporting information to South Norfolk Council. The purpose of this report is to agree to take the proposed Plan through to the next stages of consultation and independent examination.

Recommendations:

It is proposed that Cabinet agree:

1. That the submitted Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of Part 6 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. That the Neighbourhood Plan can therefore proceed to consultation, in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and subsequently to an independent examination.
3. That the proposed South Norfolk Council response, as detailed in Appendix 3, is formally submitted as part of the Regulation 16 consultation.

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Wymondham Town Council originally submitted its proposed Neighbourhood Plan, along with necessary supporting information to South Norfolk Council in late February 2022. Cabinet agreed to refer this back to the Town Council for further work, at their meeting in April, and a revised document has now been re-submitted. The purpose of this report is to agree to take the proposed Plan through to the next stages of consultation and independent examination.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Wymondham Town Council, as the appropriate Qualifying Body, applied to South Norfolk Council in March 2021 to designate a Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of producing a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.2 Since that time, the local planning authority has supported the appointed Neighbourhood Plan steering group in terms of funding and professional advice and guidance from officers. The process of producing the Plan has seen the steering group undertaking consultation with residents and other stakeholder organisations, with a view to developing and drafting Neighbourhood Plan objectives and policies with the help of independent consultants.
- 2.3 Following a pre-submission consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan between December 2021 and January 2022, the proposed Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to South Norfolk Council in late February 2022.
- 2.4 At the Cabinet meeting on 19 April members decided to refer the Neighbourhood Plan back to the Town Council with a number of specific issues highlighted on which members felt the Plan could be more explicit.
- 2.5 Further revisions to the Neighbourhood Plan have now been made and the document has been re-submitted to South Norfolk Council following a resolution of the Town Council at its meeting of 6th October. The re-submitted Neighbourhood Plan can be viewed in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 describes the revisions that have been made to the Neighbourhood Plan since its original submission.

3 CURRENT POSITION/FINDINGS

- 3.1 On submission of a Neighbourhood Plan to the local planning authority, the authority must undertake an assessment of the proposed plan against certain criteria. This is required by paragraph 6 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 3.2 The legislation states that the local planning authority may only refuse to progress a submitted Neighbourhood Plan to the next stages if it considers that any of these specific criteria have not been met or if the Neighbourhood Plan proposal is considered a repeat proposal, as defined in paragraph 5 of the above Act.

3.3 The following sets out details of the assessment against each of the prescribed criteria (bold headings);

3.4 **Is the parish/town council authorised to act?**

Wymondham Town Council applied to South Norfolk Council to designate its Neighbourhood Area in line with the civil parish boundary. This application was approved in March 2021. It is therefore considered that the Town Council is authorised to act in relation to this neighbourhood area.

3.5 **Do the proposals and accompanying documents:**

(a) Comply with the rules for submission to the Council?

Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended) states that the submitted documents should include:

- A map or statement identifying the area to which the plan relates.
- A Consultation Statement, which contains details of those consulted, how they were consulted, summarises the main issues and concerns raised and how these have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The proposed Neighbourhood Plan.
- A Basic Conditions Statement, showing how the Plan meets the basic conditions set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Act.
- An SEA screening assessment and, if required as a result of the latter, an SEA.

The Town Council has supplied all of the above documentation.

3.6 **Do the proposals and accompanying documents:**

(b) Meet the definition of a Neighbourhood Plan?

It is considered that the Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan meets the definition of a Neighbourhood Plan as set out in Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, containing (as it does) a series of planning policies that seek to manage development within the parish.

3.7 **Do the proposals and accompanying documents:**

(c) Meet the scope of Neighbourhood Plan provisions?

The Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan clearly states that it is a development plan for Wymondham, which runs until 2038. The Neighbourhood Plan does not make any provision regarding excluded development. Excluded development is that which is either a 'county matter' (relating to minerals), any operation relating to waste development, or development consisting wholly or partly of a national infrastructure project.

3.8 The Neighbourhood Plan only relates to the Wymondham Neighbourhood Area and it does not repeat an existing planning permission. It is therefore considered that it satisfactorily meets the provisions defined in Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

3.9 Has the parish/town council undertaken the correct procedures in relation to consultation and publicity regarding the Neighbourhood Plan?

Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 states that, before submitting the Neighbourhood Plan to the local planning authority, the Qualifying Body should publicise the Plan and consult the public and stakeholder bodies over a period of six weeks.

- 3.10 The pre-submission (Reg. 14) consultation undertaken by the Town Council in relation to the draft Neighbourhood Plan is summarised in the Consultation Statement. This provides details of the publicity that was undertaken at this (and prior) consultation stages and the bodies that were consulted on the draft Plan. A copy of the draft Neighbourhood Plan was received by South Norfolk Council for comments at this stage (which were duly made).

4 PROPOSED ACTION

- 4.1 It is proposed that, as Wymondham Town Council has met each of the criteria specified above, South Norfolk Council approves the submission of Neighbourhood Plan and that confirmation of this is sent to the Town Council.
- 4.2 Once approved, District Council officers will arrange for the Neighbourhood Plan to be published and will invite comments from the public, stakeholder bodies and previous consultees over a minimum period of six weeks. This requirement is set out in Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
- 4.3 Officers have considered the content of the re-submitted Neighbourhood Plan to identify whether there are any significant, outstanding issues on which South Norfolk Council may wish to make its own representations during the Reg. 16 consultation.
- 4.4 Issues have been identified which relate to the two green infrastructure policies (6 and 7) within the proposed plan and Policy 10 – Surface water flood risk, which is a policy that has been added since the pre-submission version of the plan. The proposed responses largely relate to the need for Neighbourhood Plan policies to be clear and unambiguous, in accordance with paragraph 16.d) of the NPPF, and to be distinct and to avoid unnecessary duplication of existing policies. The proposed South Norfolk Council Reg. 16 consultation response can be viewed in Appendix 3.
- 4.5 The Reg. 16 publication period will be followed by an independent examination which will be carried out by a (yet to be appointed) accredited Neighbourhood Plan examiner, in accordance with Regulation 17.
- 4.6 Following the examination (which is normally dealt with via written representations), the examiner will produce a report recommending whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a referendum (with or without certain

modifications). South Norfolk Council will then consider this report and decide whether or not to approve the examiner's recommendations.

- 4.7 If it is decided that the Plan should proceed to a referendum, then everyone eligible to vote within the Neighbourhood Area is invited to vote on whether they wish to see the Neighbourhood Plan made. This is a simple 'yes/no' vote and a majority of those voting in favour of the Plan (50%+1) is required before it can be made by South Norfolk Council.

5 OTHER OPTIONS

- 5.1 As set out in paragraph 3.2, the submitted Neighbourhood Plan can only be refused if it is felt that the criteria discussed above have not been met, or if the Plan is a repeat proposal, as defined in legislation.
- 5.2 If the Council decides to refuse the submitted Neighbourhood Plan proposal on either of these grounds, then a written statement would need to be sent to the Town Council, detailing the reasons why the proposal has not been approved. However, it is considered that the above criteria have been met and there appear to be no valid reasons for refusal.
- 5.3 If Cabinet considers that further evidence is needed from the Town Council before it can make a judgement as to whether the proposals address each of the criteria above, then the decision can potentially be deferred pending further information. However, it is worth noting that Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 states that the local planning authority must publish the submitted proposals for consultation 'as soon as possible after receiving a plan proposal'.

6 ISSUES AND RISKS

- 6.1 **Resource Implications** – There are no significant resource implications in approving the submitted Plan. There will be a small amount of officer time required to issue notice of the decision to Wymondham Town Council.
- 6.2 The subsequent stages will demand greater officer time (preparing the plan and related documents for consultation, preparing and arranging the examination). This will be resourced from within the Place Shaping team.
- 6.3 There are limited costs involved in undertaking the consultation, as the majority of this will be via electronic means. A copy of the Neighbourhood Plan will be made available in the local library and at the Council offices, for inspection.
- 6.4 Following the consultation period, there will be costs to the Council associated with the examination and referendum. The average cost of an examination is currently approximately £5,000 and the average cost of a referendum is similar, although the referendum is likely to cost more than this given the population of the

neighbourhood area. It is worth noting that South Norfolk Council is able to claim £20,000 from DLUHC (Dept. of Levelling-Up Housing & Communities) once the authority approves a Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to a referendum, meaning these costs can be recouped.

- 6.5 **Legal Implications** – The steps outlined in this report comply with appropriate legislation within Schedule 4B of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 6.6 They also have regard to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. If successful at referendum, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the statutory Development Plan and will therefore be one of the main considerations in the determination of applications for planning permission within the parish.
- 6.7 **Equality Implications** – There are no significant equalities implications associated with the approval of the submitted Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan. A full Equality Assessment has been carried out in relation to the submitted plan (see Appendix 4).
- 6.8 **Environmental Impact** – The Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening and a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening, as required by legislation. These initial assessments consider whether the proposed policies in the Plan will have any significant impact on identified environmental objectives or on nearby EU designated sites. No significant impacts have been identified.
- 6.9 **Crime and Disorder** – There are no significant risks associated with the matters covered in this report.
- 6.10 **Risks** – There are no significant risks associated with the matters covered in this report.
- 6.11 There are risks associated with the subsequent stages in the process of adopting a Neighbourhood Plan; specifically that the Plan fails the examination, and also that the Plan fails to gain support during the local referendum. It is felt that these risks are relatively low, at present, and measures will be taken where possible, by either the District Council or Wymondham Town Council, to mitigate against their occurrence.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 As discussed above, on submission of a Neighbourhood Plan to the local planning authority, the authority must undertake an assessment of the proposed plan against certain criteria. This is required by Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 7.2 As Wymondham Town Council has met each of the assessment criteria set out above, the next step is to accept their submission and to start preparations for the Reg.16 consultation.
- 7.3 Officers are proposing a small number of representations to be submitted on behalf of South Norfolk Council, as part of this consultation.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is proposed that Cabinet agree:
1. That the submitted Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of Part 6 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
 2. That the Neighbourhood Plan can therefore proceed to consultation, in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and subsequently to an independent examination.
 3. That the proposed South Norfolk Council response, as detailed in Appendix 3, is formally submitted as part of the Regulation 16 consultation.

Appendix 1: Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan – submission draft

Appendix 2: Revisions made to the Neighbourhood Plan

Appendix 3: Proposed South Norfolk Council consultation response (Reg. 16)

Appendix 4: Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan - EQIA

Background Papers

[Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan submission documents](#)



Appendix 1

Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2038

Submission Draft | August 2022



Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	About Wymondham	5
3.	A vision and objectives for the Plan	17
4.	Neighbourhood Plan Policies	19
	Policy 1: Town centre vibrancy	20
	Policy 2: Back Lane	22
	Policy 3: Planning public realm	24
	Policy 4: Excellence in design	27
	Policy 5: Views & vistas	31
	Policy 6: Strategic GI network	41
	Policy 7: Green ribbons	47
	Policy 8: Integration & access	49
	Policy 9: Access to countryside	52
	Policy 10: Flood risk	56
5.	Neighbourhood Plan Projects	59
6.	Implementation and Monitoring	61



Introduction



Introduction

This document

- 1.1. This is the Submission Draft Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan. The document is the culmination of many months of work by a team made up of community representatives and Town Councillors and inputs from residents and stakeholders via a programme of consultation.
- 1.2. The Team has worked hard on the plan since it was set up in 2020 undertaking research, holding workshops, site visits and facilitating discussions. It has also undertaken three major pieces of public consultation in winter 2020, summer 2021 and early 2022 and most recently it has responded to feedback from South Norfolk Council's April 2022 Cabinet meeting and further feedback provided via correspondence in June 2022. The Team have listened to the feedback and incorporated it into every part of this document to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan reflects local views.

The Neighbourhood Area

- 1.3. The area to which the Neighbourhood Plan relates is the whole civil parish of Wymondham (see overleaf). This includes the market town of Wymondham itself and its immediate rural hinterland which comprises open agricultural areas, various isolated homes, businesses and small hamlets. The Neighbourhood Area was formally established following a process of consultation in March 2020 in accordance with Regulation 5A of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 1.4. Neighbourhood Plans such as this generally contain a vision and a series of policies and projects that seek to influence how an area changes over time. They achieve this by, once adopted, being part of the development plan for an area. The development plan is at the heart of the planning system and there is a requirement that planning decisions must be taken in line with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This means the Neighbourhood Plan will be one of the main considerations that the Local Authority (South Norfolk Council) will take into account when determining planning applications in the area.
- 1.5. What makes them different to most other forms of planning policy is that Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by local people for their own area, not by District or County Council officers or officers within central government departments. What is more, Neighbourhood Plans will only come into force if a majority of local people vote for them to do so in a local referendum; in this way they are strongly rooted in the views of local people.
- 1.6. The power for local community-based groups to write Neighbourhood Plans was established by the 2011 Localism Act which decentralised control over various local matters to local communities including the ability to create new planning policy via Neighbourhood Plans. Providing local communities with the ability to create their own formal planning policy means that they have a powerful say in what happens in their neighbourhoods. This is at the core of the idea of "localism" which whilst less frequently referenced these days, remains a significant innovation in planning policy.

- 1.7. The power to make planning policy comes with a responsibility to ensure that legal requirements and a number of 'basic conditions' are met. These include the need to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development, the need to ensure that local policies have regard to national policy and are in general conformity with the strategic policy in the local development plan.
- 1.8. Neighbourhood Plans also must be read alongside other national policy such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local strategic planning policy such as a Core Strategy or Local Plan. In this case, local strategic policy comprises the Wymondham Area Action Plan (2015) prepared by South Norfolk Council, the existing Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP). In the case of the JCS and GNLP, both documents refer heavily to the AAP and the policies that document established which remain extant and valid today. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to replace the AAP, rather it seeks to supplement it and add a new layer of detail, where appropriate.
- 1.9. Neighbourhood Plans cannot generally deviate significantly from the planning trajectory set by national and the local strategic policies noted above for example, by seeking to veto housing development that is already allocated. Guidance states that Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area. Equally Neighbourhood Plans must avoid unnecessary duplication of policies that already exist and apply to an area such as in the AAP or JCS. So, whilst Neighbourhood Plans give local communities a great deal of power, there are limits to what these documents can do.

Figure 1: Plan showing the extent of the Neighbourhood Plan area

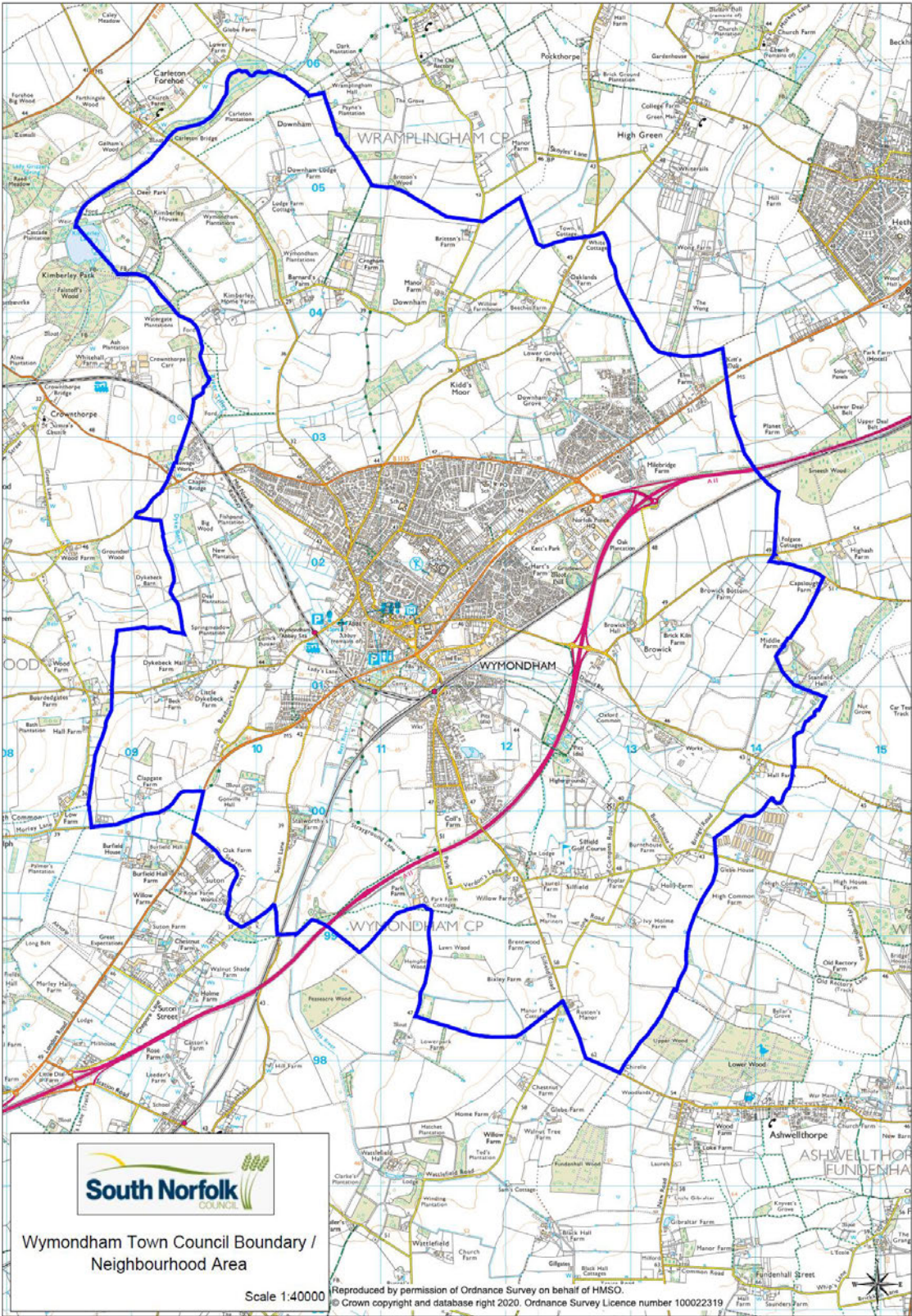
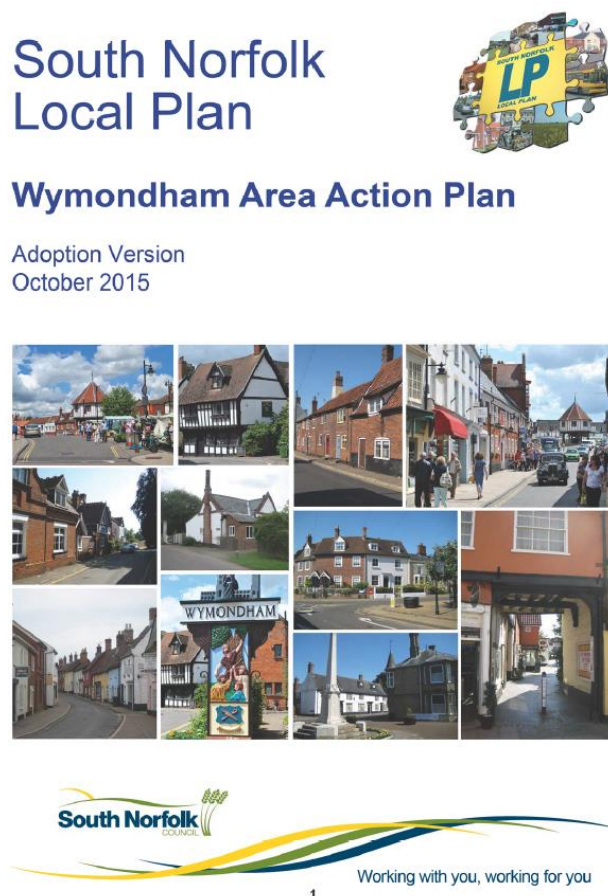


Figure 2: Image showing the front cover the Wymondham Area Action Plan (2015)



- 1.10. Notwithstanding the constraints noted above, the real value and power of Neighbourhood Plans is their ability to deal with local level or fine-grained issues that planning policies covering much larger areas such as South Norfolk simply cannot accommodate. In this case, for example, they can help to safeguard views of Wymondham Abbey or deal with improvements to specific parts of the town centre such as Back Lane.

Neighbourhood Plan lifespan

- 1.11. The intended lifespan of the Plan is from 2022 to 2038 which reflects the lifespan of the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan. The GNLP is being produced by the Greater Norwich Development Partnership which comprises South Norfolk Council, Broadland District Council and Norwich City Council and covers an area that includes Wymondham. The most recent iteration of the GNLP is the Regulation 19 Submission Version from March 2021 which is referenced a number of times in this document.



About Wymondham

2. About Wymondham

Location

- 2.1. The civil parish of Wymondham is located roughly in the centre of Norfolk, around 10 miles to the south-west of the city of Norwich. It is located by the A11 dual carriageway which is a major arterial route linking Norwich with Thetford and other towns and cities to the south.

Figure 3: Map showing the location of Wymondham in the east of England (Wymondham is marked with a red pin)



Source: Google Maps

Local government context

- 2.2. The Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan area is in South Norfolk District (Local Authority) within the County of Norfolk. It adjoins the parishes of Spooner Row to the south, Wicklewood and Kimberley to the west, Wrampingham and Great Melton to the north, Hethersett, Bracon Ash and Wreningham to the east. By geographic size, the civil parish of Wymondham is one of the largest parishes in Norfolk.
- 2.3. Reflecting local government context in the 2020s and the fact that economic, environmental and social systems do not respect local authority boundaries South Norfolk Council has increasingly been working with neighbouring Councils on planning and economic development matters, amongst others. For example, South Norfolk and Broadland Councils now work

together and share staff and South Norfolk, Broadland and Norwich Council's work together to prepare spatial planning policy in the Greater Norwich Local Plan (see below).

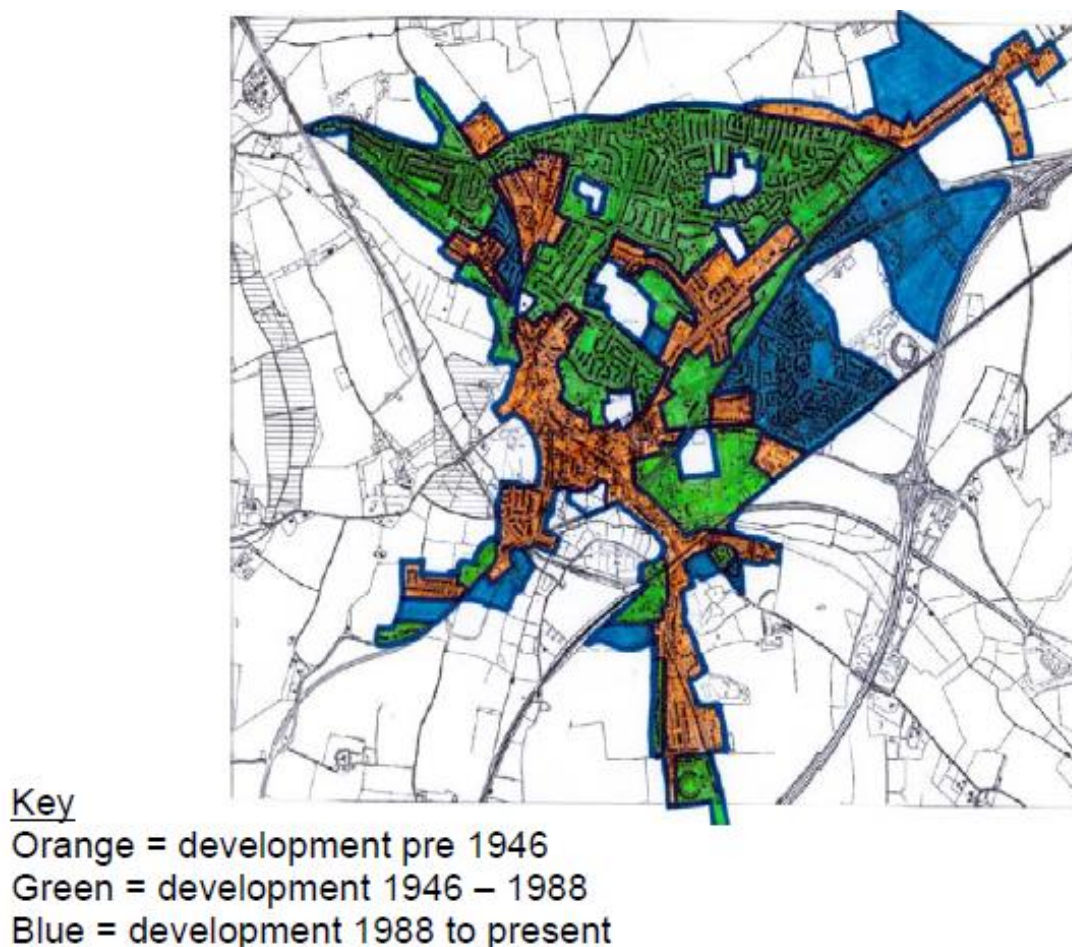
Historical development

- 2.4. Archaeological investigations suggest that human activity in Wymondham dates back to at least the Iron Age and possibly earlier (Wymondham, A Pleasant Place, 2020). However, the origins of the settlement we recognise today probably began in Saxon times around the site of the Abbey where there was thought to be a Saxon Church in the Abbey Meadows (Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan/CAAMP, 2012).

Did you know...

- 2.5. *The name "Wymondham" probably derives from the Old English "ham" (village or homestead) of "Wigmund" (a Saxon name).*
- 2.6. Thereafter the early history of the town is dominated by the Priory which was built between 1107 and 1130; by 1150 the market was thriving, a fair charter had been granted, and Wymondham developed into a recognisable market town. The CAAMP notes that the known history of the town at this time was dominated by quarrels between the monks and the parishioners!
- 2.7. With the dissolution of the monasteries under King Henry VIII the Abbey was all but demolished apart from the central tower and the nave. Only a few domestic buildings survive from this period such the Green Dragon pub primarily due to a major fire in 1615 which is thought to have destroyed around 300 buildings. Among the many casualties of the fire was the Market Cross; the present building was finished in 1618 and has since been restored several times (CAAMP, 2012).
- 2.8. The economy of the town at this time was driven by wood turning and a thriving weaving industry which provided the wealth to pay for many of the fine 17th and 18th century buildings we see today. Clues to this can be seen in the intricate carvings on the Market Cross which illustrate tops, spindles, spoons and other items being used or produced locally.
- 2.9. The CAAMP notes that with increasing competition from Yorkshire, the weaving industry, and with it the town, underwent a period of decline in the 19th century that was exacerbated by the agricultural depression in the 1870's. It notes that the town escaped large-scale development during this period which explains why Victorian buildings in the town are therefore relatively hard to find.
- 2.10. The majority of the footprint of Wymondham that we know today dates from the second half of the 20th century with the land between arterial routes being gradually developed for housing on higher land away from the Tiffey valley. The eastern boundary of the town was set by the railway, and then by the old A11 (Harts Farm Road) and now by the new A11 dual carriageway with development hurdling the old boundary and edging closer to the new. Growth has been driven by proximity to Norwich and the enviable transportation links provided by the A11, with access to the A47 and the railway providing rapid access to the regional hubs of Cambridge and Norwich.

Figure 4: Diagram illustrating the development of Wymondham over time

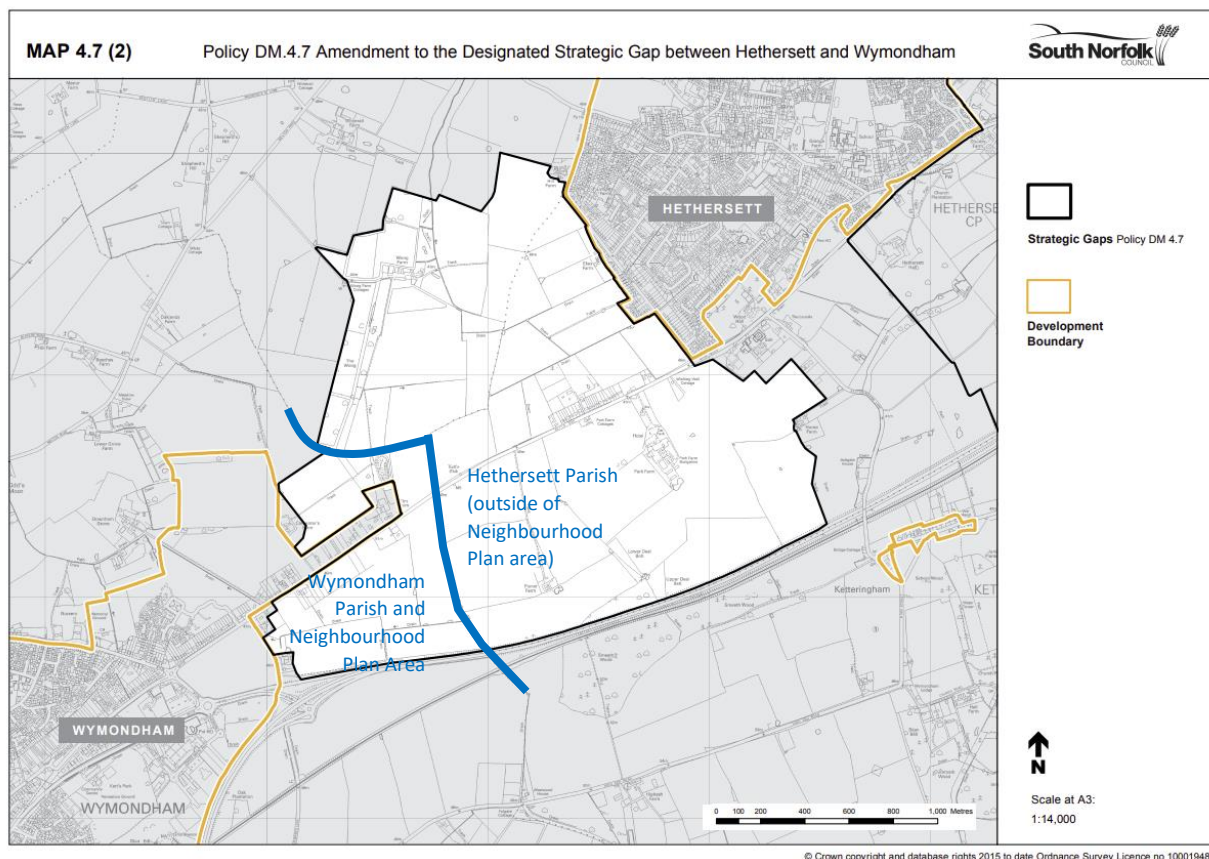


Source: Wymondham Area Action Plan, 2015

The strategic gap

- 2.11. As time passed and Wymondham continued to grow, particularly in the later part of the 20th century and early 21st century, the footprint of Wymondham edged ever closer to Norwich along the Norwich Road and the gap between the north-eastern edge of Wymondham and its neighbour - Hethersett - grew ever smaller. The risk of the two towns becoming a single unbroken ribbon of development with no open countryside between them was increasing, undermining the landscape setting of these two attractive rural places. In response to this there is a long-established and thorough policy framework that ensures some level of 'strategic gap' between Wymondham and Hethersett remains.
- 2.12. For example, policy DM 4.7 of the existing Local Plan (Development Management Policies document, October 2015) states that: Development will be permitted in the Strategic Gaps identified on the Policies Map between the development boundaries of the Settlements listed below, where it would not erode or otherwise undermine the openness of the Strategic Gap and complies with other Development Plan policies.
- Hethersett – Wymondham

Figure 5: Plan showing the strategic gap between Wymondham and Hethersett from the South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Plan Policies document. A blue line has been added to show the approximate boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area



Source: South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Plan Policies document, 2015

- 2.13. Protection of the strategic gap is reflected in the 2015 Wymondham Area Action Plan which stated that: 'Maintaining the separate identities of Wymondham and Hethersett has long been an important policy requirement in South Norfolk. The Development Management Policies document contains a Strategic Gap policy (DM 4.7) based on a study prepared by the Council's landscape consultants, Chris Blandford Associates. Whilst some minor boundary amendments have been made in response to the CBA report to reflect development sites which have been approved since 2001 (such as Carpenter's Barn) and allocations in this Wymondham Area Action Plan (such as the extension to Elm Farm Business Park) the CBA report concluded that new development on land located north or east of Carpenter's Barn would likely be seen in glimpsed views from a permissive bridleway to the south of The Wong, resulting in a reduction in gap/break openness. The report also concluded that further development in this area would result in a component of development "sprawl" into the rural landscape that provides the setting for Wymondham, and the recommendation that the current strategic gap boundaries be maintained (with minor amendments) was accepted.'
- 2.14. In addition to this, the protection of strategic gaps has been carried forward into the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan. Policy 2 (Sustainable Communities), of the submission draft GNLP (March 2021) states that: 'Development must be high quality, contributing to delivering inclusive growth in mixed, resilient and sustainable communities, to enhancing the environment, and to mitigating and adapting to climate change, assisting in meeting national

greenhouse gas emissions targets. To achieve this, development proposals are required, as appropriate, to:

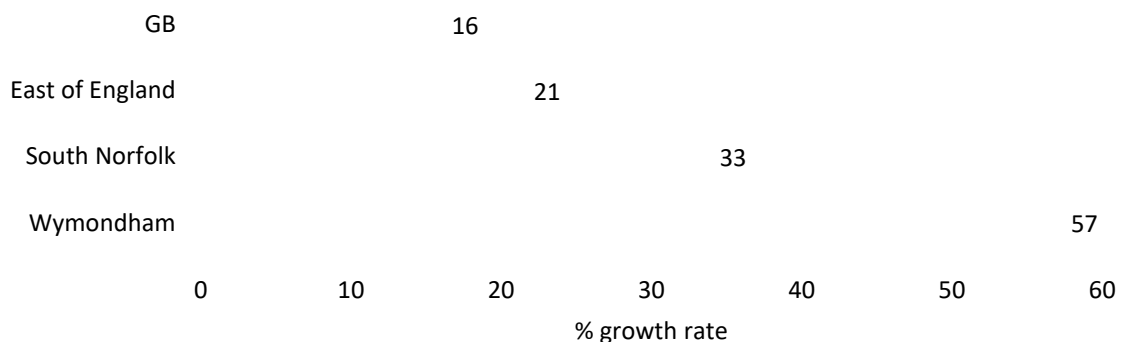
- Respect, protect and enhance local character and aesthetic quality (including landscape, townscape, and the historic environment), taking account of landscape or historic character assessments, design guides and codes, **and maintain strategic gaps and landscape settings**, including river valleys, undeveloped approaches and the character and setting of the Broads.’

- 2.15. In line with guidance, the Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to replicate or replace these existing policies. However, the Strategic Gap concept it is referenced in Policy 6 (part c) where there is clear cross-over with a proposed green infrastructure corridor and the principle of the strategic gap is supported by this Neighbourhood Plan and its retention in future Local Plan/strategic planning policy reviews is supported.

The local community

- 2.16. Wymondham is the largest settlement in South Norfolk. The population (of the parish) is around 17,000 which is around 12% of the total population of the District.
- 2.17. The population of Wymondham has grown significantly over the last few decades as can be seen from the numerous modern housing estates that have been built around the town and as Figure 4 (above) illustrates.
- 2.18. To give an indication of the scale of recent growth, in 1991 the population of the town was around 10,000 compared to nearly 17,000 today. The graph below puts this growth into context by illustrating the percentage growth rate of the population of Wymondham relative to South Norfolk, East of England and Great Britain as a whole over the period 1991-2018; it clearly shows that the rate of growth in Wymondham is far greater than other areas.

Figure 6: Graph showing the percentage change in population from 1991-2018



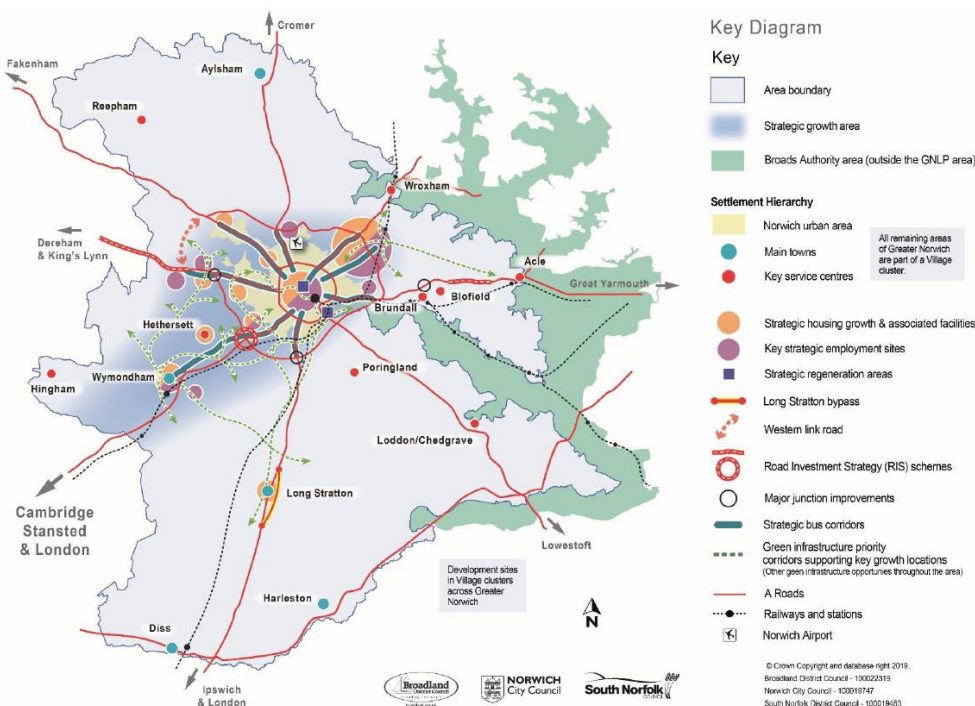
Source: ONS

- 2.19. Analysis of various sets of demographic data from the 2011 Census combines to suggest that Wymondham is a popular town for families; age breakdown statistics for example illustrate that Wymondham has higher proportions of school age children and people in their 30s and 40s than is the case across the rest of South Norfolk. This is perhaps driven by the cluster of schools and services in the town and Wymondham College being nearby. Accessibility is also likely to be a key driver; Wymondham has excellent access to the A11, direct rail links to Norwich and

Cambridge and great access to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and University of East Anglia on the western edge of Norwich as well as access to Norwich itself.

- 2.20. The analysis also suggests a relatively well educated and affluent town with limited evidence of deprivation. Levels of economic activity amongst residents are high, people are generally well qualified and working in higher order occupations, in line with trends across South Norfolk.
- 2.21. One of the most interesting statistics drawn out of the research relates to where people live and work. Data relating to the distance that people travel to work suggests that around 18% of working age residents probably live and work in Wymondham but around 45% of people are travelling between 5km and 20km to work, most probably to Norwich and its satellite of employment areas. This data highlights the economic pull factor of Norwich on Wymondham.
- 2.22. Alongside data on commuting distance, despite the fact that nearly 50% of people probably travel to Norwich for work and the presence of a direct rail link, only around 1% of people are travelling to work by train.
- 2.23. Looking to the future, the existing Local Plan, supported by the Wymondham Area Action Plan in 2015 established the principle of further major growth in and around Wymondham (a minimum of 2,200 new homes) which is still being delivered today. The emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan identifies Wymondham as being within the broad strategic growth area running south west from Norwich along the A11 (see image below). However, the GNLP states that only a relatively small level of new growth is proposed in Wymondham due to the scale of recent development and the existing commitment.

Figure 7: The 'key diagram' included in the emerging Local Plan which illustrates Wymondham as being within the strategic growth area



Source: Greater Norwich Local Plan Pre Submission Draft Strategy document, March 2021

- 2.24. The emerging Local Plan and proposes two further housing allocations equating to around 150 new homes:
- Policy GNLP0354R: Land at Johnson's Farm, Wymondham (approx. 5.39 ha) is allocated for residential development. The site is likely to accommodate approximately 100 homes.
 - Policy GNLP3013: Land North of Tuttles Lane, Wymondham (approx. 2.54 ha) is allocated for residential development. The site is likely to accommodate at least 50 homes.
- 2.25. Beyond this, as noted above the GNLP does not seek to allocate further housing within the Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan area. Across its area, the GNLP identifies enough sustainable sites and locations within and on the edge of existing settlements to meet current needs. However, it notes that with sustainable options for settlement extensions diminishing, the authorities are convinced that one or more new settlements will be required in the longer term, particularly if housing needs rise as signalled by government. The GNLP therefore includes Policy 7.6 (Preparing for New Settlements) which states that 'subject to the outcome of evidence, assessment and appraisal, one or more new settlements will be brought forward in the next Local Plan i.e. the Plan that replaces the GNLP. Three new settlement sites have been proposed through the GNLP (at Honingham Thorpe, Hethel and Silfield, the latter of which is within the Neighbourhood Plan area). It goes on to state that these sites will be investigated along with other potential locations in the next plan, taking account of selected criteria.
- 2.26. Preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan via consultation with the community and Plan Team has identified a series of issues such as key views and areas of green infrastructure which are important to local people and which they hope to see maintained. Any strategic growth in the long-term around the town that may arise from future Local Plans should reflect these ideas and aspirations and ensure that they are conserved and enhanced. The GNLP highlights that future strategic growth will be investigated in the Plan that replaces it.

Community Infrastructure

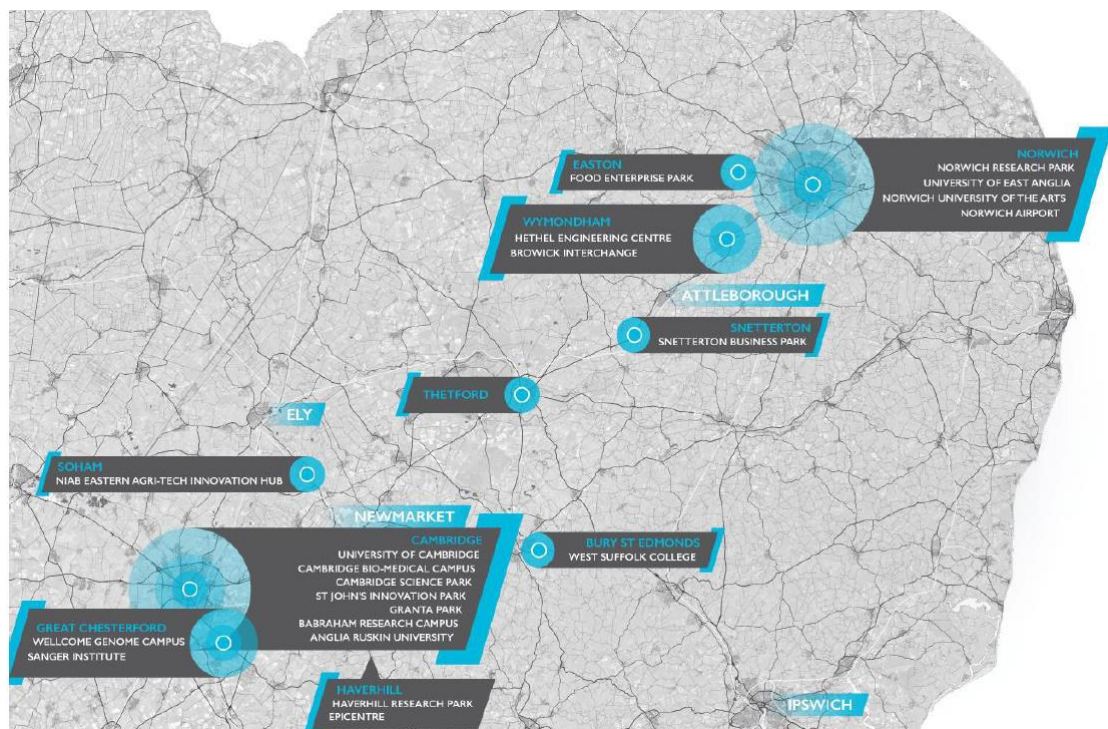
- 2.27. Wymondham contains several major community facilities including Wymondham Leisure Centre, Wymondham Library and the Ketts Park Community and Recreation Centre. The town also contains a number of important green spaces such as Tolls Meadow, the Lizard and several smaller formal and informal recreation grounds and informal green spaces.
- 2.28. In terms of education provision Wymondham has a large secondary school (Wymondham High) and several primary and nursery schools such as Robert Kett Primary School. Wymondham College is outside of the Plan area to the south. There are several GP surgeries and dentists.
- 2.29. The town centre contains various independent and national multiple retailers and retail services such as banks and building societies. Away from the town centre Wymondham benefits from a Morrisons supermarket, a Waitrose and Lidl.

The local economy

- 2.30. Historically employment was focussed around the town centre whether as a place to trade or for the historic crafts people involved in the wood-turning and weaving industries noted above. The local economy has developed in waves that have included agriculture and more latterly industrial and manufacturing, notably including the brush making.

- 2.31. As the economy has evolved, its spatial focus has shifted from the town centre to the Ayton Road area which provides an historic traditional mixed industrial estate from the early- to mid 20th century. Developing partly as a result of its proximity to the rail network, the area today includes a range of general and light industrial uses as well as some retail.
- 2.32. The newest additions to Wymondham's employment areas include a number of other more modern and high quality business parks primarily containing office based activities. This includes Elm Farm Business Park and the A11 Business Park to the north of the town and Wymondham Business Park to the south of the town centre. These modern employment sites reflect Wymondham's important position in the tech-corridor between Cambridge and Norwich including the Hethel Engineering Centre (outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area), see below.

Figure 8: Diagram illustrating the Cambridge-Norwich Tech Corridor



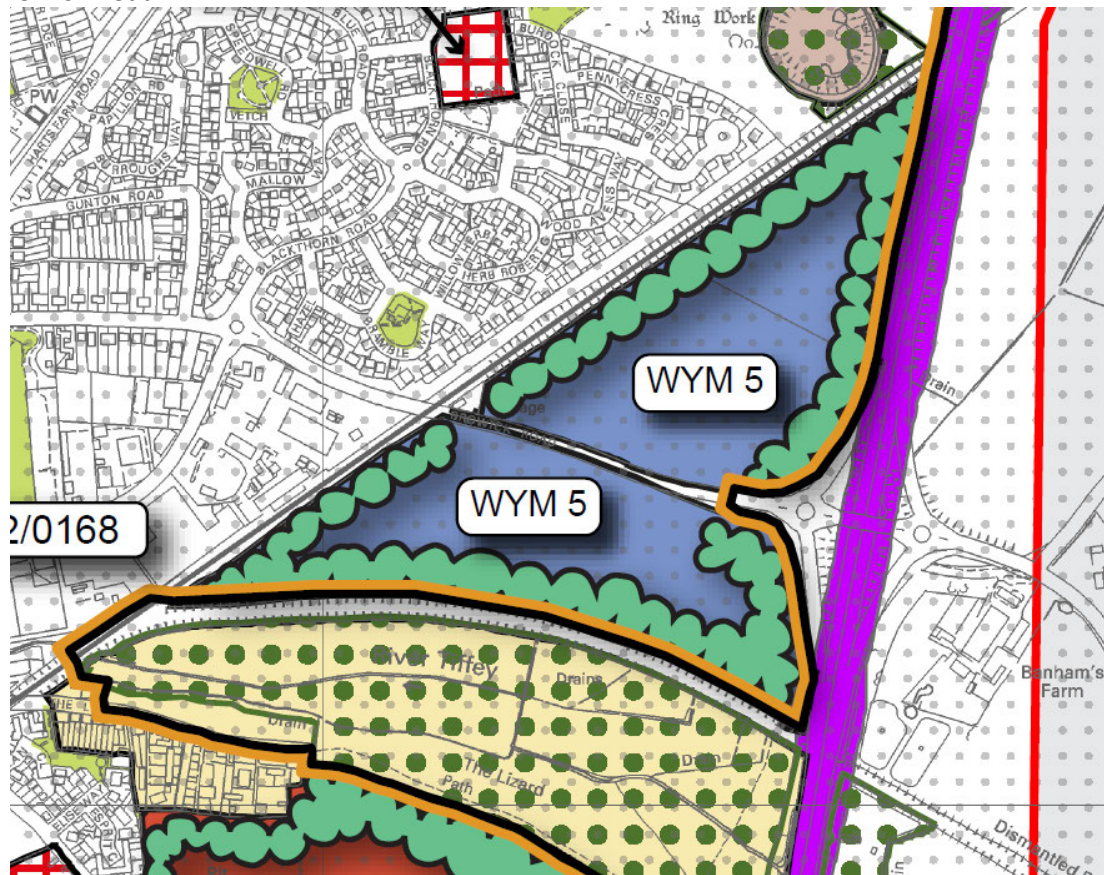
Source: Greater Norwich Local Plan Pre Submission Draft Strategy document, March 2021

- 2.33. Recognising its strategic location for economic activity, significant land was allocated for further employment development in the 2015 Area Action Plan, at Browick Road (Policy WYM 5), and adjacent Chesnut Drive (Policy WYM 6).
- 2.34. The Browick Road site represents a strategic employment allocation comprising around 22 hectares of land and land adjacent Chesnut Drive is around 5 hectares. Whilst development has progressed on the land adjacent Chesnut Drive, that is not the case at Browick Road where a scheme has not yet come forward.
- 2.35. The existing Area Action Plan policy for the Browick Road states: Land amounting to 22 hectares in total is allocated to support local employment opportunities and economic growth within use classes B1, B2 and B8. Uses associated with, or ancillary to, these use classes may also be acceptable. The site will need extensive levels of landscaping to provide a buffer to adjacent

residential areas, nearby environmentally sensitive areas, the railway line and the A11 and consequently the actual developable area is likely to be nearer to 15 hectares.

- 2.36. It continues; the developer of the site will be required to ensure a number of conditions including that the site is masterplanned as a whole to provide a new gateway to Wymondham as approached from Hethel, and footway and cycleway improvements to link to the town centre ,railway station and neighbouring areas are delivered etc.
- 2.37. To help progress development at this site the opportunity to establish a Local Development Order is currently being explored by South Norfolk Council.

Figure 9: Image showing the two parcels of land allocated for employment development at Browick Road



Source: Wymondham Area Action Plan, 2015

- 2.38. In addition to these traditional employment areas, Wymondham is home to a number of interesting heritage attractions that contribute towards the visitor economy of the town:
 - a) Wymondham Abbey
 - b) Becket's Chapel (currently the subject of a live restoration proposal)
 - c) Wymondham Heritage Museum
 - d) Mid Norfolk Railway
- 2.39. These destinations are located along an axis from one end of the town centre to the other with the attractive Market Place in the centre which is home to the unusual Market Cross building which houses a small tourist information centre.

Heritage assets

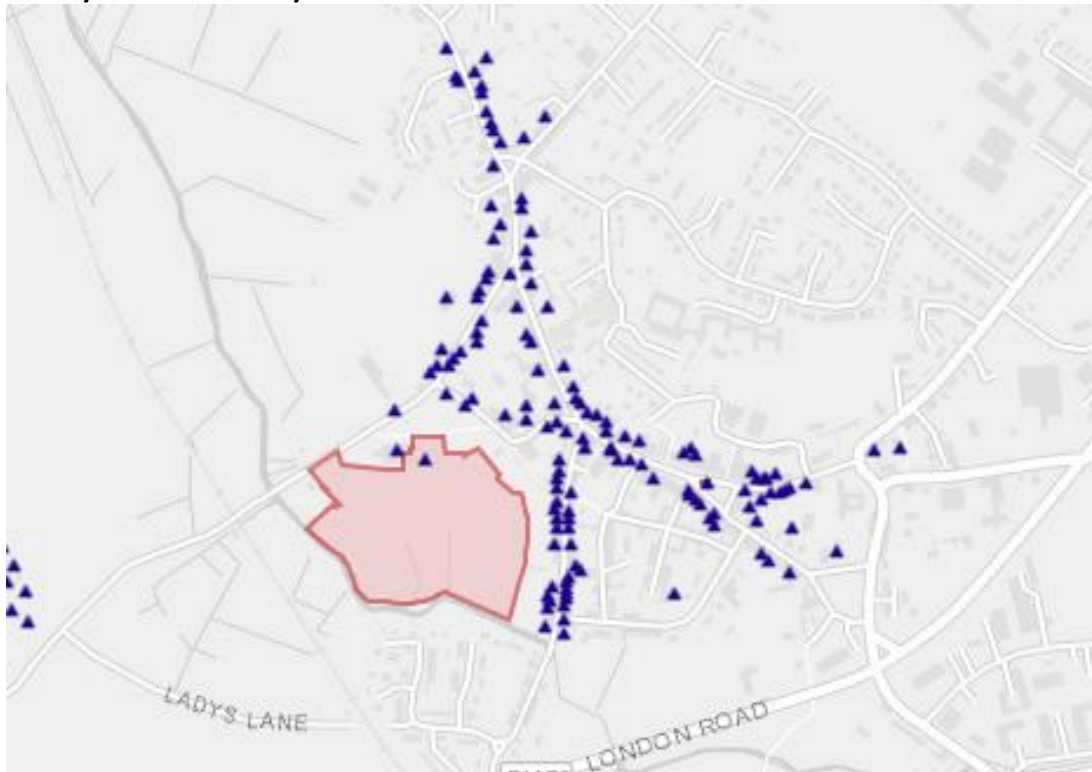
- 2.40. Wymondham is rich in heritage, most notably of course with the Abbey which is a scheduled monument and Grade I Listed. In total, the Plan area contains around 170 designated heritage assets, most of which are Listed buildings in the town centre¹. In addition to the Abbey and Listed Buildings, Wymondham is also the home of Moot Hill, a large earthwork to the north east of the town centre which is a scheduled monument, Kimberley Hall park which is a registered parkland to designs by Capability Brown and is understood to have a significant buried historic environment. In addition to these designations Wymondham also benefits from two Conservation Areas, one covering a large part of the town centre and another covering the Lizard.

Figure 10: Image showing Wymondham Abbey west from the north-west



¹ Norfolk County Council's Historic Environment Team are able to offer advice on planning proposals regarding heritage assets when it is needed.

Figure 11: Plan showing the concentration of Listed Buildings in Wymondham town centre. Listed Buildings are indicated by the blue triangles, the red polygon is showing the extent of the Wymondham Abbey scheduled monument.



Source: Historic England

Environmental assets

- 2.41. In contrast to the large number of heritage designations in Wymondham, the town is the location of relatively few environmental designations with Toll's Meadow as the sole Local Nature Reserve, which is a statutory designation.

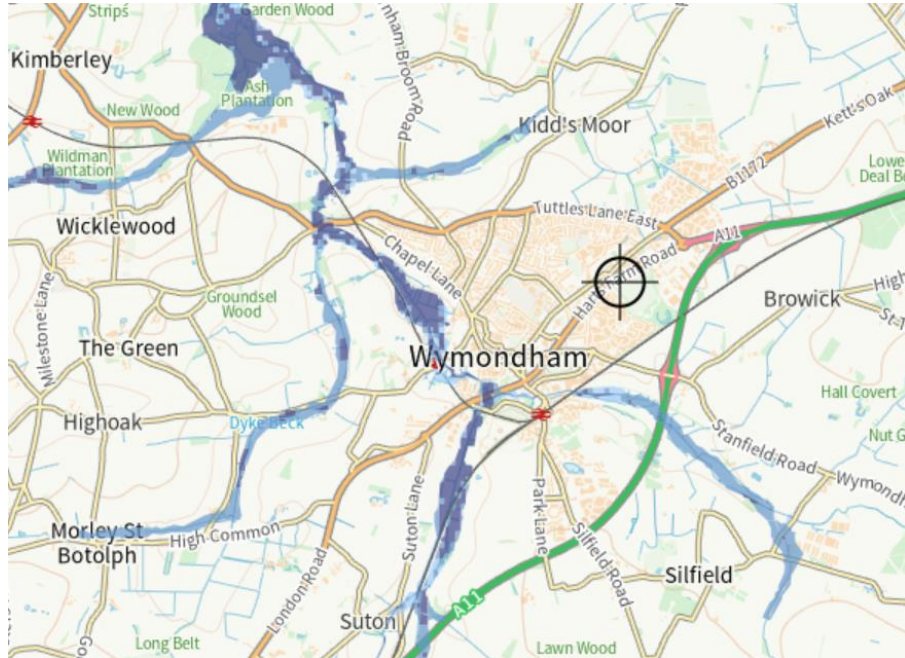
Did you know...

- 2.42. *Local Nature Reserves are for people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. They offer people opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it. They range from windswept coastal headlands, ancient woodlands and flower-rich meadows to former inner city railways, long abandoned landfill sites and industrial areas now re-colonised by wildlife. They are an impressive natural resource which makes an important contribution to England's biodiversity (Natural England).*
- 2.43. Away from Tolls Meadow, Wymondham is home to a large number of other pieces of green infrastructure including several County Wildlife Sites, Priority Wetland Habitats (Lowland Fens), Priority Grassland Habitats (floodplain, lowland meadows, semi-improved grassland such as the Lizard etc.) and other un-designated areas such as the woodland around Ketts Park.

Flood risk

- 2.44. Wymondham has grown around a network of waterways that feed into the River Tiffey. As such there are parts of the Plan area that are susceptible to flooding as shown in the plans below.

Figure 12: Map showing areas of flood risk from rivers or the sea



Source: gov.uk



A Vision & Objectives

3. A vision and objectives for Wymondham

- 3.1. The Neighbourhood Plan for Wymondham has at its heart a long-term vision for the area and a series of more detailed strategic objectives.
- 3.2. True to the ethos of Neighbourhood Planning the vision set out in this document is based on the views and aspirations of local people. In the winter of 2020/2021, the Neighbourhood Plan Team consulted with local residents and asked them for their ideas on a vision for the area. The local community stepped up to the challenge and responded in great number with over 250 different vision statements submitted.

Figure 13: Illustration showing a ‘word cloud’ of popular words used by local people when asked to write down their vision for Wymondham



- 3.3. Riven through the huge number of suggested visions provided by the community were a series of common themes such as maintaining a traditional character and peoples fondness for Wymondham’s market town identity. Following a process of analysis and testing within the team a draft vision statement for the Plan was prepared as set out below.

WYMONDHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN VISION STATEMENT

‘ONE WYMONDHAM: A TRADITIONAL AND VIBRANT MARKET TOWN IN THE NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE, WITH AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THAT VALUES ITS HERITAGE AND GREENSPACES WHILST EMBRACING THE FUTURE.’

- 3.4. This vision was tested through a consultation that took place over summer 2021 and was met with overwhelming support.
- 3.5. The purpose of the vision is to provide an overarching direction for the Neighbourhood Plan. It is not supposed to be detailed or particularly technical but capture how local people see their part of the world and how they want it to be in the future.

- 3.6. Alongside the high-level vision, the Neighbourhood Plan Team has also developed a series of more detailed strategic objectives. In contrast to the vision, the objectives seek to address specific thematic or geographic issues. They provide a starting point for measuring progress and a point of reference for assessing performance and it should follow that, if the objectives are cumulatively met, the vision will be achieved.
- 3.7. The objectives for the Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan have emerged from consultation, research and discussion within the Neighbourhood Plan Team. Just like the vision, the draft objectives were tested with the community in 2021 and met with overwhelming support. They are set out below:

WYMONDHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: INCLUSION: THE PLAN SHOULD PROMOTE IMPROVED PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ALL COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE TOWN

OBJECTIVE 2: TRADITIONAL MARKET TOWN CHARACTER: THE PLAN SHOULD SEEK TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE CHARACTERISTICS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF WYMONDHAM AS A LIVING, WORKING HISTORIC MARKET TOWN

OBJECTIVE 3: RURAL SETTING: THE PLAN SHOULD SEEK TO MAINTAIN THE SETTING OF WYMONDHAM AS A DISCRETE TOWN SURROUNDED BY HIGH QUALITY COUNTRYSIDE

OBJECTIVE 4: COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE: THE PLAN SHOULD SEEK TO ENSURE THAT THE PROVISION OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE KEEPS-UP WITH THE GROWTH OF THE TOWN

OBJECTIVE 5: TOWN CENTRE: THE PLAN MUST CONSERVE THE TRADITIONAL TOWN CENTRE AND HELP IT TO ADJUST TO CHANGING CONSUMER TRENDS AND PREFERENCES FOR SHOPPING, WORKING AND LEISURE

OBJECTIVE 6: SUSTAINABILITY: THE PLAN MUST SEEK TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF WYMONDHAM, MITIGATING THE IMPACTS OF A CHANGING CLIMATE AND ADAPTING TO FUTURE CONDITIONS

OBJECTIVE 7: THE PLAN MUST PROMOTE IMPROVING ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL, PAYING ATTENTION TO THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED AND PROMOTE IMPROVED PERMEABILITY OF BUILT UP AREAS ACROSS THE TOWN

OBJECTIVE 8: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: THE PLAN MUST PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT OF STRATEGIC AND LOCAL GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE SITES AND NETWORKS



Neighbourhood Plan Policies

4. Neighbourhood Plan Policies

- 4.1. This section of the Plan sets out the policies that have been developed by the Neighbourhood Plan Team in response to their research and consultation with the local community. The policies are the main focus of the Plan as the tools that will be used by South Norfolk Council when they are considering planning applications that come forward in the Plan area.
- 4.2. There are nine policies in total covering a range of issues. The policies have been arranged under two headings as follows:

Town centre policies

POLICY 1: TOWN CENTRE VIBRANCY
POLICY 2: BACK LANE
POLICY 3: PLANNING PUBLIC REALM

Thematic policies

POLICY 4: EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN
POLICY 5: IMPORTANT VIEWS AND VISTAS
POLICY 6: STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK
POLICY 7: WYMONDHAM GREEN RIBBONS/LOCAL GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK
POLICY 8: INTEGRATION AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL
POLICY 9: ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE
POLICY 10: SURFACE WATER FLOOD RISK

Town Centre Policies: Vibrancy

Background

- 4.3. Our town centres are going through a period of long-term and fundamental change. Shopping and related services such as banking, which for well over a century have formed the focus for our town centres and high streets, are taking place increasingly online and via large footprint out of town stores and supermarkets. This type of activity is happening less and less in our town centres and high streets and as a result we regularly see historic stalwarts closing stores or going out of business altogether and the 'retail footprint' of town centres getting smaller.
- 4.4. This trend shows no sign of abating with the proportion of retail activity undertaken online in particular increasing consistently year after year. In many places, retailers with fixed premises and additional costs such as high-street rents and business rates are struggling to compete and many are closing and/or switching their trading platform to online.
- 4.5. The sudden impact of the coronavirus pandemic on this long-term trend is still being borne out. In some places there is evidence to suggest that smaller, local centres have fared well and people have re-connected with their local shops and their '15 minute neighbourhoods' but in others, the significant loss of trade has simply accelerated their decline.
- 4.6. Wymondham has a large and expansive historic retail centre; it extends from Town Green in the west through to The Fairland in the east with several side streets with shops branching off, in total this extends over a length of nearly 600 metres. Wymondham's retail footprint was established in the late 19th and 20th centuries and in the face of the long-term shift in shopping habits will change and adapt over the coming years.
- 4.7. Whilst we are still very much in this period of transition and it is too soon to confidently predict what town centres will look like in 20 or 30 years, it does appear that there is a trend towards people using them more for leisure and lifestyle and less for everyday retail. So, for example the idea of 'café culture' and the growth in coffee shops is a sign that people are using town centres more to socialise than they did in the past and the occurrence of niche or lifestyle retailers such as antiques, crafts or speciality food and drink or services such as barbers and beauty salons is a sign that people are using town centres as part of a lifestyle rather than for pure convenience.

Objective

- 4.8. The objective of this policy is not to try to second guess the role that town centres will play in the next 10 years but to create a framework to ensure that Wymondham town centre will be able to adapt whilst fundamentally continuing to play its role as the vibrant heart of Wymondham. In promoting vibrancy, the policy is seeking to encourage a varied mixture of uses, high levels of footfall throughout the day and evening, high levels of occupancy, attractive and well maintained buildings and varied patterns of use and activity taking place in the public realm

POLICY 1: TOWN CENTRE VIBRANCY

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO, AND HELP TO IMPROVE THE OVERALL VIBRANCY OF THE TOWN CENTRE; THIS INCLUDES THE SENSITIVE REDEVELOPMENT OF POOR QUALITY BUILDINGS AND SITES. THE PLAN SUPPORTS PROPOSALS FOR SENSITIVE RETAIL, LEISURE AND EMPLOYMENT USES IN THE TOWN CENTRE THAT HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO GENERATE HIGH LEVELS OF FOOTFALL THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND EVENING AND HELP INCREASE ACTIVITY. THE PLAN ENCOURAGES PROPOSALS TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS:

- A) ACTIVE FRONTAGES THAT HELP TO MAKE THE TOWN CENTRE ATTRACTIVE TO BOTH RESIDENTS AND VISITORS AND FEEL BUSY**
- B) USES THAT UTILISE OR HELP TO INCREASE ACTIVITY IN THE PUBLIC REALM**
- C) EMPLOYMENT OR RESIDENTIAL USE AT FIRST FLOOR AND ABOVE**
- D) IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC REALM SUCH AS LIGHTING, PLANTING, SEATING AND IMPROVED SURFACING**
- E) INSERTING NEW USES ALONG THE LENGTH OF ALLEYWAYS AND PEDESTRIAN LINKS**
- F) IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SETTING OF LISTED BUILDINGS**
- G) RETAINING OR PROVIDING COHERENT OPEN SPACES BETWEEN SEPARATE DEVELOPMENTS.**

Did you know...

- 4.9.** *The term 'active frontage' means 'ground floors with windows and doors onto the street which create interest and activity' (Bradford City Design Guide).*

Town Centre Policies: Back Lane

Background

- 4.10. The historic nature of Wymondham and its prosperity during periods from the past has left a legacy in the shape and form of the town that we see today. Whether it is the large open medieval Market Place or the street pattern around the Abbey, the shape and appearance of the town is so often driven by the economics and politics of times past.
- 4.11. Back Lane is a good example of this. Historically development in Wymondham ran along main thoroughfares such as Damgate, Bridewell Street, Middleton Street and Market Street, centred around the Market Place. Individual properties or 'burghage plots' comprised narrow strips extending back from the street with most commonly a building at the front and open yards, workshops, barns or gardens to the rear. The front of the properties formed a neat and what is now, highly attractive street frontage filled with shops and businesses and homes. The very rear of the properties was much less defined often just petering out and merging into what was at the time likely to be open fields, lanes or countryside. You can see this quite easily today as you walk along Back Lane and view the rear of properties that front onto the Market Street, with, very often, historic barns and yard areas still visible.
- 4.12. Unlike parts of Brewery Lane on the other side of the Market Place, where the backs of the plots have been developed out to create a second contiguous street, Back Lane still feels very much like an area of back-lands, despite the fact that Wymondham has grown significantly beyond this point. The Lane itself snakes around from Bridewell Street to Pople Street; stretches of pavement are fragmented; the Back Lane Car Park, whilst important, has a confusing layout; in some places the rear of properties on Market Place are open with bin stores and private car parks, in other places there are remnants of historic walls and gateways.

Did you know...

- 4.13. *Burghage plots are a typical form of medieval property which may have originally been owned by the Crown or local Lord of the Manor and rented to a local tenant and being the owner or tenant of a burghage was the basis of the right to vote in many boroughs!*

Objective

- 4.14. The objective of this policy is to improve the function and appearance of Back Lane; to improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists and improve and enhance the historic setting as well as more modern landmark buildings such as the Library.

POLICY 2: BACK LANE

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS PROPOSALS FOR THE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT OF BACK-LAND PLOTS ALONG BACK LANE TO HELP IMPROVE THE FUNCTION AND APPEARANCE OF THIS AREA. THIS INCLUDES ANIMATING THE ALLEYWAYS LINKING BACK LANE TO THE TOWN CENTRE BY INTRODUCING NEW USES WITH ACTIVE FRONTAGES AND GENERALLY IMPROVING THEIR ATTRACTIVENESS AND APPEAL.

WHERE RELEVANT, PROPOSALS SHOULD SEEK TO RATIONALISE CAR PARKING PROVISION AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC REALM. A PARTICULAR FOCUS SHOULD BE ON IMPROVING ORIENTATION BETWEEN THIS AREA AND THE TOWN CENTRE, IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY AND INTRODUCING SOFT LANDSCAPING AND PLANTING.

PROPOSALS SHOULD TAKE PARTICULAR CARE TO ENSURE THAT THEIR LAYOUT AND DESIGN, INCLUDING THE SCALE, MASSING AND EXTERNAL TREATMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO ENHANCING THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE AND HELP TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE CONSERVATION AREA AND THE SETTING OF ANY LISTED BUILDINGS WITHOUT REMOVING THE HISTORIC PATTERN OF BURGHAGE PLOTS.

Town Centre Policies: Public realm

Background

- 4.15. The historic nature of Wymondham means that the town centre is full of small areas or pockets of public space or incidental public realm in addition to the more obvious formal example of the Market Place itself. Some of these pockets are well defined with clear boundaries such as The Fairland or the area around the Market Place, others have become established almost accidentally in the spaces between buildings and the highway such as outside Barclays or outside the bakers and chip shop on the corner of Queen Street and Market Place

Did you know...

- 4.16. The term 'public realm' refers to the space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces (The London Plan).*

- 4.17. Alongside this, the scale of some of the roads and junctions in Wymondham dates back to a time before the town centre was bypassed, firstly by Harts Farm Road and more recently by the A11. In these places the highway and junctions are designed to accommodate a volume of traffic that has long since gone; the most obvious example of this is perhaps the junction of Bridewell Street and Avenue Road where there is a huge expanse of highway, dominating the setting of the Wymondham Heritage Museum and making it difficult for pedestrians to cross.
- 4.18. Finally, it is symptomatic of many places that where there are pockets of public space that aren't part of the highway or apparently part of a pedestrian thoroughfare, clutter accumulates. This could be utilities cabinets, general waste bins, recycling bins, planters, street lighting, benches, bike stands, signage, interpretation, public art, railings, bollards and traffic signs. There is doubtless justification for each one of these items in its own right that makes them entirely necessary at a point in time. However, in many cases these things have collected over time without regard to the cumulative impact on the appearance or functionality of their location. In some places they occupy parts of the public realm in such number so as to create an obstruction and render a valuable part of the town centre unusable
- 4.19. The Wymondham Town Centre Strategy (2018) and the South Norfolk Place Making Guide (2021) provide more information and analysis of the above and are a useful reference. The Government's National Design Guide (2021) and LTN 1/20 on Cycle Infrastructure Design plus Historic England's publication Streets for All (2018) should be referred to as best practice.

Objective

- 4.20. The objective of this policy is to put the welfare and amenity of pedestrians and Wymondham town centre first. It is accepted that measures within the policy will not be implemented immediately or in a single phase but the objective is to establish a framework by which parts of the town centre can be improved or reclaimed for the local community over time and to ensure that future installation of infrastructure or street furniture is done in a coherent way that is mindful of cumulative impact.

Figure 14: Sample diagram from the Wymondham Town Centre Strategy



Source: Wymondham Town Centre Strategy, Wynne-Williams Associates, May 2018

Figure 15: Diagram showing some of the principles of well designed public spaces



Source: National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places, Ministry of Housing, communities and Local Government (now DLUHC), 2021

POLICY 3: PLANNING PUBLIC REALM

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS THAT IMPROVE THE PUBLIC REALM ACROSS THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA WILL BE SUPPORTED. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PLAN SUPPORTS A REDUCTION IN WIDTH OF THE ROADS IN THE TOWN CENTRE AND THE WIDENING OF PAVEMENTS, THE CREATION OF MORE PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY AREAS, BETTER STREET SURFACES, NEW PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS, DE-CLUTTERING, NEW PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES SUCH AS SEATING AND THE CAREFUL INTRODUCTION OF PLANTING AND STREET TREES.

IN PARTICULAR PROPOSALS THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS PLACEMAKING AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC REALM IN LOCATIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE WYMONDHAM TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY (2018) AND VIA CONSULTATION WILL BE SUPPORTED; THESE AREAS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- A) THE FAIRLAND JUNCTION**
- B) BRIDEWELL JUNCTION**
- C) TOWN GREEN JUNCTION**
- D) MARKET PLACE**
- E) MARKET STREET CAR PARK**
- F) OLD FIRE STATION ARCH (ENTRANCE TO MARKET STREET CAR PARK) AND WHARTON COURT**
- G) BACK LANE CAR PARK**
- H) AROUND BECKET'S CHAPEL**
- I) PRIORY GARDENS**
- J) AROUND THE WAR MEMORIAL**
- K) ALLEYWAYS IN THE TOWN CENTRE.**

Thematic Policies: Design

Background

- 4.21. Research undertaken in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan highlighted how significantly Wymondham has grown over the last few decades. This significant growth has occurred through the building of a large number of new housing estates such as at Harts Farm and more recently at Silfield. The quality of the urban design and architecture of these new estates has improved over time but is not consistently as high as it might be.
- 4.22. In parallel to undertaking this research, community consultation has highlighted that local people feel strongly about Wymondham's history and protecting its own unique appearance identity as a large, historic and important market town in Norfolk. These qualities are part of what attracts people to Wymondham and goes some way to explaining its enduring appeal
- 4.23. The Neighbourhood Plan Team recognise that the regulations around Neighbourhood Planning limit what the document can do in terms of new housing development; indeed there is a strong feeling coming from public consultation that the town does need to continue to evolve and change to remain relevant and attractive. However, the Team is keen that any new development is built to the highest possible standards of urban design and architecture. In this way, new development can enhance the existing character of the town and contribute positively to its identity in a range of ways such as through a sensitive choice of materials, architectural details, density, relationship to greenspaces.

Figure 16: Images showing typical local building materials, styles and details



Did you know...

4.24. The South Norfolk Place Making Guide identified a series of characteristics that are particular to Wymondham and help to give the look and feel that local people value so much. These important characteristics include:

- a) A tightly defined 'urban grain'**
- b) Narrow "burgage" plots in the town's historic core**
- c) The Market Place and unusual Market Cross providing a focal point to the town**
- d) Streets that vary in width with changes in level that often open up onto squares and crossing points**
- e) A high quality of craftsmanship and design**

Objective

- 4.25.** The objective of this policy is to raise the standard of the design of new homes, employment space, infrastructure and public spaces in Wymondham in the future to a consistently high standard. In doing so, the policy will conserve and enhance the character of the town for future generations and ensure that Wymondham retains its unique identity and appeal
- 4.26.** Rather than trying to prescribe what good design is, the policy points people in the direction of a range of guidance that already exists. This includes:
- a) National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places (2021), prepared by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities
 - b) Streets for All: Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places (2018), prepared by Historic England
 - c) South Norfolk Place Making Guide (2012), prepared by South Norfolk Council
 - d) Wymondham Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (2021), prepared by South Norfolk Council.

Figure 17: Images showing how a modern building in Wymondham can include materials that are sensitive to the historic character of the area in a contemporary manner. The building also includes a significant range of sustainability measures such as integrated solar-thermal panels and rainwater harvesting.



Source: South Norfolk Place-Making Guide, Appendix A: Case Studies

POLICY 4: EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT WHICH DEMONSTRATES THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE TO HELP REINFORCE WYMONDHAM'S UNIQUE AND SPECIAL CHARACTER AND SENSE OF PLACE. THIS INCLUDES THE DESIGN OF NEW HOUSING, WORK SPACE, RETAIL SPACE, STREETS AND LANDSCAPE. PROPOSALS FOR NEW HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD REFER TO THE NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE AND OTHER DESIGN GUIDANCE AND DEMONSTRATE THROUGH THE SUBMISSION OF AN APPROPRIATE AND PROPORTIONATE DESIGN STATEMENT HOW THEY HAVE RESPONDED TO THEM AND THE FOLLOWING 10 CHARACTERISTICS FOR GOOD DESIGN:

- A) CONTEXT
- B) IDENTITY
- C) BUILT FORM
- D) MOVEMENT
- E) NATURE
- F) PUBLIC SPACES
- G) USES
- H) HOMES & BUILDINGS
- I) RESOURCES
- J) LIFESPAN

HAVING TAKEN ACCOUNT OF DESIGN GUIDANCE PARTICULAR CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ENSURING THAT THE CHARACTER, LAYOUT AND FORM OF NEW DEVELOPMENT BLENDS SEAMLESSLY WITH THE EXISTING TOWN, CREATING A COHERENT PLACE IN TERMS OF DESIGN AND CONNECTIVITY.

NEW DEVELOPMENT MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE PROVISION OF NECESSARY SOCIAL AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE AS EARLY AS PRACTICABLY POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT DEMANDS ARISING FROM DEVELOPMENT ARE EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSED.

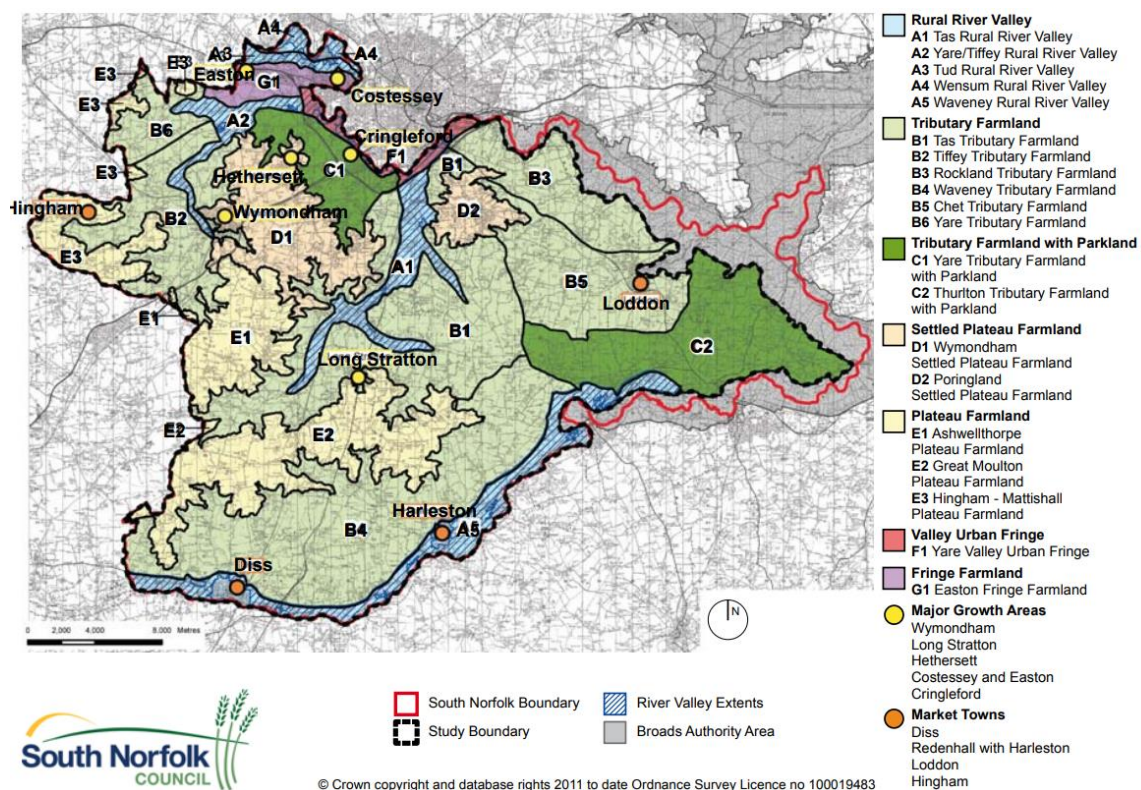
Thematic Policies: Views and vistas

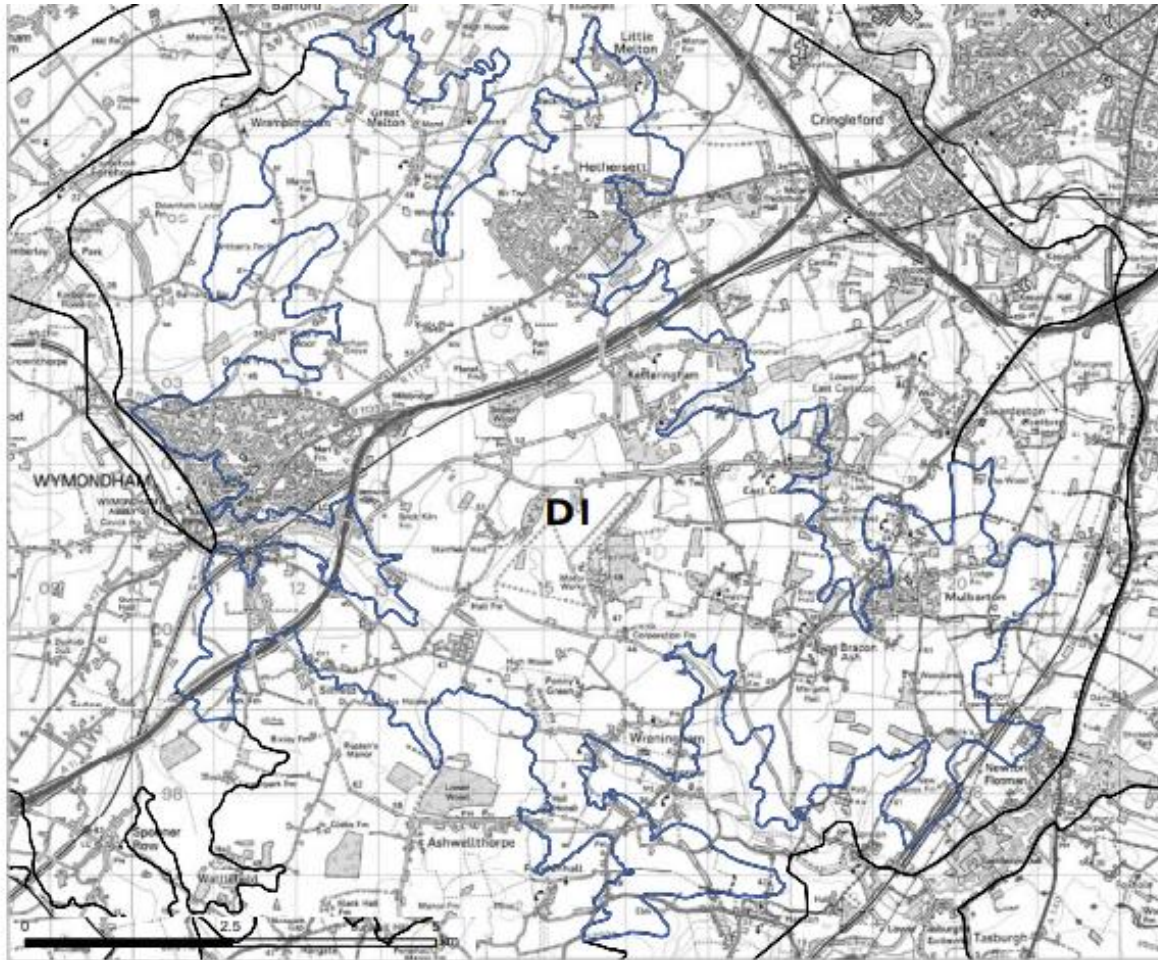
Background

4.27. Wymondham is located in an area of landscape characterised by the South Norfolk Place Making Guide (2012), as ‘Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland’, the key characteristics of which include:

- Large expanses of flat landform with little variation over long distances with strong open horizons
- Settled landscape with large edge-of-plateau towns and villages such as Wymondham
- Long views from plateau edge

Figure 18: Diagram illustrating the different landscape character areas within South Norfolk and below, a more detailed plan showing the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland character area





Source: South Norfolk Place-Making Guide, Supplementary Planning Document, September 2012

4.28. This plateau is dominated to the west of Wymondham by the much-loved Tiffey river valley, the Tiffey being a tributary of the River Yare. This valley is identified as a unique local landscape in its own right ('Tiffey Tributary Farmland') by the 2012 Placemaking work with a number of characteristics including:

- a) Presence of attractive historic bridges over the river, mostly constructed of brick
- b) Important buildings including Wymondham Abbey and churches and mills forming landmark features
- c) Important views including the view to Wymondham Abbey across the river valley.

- 4.29. What is notable about both landscape characterisations is the frequent reference to the importance of views and how important they are in defining the places.
- 4.30. On a very practical level this characterisation is immediately familiar to anyone who has spent time in Wymondham. Travelling along Chapel Lane along the ridge of the Tiffey valley for example, the Abbey dominates the long-view, rising up above the horizon, or moving through the town centre there are glimpsed views of the tower rising above all of the other buildings such as on Brewery Lane. The views of the Abbey are of a high heritage value and might be considered nationally significant, akin to glimpses of Ely Cathedral across the Fen, for example.
- 4.31. Venturing out into the countryside there are equally attractive views where the landscape starts to undulate as the river valley and ditch lines cut through farmland to shape long, winding views, examples of which can be seen looking away from Wymondham along the Lizard or looking north and east towards Kidd's Moor.
- 4.32. A process was undertaken during the preparation of this Plan to review views already noted in other documents and identify others that are valued by local people and help to define Wymondham's own unique sense of place. The process for identifying new views included:
- Site visits
 - An appeal for the Neighbourhood Plan Team to identify views that were important to them
 - Consultation with the Neighbourhood Plan Team
 - Community consultation
 - An assessment of the level of public access or public use of the point from which a view is experienced
 - An assessment of the broad significance/quality or characteristics of that view.

Objective

- 4.33. The objective of this policy is to preserve and enhance important views in and around Wymondham so that the features of these views and vistas can be enjoyed by future generations and go on defining Wymondham's unique character. If further development is forthcoming in the future around Wymondham that is currently not set out in the GNLP or AAP, it should take the preservation and enhancement of these views into account.

POLICY 5: IMPORTANT VIEWS AND VISTAS

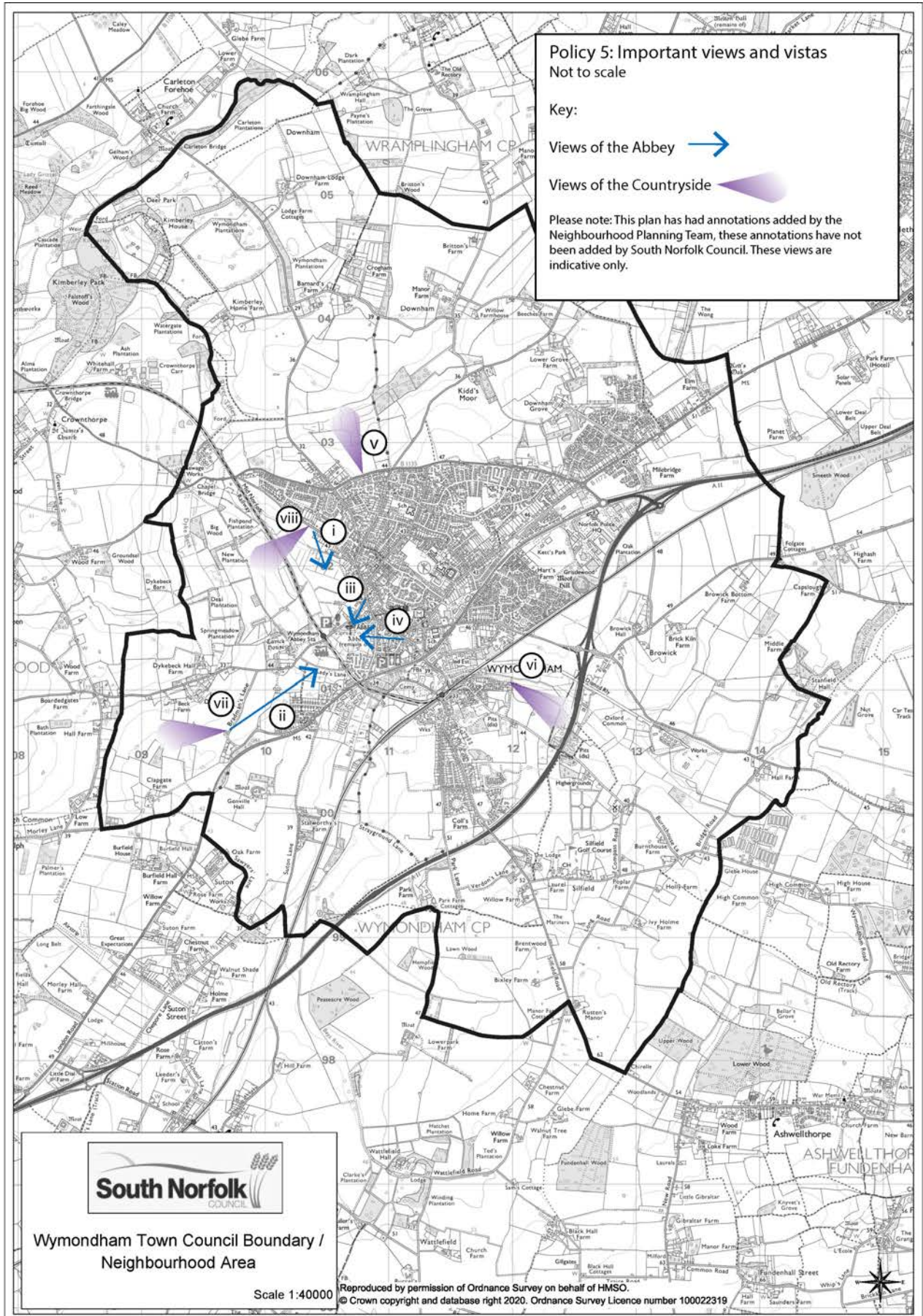
THE PLAN SEEKS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE VIEWS OF WYMONDHAM ABBEY, THE TIFFEY VALLEY, THE LIZARD AND ACROSS HIGH-QUALITY COUNTRYSIDE TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE TOWN. ANY DEVELOPMENT OR ALTERATIONS TO AN AREA WITHIN THESE VIEWS MUST ENSURE THAT KEY FEATURES OF THE VIEW CAN CONTINUE TO BE ENJOYED INCLUDING LANDMARK BUILDINGS, OPEN COUNTRYSIDE AND THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE TOWN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS. DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE VIEWS THAT IS INTRUSIVE, UNSIGHTLY OR PROMINENT TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE VIEW AS A WHOLE SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

ABBNEY VIEWS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE INCLUDE THOSE FROM:

- I. CHAPEL LANE (LONG VIEW OF ABBEY IN DISTANCE ACROSS TIFFEY VALLEY)
- II. BRADMAN'S LANE (LONG VIEW OF ABBEY IN DISTANCE ACROSS OPEN COUNTRYSIDE)
- III. VICAR STREET (URBAN VIEW OF ABBEY TOWER FRAMED BY HISTORIC BUILDINGS)
- IV. BREWERY LANE (URBAN VIEW OF ABBEY TOWER FRAMED BY HISTORIC BUILDINGS)

COUNTRYSIDE VIEWS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE INCLUDE THOSE FROM:

- V. TUTTLES LANE WEST LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS KIDD'S MOOR & CARLTON FOREHOE (LONG VIEW ACROSS OPEN COUNTRYSIDE)
- VI. THE LIZARD LOOKING EAST ALONG THE TIFFEY VALLEY (LONG VIEW ALONG TIFFEY VALLEY)
- VII. BRADMAN'S LANE LOOKING WEST (LONG VIEW ACROSS OPEN COUNTRYSIDE)
- VIII. CHAPEL LANE LOOKING WEST ACROSS THE TIFFEY VALLEY (LONG VIEW ACROSS TIFFEY VALLEY)



View i. Wymondham Abbey from Chapel Lane

View i: Wymondham Abbey in the middle distance rising up above the tree line across the Tiffey Valley. An iconic vista from a particularly important and busy road that flanks the west of the town means that it will be experienced by local residents and people travelling through Wymondham.



View II. Wymondham Abbey from Bradman's Lane

View II: Wymondham Abbey in the far distance rising over a seemingly flat agricultural plateau landscape. An important long-distance view from a well-used country lane that links two arterial routes into Wymondham.



View iii. Wymondham Abbey from Vicar Street



View iv. Wymondham Abbey from Brewery Lane



View v. Tuttles Lane West



View vi. The Lizard looking east along the Tiffey Valley



View vii. Bradman's Lane looking west



View viii. Chapel Lane looking west across the Tiffey Valley

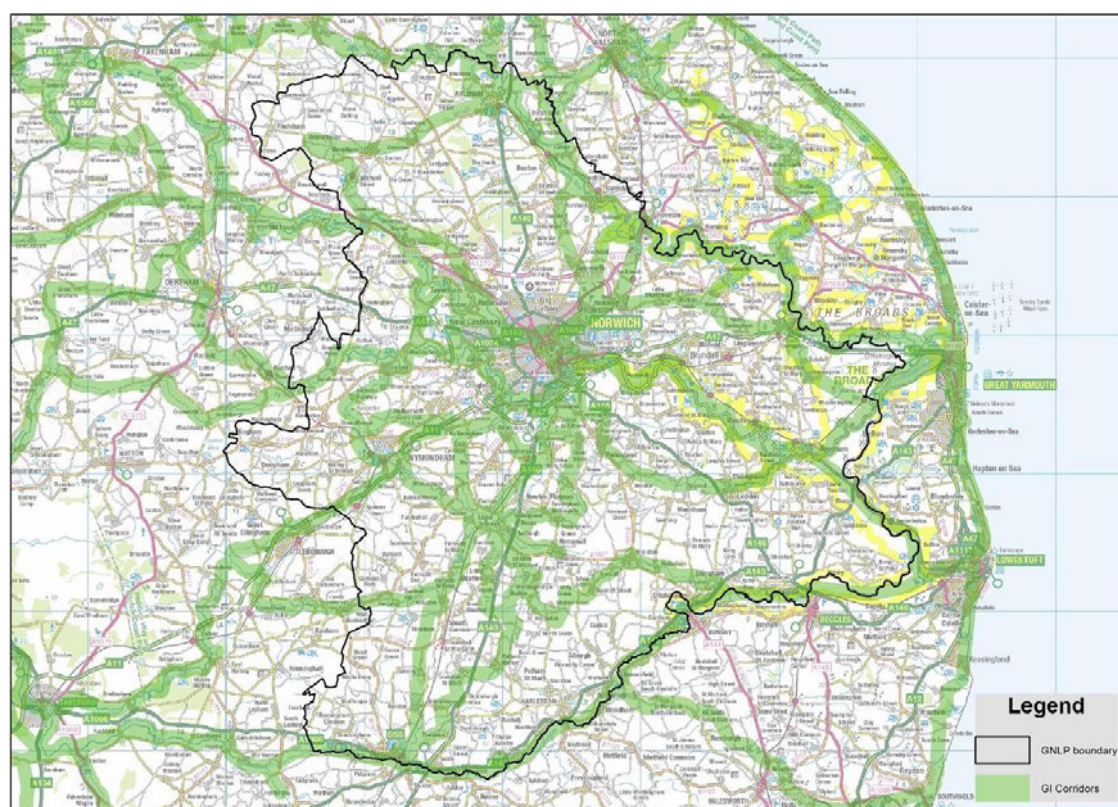


Thematic Policies: Green infrastructure

Background

- 4.34. Norfolk as a county is full of incredible green infrastructure including historic parkland, forests, valleys, heaths and much more. There is a good strategy and policy framework that maps existing provision at the County and Local level and this has been enshrined in planning policy since at least 2011 in the previous Local Plan (the Joint Core Strategy). Going forward this pattern looks set to continue with the emerging GNLP continuing to place a high priority on green infrastructure stating that it is ‘essential that the network continues to be protected and developed further into the long term as green infrastructure aims to link fragmented habitats, allowing the movement of species and supporting biodiversity gain. It also has other benefits such as reducing flood risk and promoting active travel’.
- 4.35. In addition to a well-established and comprehensive policy framework, there is good representation from within local communities seeking to conserve and expand local provision. Greening Wymondham, for example, is a long-established and particularly proactive local group who were members of the Neighbourhood Plan Team.

Figure 19: Plan showing the strategic green infrastructure corridors across Norfolk

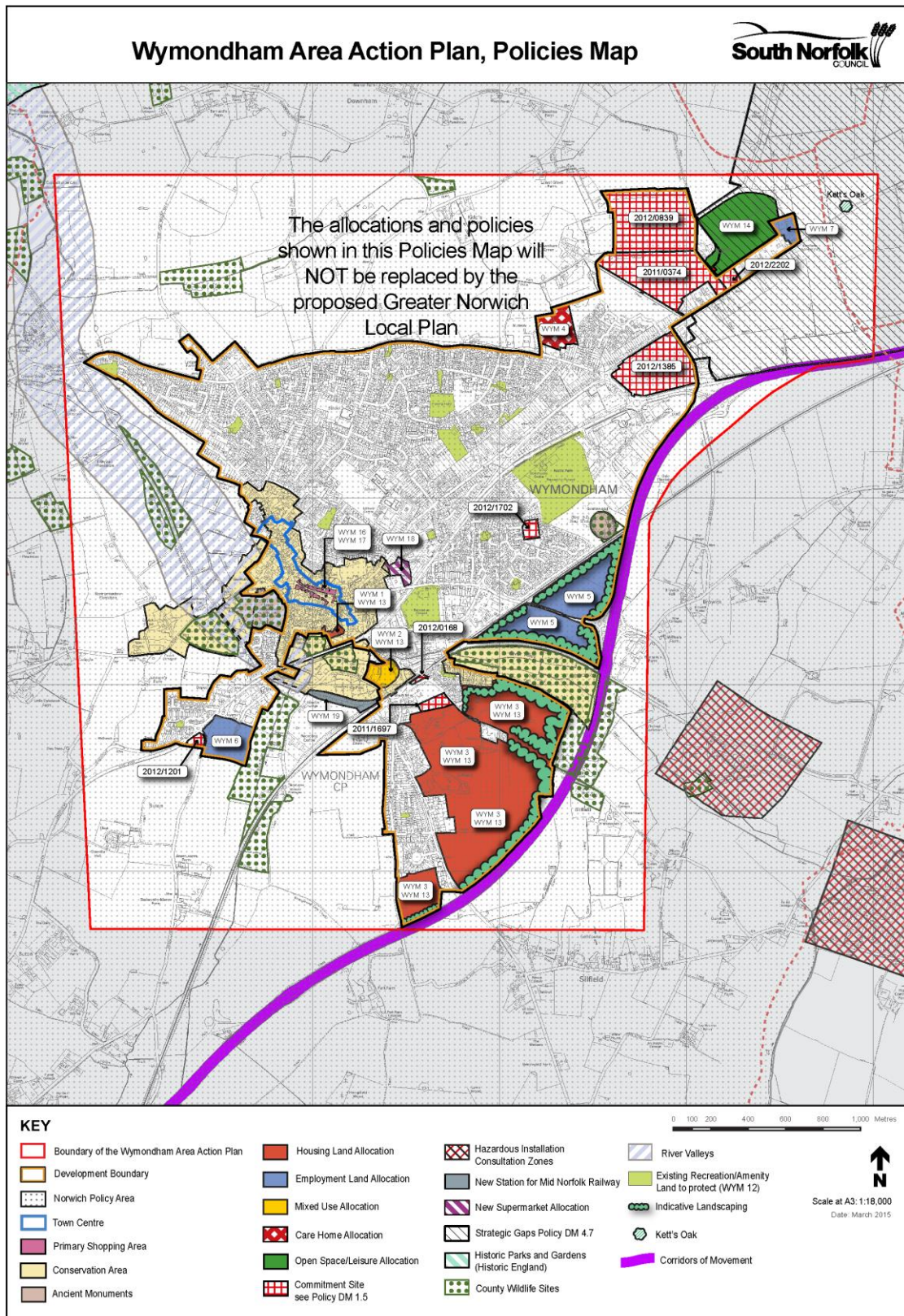


Source: Greater Norwich Local Plan (Regulation 19 draft), 2021

Did you know...

- 4.36. *Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities. Green infrastructure is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. It includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands – and also street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and soils. It includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called ‘blue infrastructure’.*
- 4.37. *The key features of green infrastructure are that it is a network of integrated spaces and features, not just individual elements; and that it is ‘multi-functional’ – it provides multiple benefits simultaneously.*
- 4.38. *These can be to:*
- a) Support people’s mental and physical health*
 - b) Encourage active travel*
 - c) Cool urban areas during heat waves*
 - d) Attract investment*
 - e) Reduce water run-off during flash flooding*
 - f) Carbon storage*
 - g) Provide sustainable drainage*
- 4.39. *The extent to which green infrastructure provides these benefits depends on how it is designed and maintained, and the maturity and health of the elements (such as trees) that form it (definition provided by the Town and Country Planning Association).*
- 4.40. Whilst Wymondham may not have many statutory designated pieces of green infrastructure it does benefit from several more informal sites and undesignated assets that are much loved such as walks along the Tiffey Valley and the woodland around Moot Hill. Many of these local assets are situated on or within a number of strategic green infrastructure corridors which traverse the Plan area such as the A11 corridor and the Tiffey Valley corridor.
- 4.41. Much of the local green infrastructure in Wymondham was captured in the 2015 Area Action Plan which catalogues local green spaces and starts to establish enhanced protection for all the main green infrastructure sites in the town. The AAP puts forward an appealing vision of establishing a ‘Kett’s Country’ pastoral landscape of grassland, woodland, farmland, hedgerow and wetland habitats will be protected and enhanced with the aim of strengthening the role of the Tiffey valley, maintaining the open land between Wymondham and Hethersett, conserving the historic landscape setting of the town and abbey and creating connections and linkages between green infrastructure.
- 4.42. South Norfolk Council’s adopted Open Spaces SPD (2018) sets out an approach to determining the appropriate level of contribution towards green infrastructure and should be applied (or its successor document applied), as appropriate.
- 4.43. Additional work is currently ongoing via the Wymondham/A11 Green Infrastructure Strategy that will take this even further. The purpose of the green infrastructure policies in this Plan is to add more weight and more information on local green infrastructure and to establish a more coherent strategy for linking sites in the town.

Figure 20: Plan showing the policies contained in the 2015 Wymondham Area Action Plan



The plan can also be viewed by clicking on this link: [2015 AAP Plan](#)

Source: Greater Norwich Local Plan (Regulation 19 draft), 2021

Objective

- 4.44. The objective of this policy is to reinforce and enhance the parts of the Norfolk-wide strategic green infrastructure network that runs through Wymondham and highlight the importance of local green infrastructure sites within this network. The strategic network illustrated on the accompanying plan seeks to broadly reflect the corridors illustrated in the GNLP which are intended to provide a regional framework for more detailed development and planning. A second objective of the policy is to protect and enhance local elements of green infrastructure such as County Wildlife Sites that help to make up this strategic network and are much loved by local people. Future development outside of that allocated in the GNLP and AAP should seek to work within the framework provided by the strategic green infrastructure network, wherever possible conserving and enhancing the network to reinforce it and support biodiversity.

POLICY 6: STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

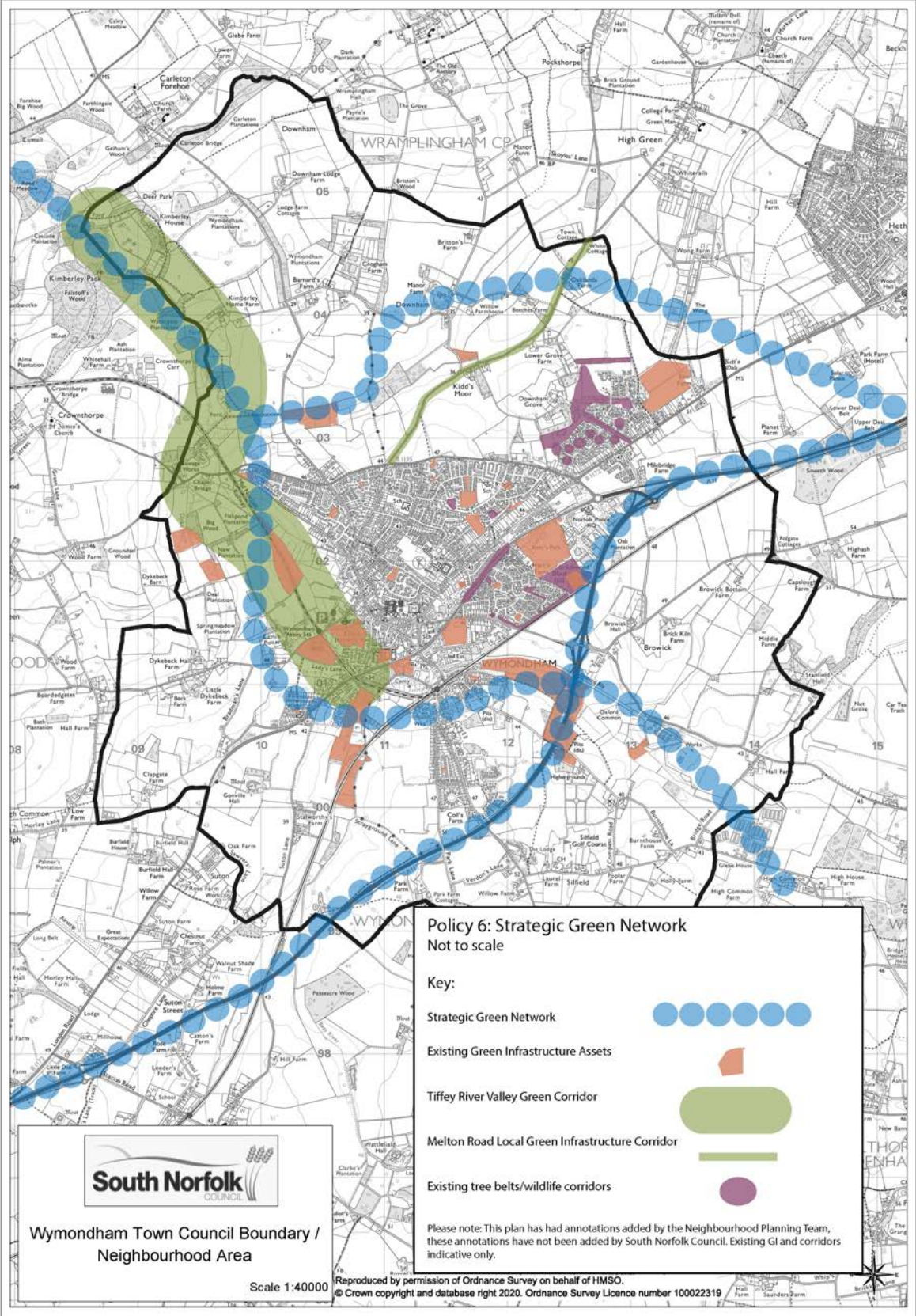
PROPOSALS THAT COMPLY WITH POLICIES WYM 8, 9, 10 AND 11 OF THE 2015 AAP AND MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK IN WYMONDHAM WILL BE ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED. PARTICULAR CONTRIBUTIONS THAT WOULD BE WELCOMED INCLUDE:

- A) LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT CREATION THAT CREATE AND ENHANCE STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CORRIDORS**
- B) INTERVENTIONS THAT ENHANCE PARTS OF THE NETWORK THAT RUN THROUGH BUILT-UP AREAS OF WYMONDHAM**
- C) INTERVENTIONS THAT CONSERVE AND ENHANCE THE HIGH QUALITY LANDSCAPE SETTING THAT MAKES UP THE STRATEGIC GAP BETWEEN WYMONDHAM AND HETHERSETT**

WHERE A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IS A REQUIREMENT OF A DEVELOPMENT, THE DEVELOPERS WILL BE EXPECTED TO MAKE PROPORTIONAL PROVISION FOR THE LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE IN LINE WITH SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL'S OPEN SPACES SPD OR EQUIVALENT REPLACEMENT.

DEVELOPMENT THAT SEVERS OR SIGNIFICANTLY INTERRUPTS THE NETWORK INCLUDING LOCAL GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE SUCH AS COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES WILL NOT BE SUPPORTED.

DEVELOPMENT SHOULD HAVE REGARD TO THE OUTCOME OF THE WYMONDHAM/A11 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY THAT WAS BEING PREPARED AT THE TIME THIS PLAN WAS WRITTEN.



Objective

- 4.45. The objective of this second green infrastructure policy is to seek to bridge the gap between the regional-scale, high level green infrastructure network noted in the previous policy that largely follows main river valleys or movement corridors and the smaller local areas and sites set out in the AAP. It seeks to establish larger contiguous areas of green infrastructure in Wymondham that join up individual local sites to create unbroken corridors or ribbons of habitat and greenspace for people and wildlife.
- 4.46. The ribbons identified are based on the results of consultation and research into existing areas of green infrastructure that could potentially be linked or joined up to create larger contiguous pieces of locally strategic green infrastructure and link back into the regional network. The extent and alignment of the Wymondham Green Ribbons shown in the accompanying plan recognise existing and broadly contiguous or adjacent landscape features such as river valleys, major arterial routes lined with planting, and highly used public routes such as footpaths. The routes of the ribbons form an important link between the countryside and the town centre. The presence of almost unbroken lengths of green infrastructure of some form is a feature to be protected and enhanced and the areas shown on the plan are intended to aid this ambition
- 4.47. Should further development come forward outside of the existing GNLP and AAP allocations in the future it should seek to reflect the concept of the green ribbons and conserve and enhance these wherever possible. As other towns and cities have demonstrated elsewhere, places can change and grow whilst retaining areas of countryside right at their heart, creating an unbroken green link from the centre of a town out into the rural landscape beyond.

Figure 21: Diagram illustrating the variety of different forms of green spaces that can form part of local green infrastructure networks



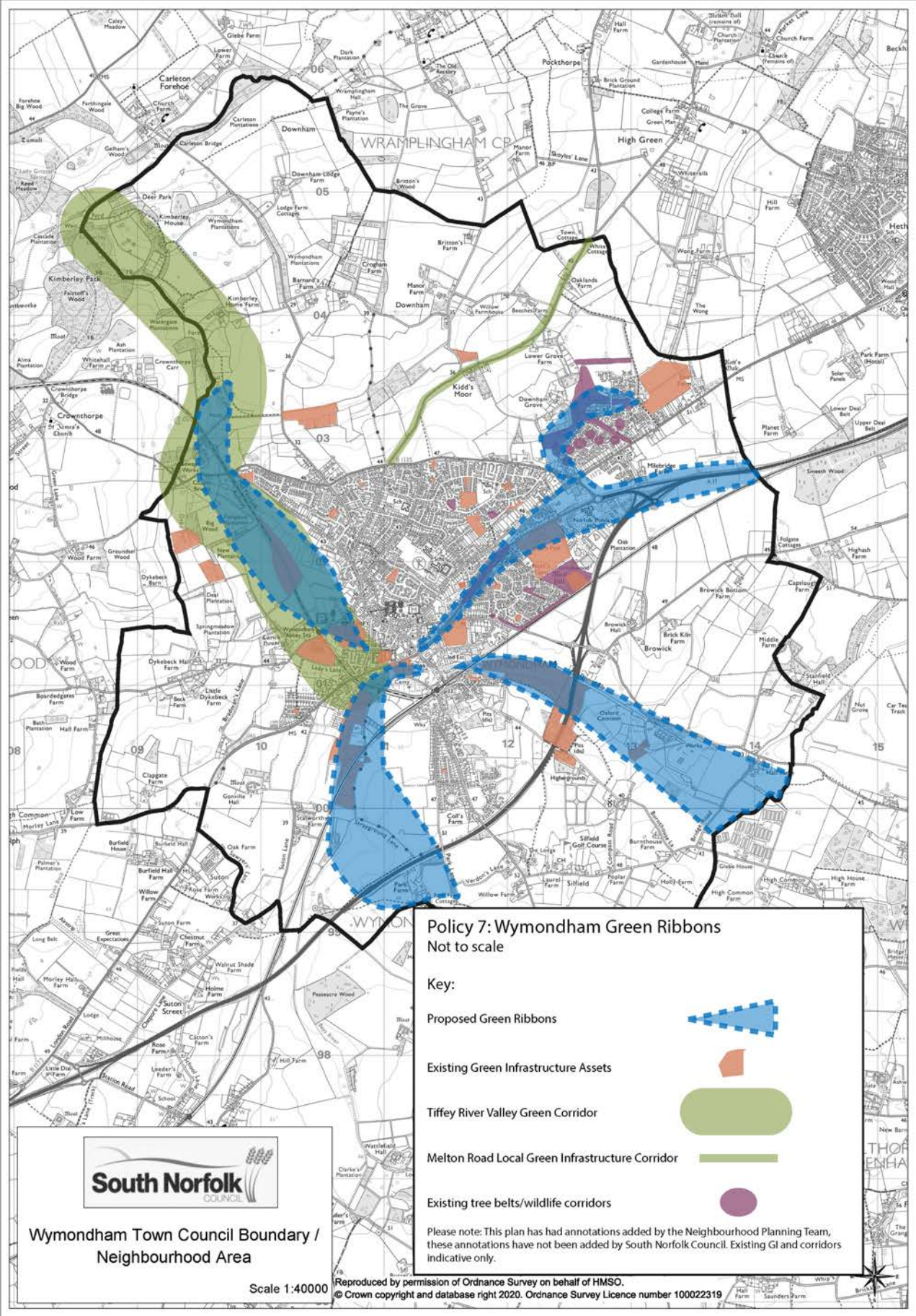
Source: National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places, Ministry of Housing, communities and Local Government (now DLUHC), 2021

POLICY 7: WYMONDHAM GREEN RIBBONS

PROPOSALS THAT COMPLY WITH POLICIES WYM 8, 9, 10 AND 11 OF THE 2015 AAP AND MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NETWORK OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE RIBBONS OR WEDGES IN WYMONDHAM WILL BE ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED. CONTRIBUTIONS THAT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY WELCOMED INCLUDE THOSE THAT SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREAS ILLUSTRATED:

- A) RUNNING EAST WEST ALONG THE HARTS FARM ROAD**
- B) FOLLOWING THE TIFFEY VALLEY EASTWARDS FROM THE LIZARD OUT TO OXFORD COMMON**
- C) RUNNING NORTH-SOUTH ALONG STRAYGROUND LANE AND BAYS RIVER VALLEY FROM THE A11 INTO THE TOWN CEMETERY**
- D) FOLLOWING THE TIFFEY VALLEY AND MID NORFOLK RAILWAY NORTH-WEST FROM THE ABBEY**

HOUSEHOLD, COMMUNITY GROUP AND OTHER SMALL LANDOWNER INTERVENTIONS THAT MAKE MINOR CONTRIBUTIONS BUT THAT CUMULATIVELY CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE TO ENHANCE THE NETWORK OF RIBBONS ARE POSITIVELY ENCOURAGED.



Thematic Policies: Integration and accessibility

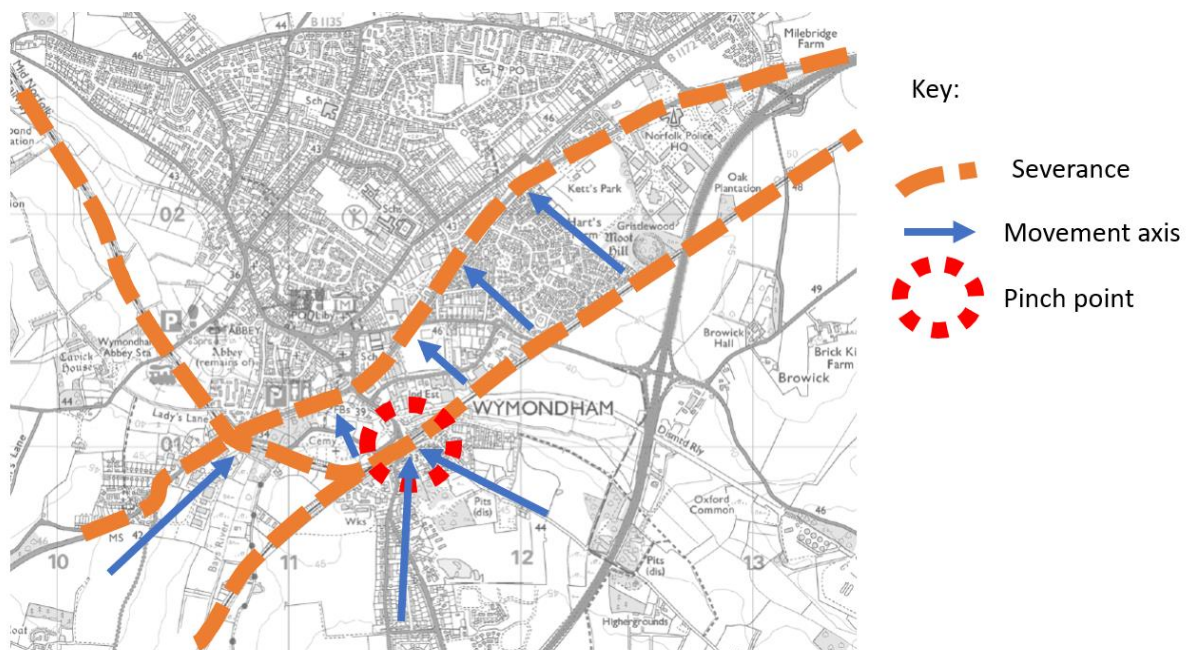
Background

- 4.48. Representations during the preparation of the Plan, backed up by the response from community consultation has identified significant issues around the physical integration of parts of Wymondham and the poor accessibility of particular parts of the town.

Linking up key nodes and neighbourhoods

- 4.49. Wymondham benefits from a good town centre, large residential neighbourhoods, several large employment areas, critical community infrastructure and public transport nodes such as the mainline railway station. However, the way that the town has grown, traversed by major through routes of infrastructure such as the railway line and the old A11 Harts Farm Road means that in many cases physical linkages between parts of the town is poor. The diagram below illustrates some examples of this type of severance where major transport infrastructure routes makes it more difficult for people to move across the town. This is particularly the case for residents who live to the south of the mainline railway in and around Silfield because of the severe pinch-point where the Silfield Road dips beneath the railway line.

Figure 22: Image showing examples of severance in Wymondham



Integrating new housing with the existing townscape

- 4.50. As well as including residents who have lived in Wymondham all their lives, the Neighbourhood Plan Team included people who have moved to the town more recently and live in some of the newer housing. Representation from this group in particular helped to highlight how in some cases new developments are poorly integrated with the existing fabric of Wymondham and that not only does this create a degree of physical severance but it also makes it more difficult for new residents to socialise and interact with neighbouring residents
- 4.51. At the largest scale some of the most recent developments in Wymondham have occurred to the south of the railway off Silfield Road and the railway line creates a very real physical barrier between these areas and the rest of the town to the north. The fact that there is only a single and narrow underpass creating a pinch-point only serves to exacerbate this. Equally, the old A11 (Norwich Road) was and still is a major route through the town the scale of which and speed of traffic creates a degree of severance.
- 4.52. At the neighbourhood scale there are examples of poorly integrated housing estates that have been built field-by-field as housing allocations have been made over time. They are sometimes poorly integrated to the existing fabric of the town with one way in and one way out.
- 4.53. At best, issues such as these give rise to day to day inconveniences getting in and out of parts of town; at worst they can start to undermine the sense of community cohesion in Wymondham based on whether or not you live one side of the railway line or the other.

Poor disabled access

- 4.54. In addition to issues of physical severance, another series of representations made by the Wymondham Access Group highlighted numerous examples of where parts of the town simply do not work for disabled residents such as the visually or physically impaired. Examples included pedestrian routes spilling straight into the highway or poorly placed or unnecessary railings that create a hazard to the visually impaired or poorly placed bollards and railings or narrow/non-existent pavements that simply do not allow wheelchair users to pass.

Objective

- 4.55. The objective of this policy is to promote and enhance the physical and social concept of One Wymondham as a single, integrated and joined-up town that is fully accessible to all. The objective complements the work of Norfolk County Council who are preparing a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan for the County and should provide a basis for joint working and consultation in due course.

Figure 23: Image showing a dedicated pedestrian and cycle Quietway route that separates pedestrians from vehicles



Source: National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places, Ministry of Housing, communities and Local Government (now DLUHC), 2021

POLICY 8: INTEGRATION AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

PROPOSALS THAT MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY WITHIN THE PLAN AREA FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS WILL BE SUPPORTED. PROPOSALS THAT LINK EXISTING AND NEW PARTS OF THE TOWN AND IMPROVE LINKS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT NODES SUCH AS THE RAILWAY STATION ARE KEY TO THE PLAN'S AMBITION OF CREATING ONE WYMONDHAM AND ARE PARTICULARLY ENCOURAGED.

OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE MORE AND BETTER WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES AROUND THE TOWN WILL BE SUPPORTED PARTICULARLY WHERE THEY LINK NEIGHBOURHOODS ON THE EDGE OF WYMONDHAM WITH THE TOWN CENTRE AND RAILWAY STATION; FOR EXAMPLE SIGNIFIANT IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE TO STATION ROAD TO PROVIDE A SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE ROUTE FOR PEDESTRIANS AND TO RESOLVE THE MANY POINTS OF PEDESTRIAN/VEHICLE CONFLICT AND TO PROVIDE A NEW GATEWAY TO THE TOWN CENTRE.

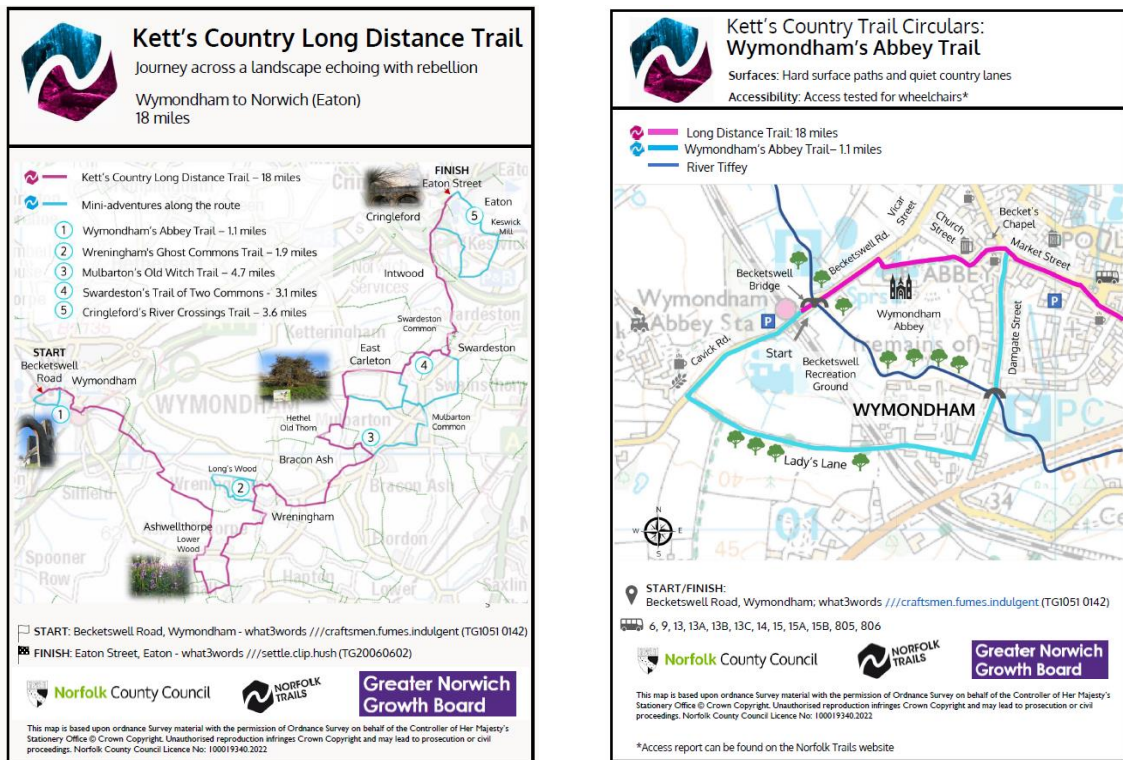
NEW AND IMPROVED ROUTES SHOULD SEEK TO BE MORE ATTRACTIVE AND PLEASANT AND INCORPORATE SOFT LANDSCAPING WHEREVER POSSIBLE POTENTIALLY USING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CORRIDORS/RIBBONS. PARTICULAR ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY AND FACILITIES FOR DISABLED AND ELDERLY RESIDENTS WHERE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE IS EITHER LACKING OR UNFIT FOR PURPOSE.

Thematic Policies: Access to the countryside

Background

- 4.56. Wymondham is a classic historic market town notable in this case for the presence of the huge and impressive Abbey. It is characterised by a dense historic core and a central Market Place and a network of radial routes leading off from this point around which new homes and workspaces have been built over time.
- 4.57. Wymondham is also defined by its setting, in this case within a large plateau or gently rolling arable countryside. The South Norfolk Place Making Guide (2012) notes that beyond the town, the parish comprises a number of hamlets; small church/hall settlements, with dispersed farmsteads and country houses. The key defining characteristics of the countryside around Wymondham includes:
- a) The Tiffey valley and associated river meadows to the south and west making an important recreation and ecological green corridor
 - b) Outlying hamlets and settlements, landscape dominated and visually separate and distinct
 - c) Presence of large parkland estates with estate dwellings, railings and other features
- 4.58. As noted throughout this Plan, the character of the town and its setting in the countryside contributes significantly to the appeal of Wymondham which is why this characteristic is specifically referenced in the vision for the plan. People naturally therefore want to get out into the countryside and enjoy the area where they live whether they are walking the dog, exercising or simply exploring.
- 4.59. However, with just a few notable exceptions such as the Wymondham Abbey Trail which are much used and much loved and the recently established Ketts Country Trail, it is relatively difficult to get out into the countryside on foot around Wymondham via formal public footpaths or cycleways. This issue was highlighted by the Neighbourhood Plan Team and during public consultation work and during site visits and highlighted in the Wymondham Network Improvement Strategy (2020).

Figure 24: Image showing the Kett's Country Long Distance Trail and Wymondham Abbey Trail



Source: www.norfolk.gov.uk

- 4.60. One of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic has been a marked increase in people using their local countryside. People are spending more time in the place that they live and have more time to spend locally; people are more mindful of needing to exercise for physical and mental wellbeing and people are less inclined to gravitate towards more obvious outdoor destinations that attract large concentrations of people. Whilst this trend may fade somewhat as the pandemic eventually passes, it is likely that it will have a lasting legacy which places even more of an impetus on finding ways to improve access to the countryside around Wymondham.

Objective

- 4.61. The objective of this policy is to encourage landowners, developers and the public sector to facilitate or deliver new and/or improved footpaths and cycleways in the countryside around Wymondham. The specific elements of the network that this policy seeks to add is based on a review of where there are gaps in the existing network, for example between fragmented lengths of public footpaths. This will directly benefit the physical and mental wellbeing of the community and help to make Wymondham an even more attractive place to live, work and play.

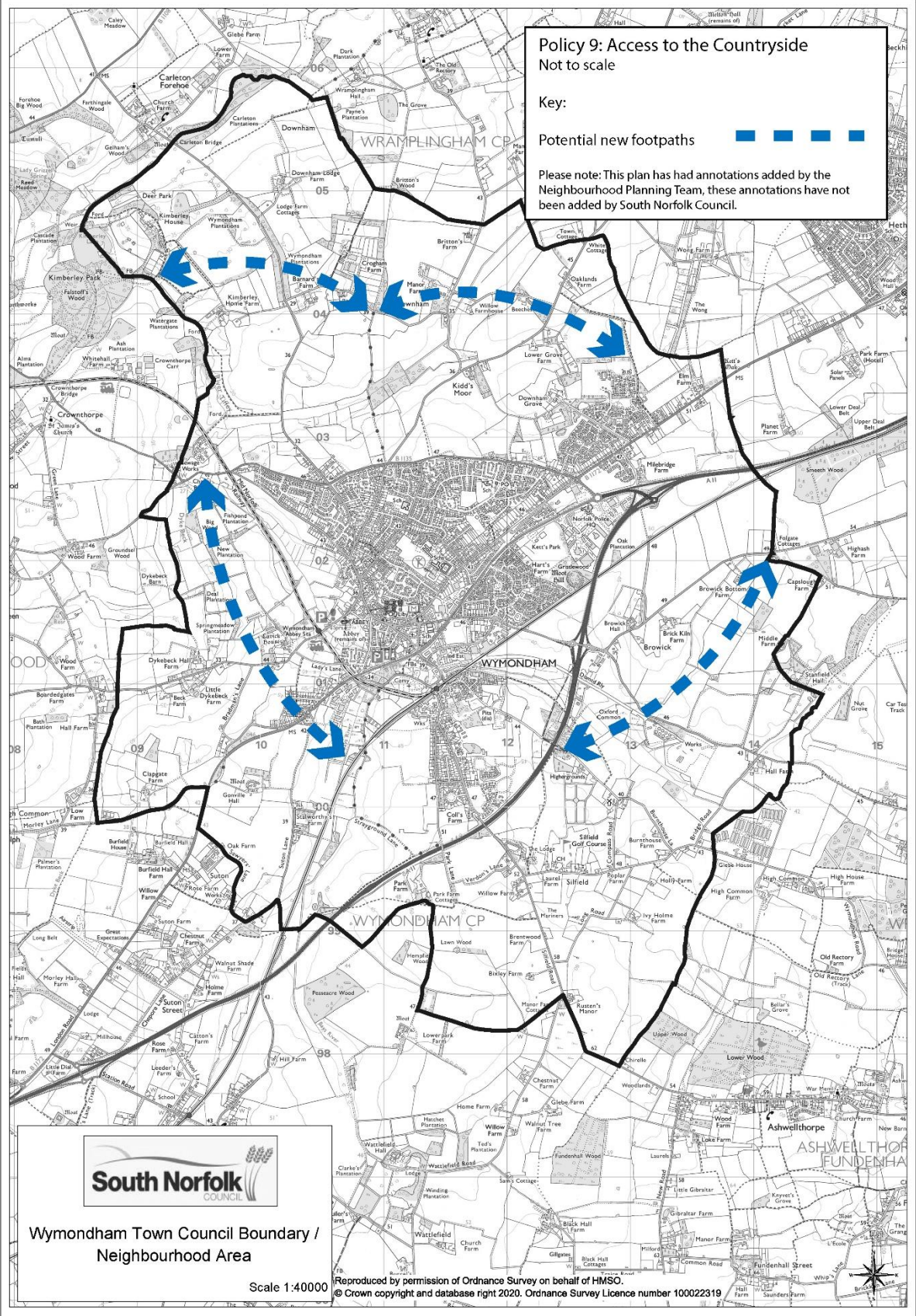
POLICY 9: ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

PROPOSALS TO INCREASE AND IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY TO THE COUNTRYSIDE AROUND WYMONDHAM TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING ARE ENCOURAGED. IN PARTICULAR, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS THE PROVISION OF IMPROVED AND NEW FULLY ACCESSIBLE FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS BUILDING ON EXISTING ROUTES AND THE LOCAL GREEN RIBBONS IN A NUMBER OF AREAS:

- A) TO THE NORTH OF THE TOWN AND WEST TOWARDS THE TIFFEY VALLEY AND EAST TOWARDS HETHERSETT**
- B) TO THE SOUTH OF THE TOWN AND EAST TOWARDS SILFIELD**
- C) TO THE WEST OF THE TOWN ON A NORTH-SOUTH AXIS.**

FOOTPATHS SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO SUIT THEIR ENVIRONMENT AND BLEND WITH THE LANDSCAPE. THEY SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING. THE PLAN ENCOURAGES THE DESIGN OF FOOTPATHS TO REFLECT THE RURAL SETTING OF WYMONDHAM.

WHERE FOOTPATHS MAKE USE OF EXISTING ROADS APPROPRIATE MEASURES SHOULD BE TAKEN TO MAXIMISE PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST SAFETY.

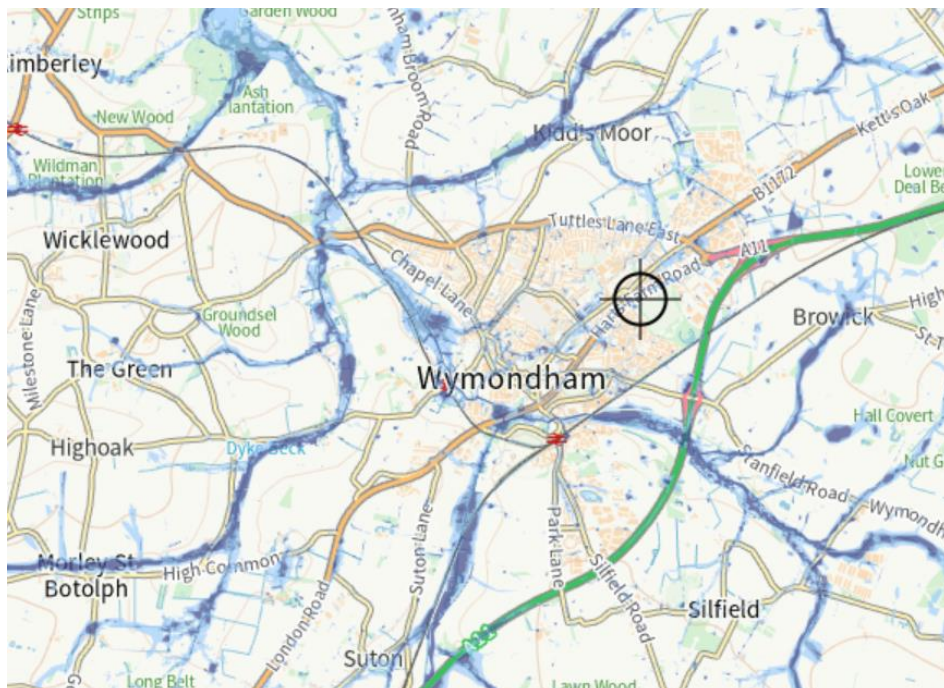


Thematic Policies: Surface water flood risk

Background

- 4.62. During consultation the LLFA commented that according to their datasets (extending from 2011 to the present day) there are 16 records of internal flooding and 19 records of external/anecdotal flooding in the Parish of Wymondham. The plan below shows areas that are particularly susceptible to surface water flooding in and around Wymondham.
- 4.63. The LLFA highlighted the importance of considering surface water, ground water and flooding from ordinary water courses within the Plan and recommended that the following policy be included in the Plan. The Plan requires that any future development (or redevelopment) proposals show there is no increased risk of flooding from an existing flood source and mitigation measures are implemented to address surface water arising within the development site.

Figure 25: Map showing areas at risk of surface water flooding

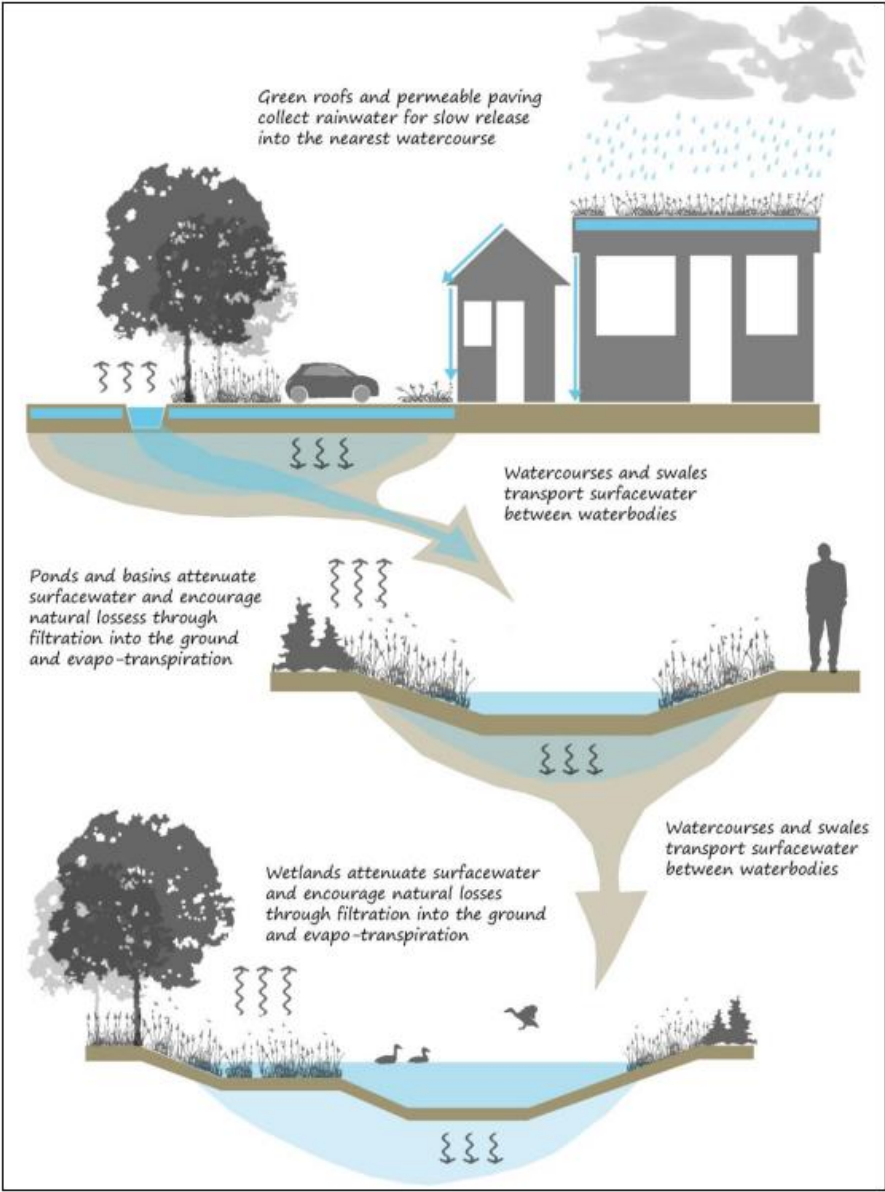


Source: gov.uk

Did you know...

- 4.64. *There are numerous examples across Norfolk where SUDS or 'sustainable urban drainage systems' have been designed into new developments or even retrofitted into existing development. Norfolk County Council highlights a number of good practice case studies such as at Ster Drive and Badgers Brook in Taverham. In this instance surface water flooding occurred that led to properties being flooded. SuDS were retrofitted into the existing landscape and rills/channels were installed to carry water into rain gardens/attenuation basins.*

Figure 26: Diagram illustrating the principles of SuDS



Source: SuDS Design Guidance for Hertfordshire, March 2015

POLICY 10: SURFACE WATER FLOOD RISK

PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT LIKELY TO HAVE AN IMPACT SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT WHICH GIVES ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE CONSIDERATION TO ALL SOURCES OF FLOODING AND PROPOSED SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE. ANY APPLICATION MADE TO A LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY WILL BE REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT IT WOULD:

- A) NOT INCREASE THE FLOOD RISK TO THE SITE OR WIDER AREA FROM FLUVIAL, SURFACE WATER, GROUNDWATER, SEWERS OR ARTIFICIAL SOURCES.**
- B) HAVE A NEUTRAL OR POSITIVE IMPACT ON SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE.**

PROPOSALS MUST DEMONSTRATE ENGAGEMENT WITH RELEVANT AGENCIES AND SEEK TO INCORPORATE APPROPRIATE MITIGATION MEASURES MANAGE FLOOD RISK AND TO REDUCE SURFACE WATER RUN-OFF TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND WIDER AREA SUCH AS:

- A) INCLUSION OF APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO ADDRESS ANY IDENTIFIED RISK OF FLOODING (IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER OR PRIORITY: ASSESS, AVOID, MANAGE AND MITIGATE FLOOD RISK).**
- B) WHERE APPROPRIATE UNDERTAKE SEQUENTIAL AND /OR EXCEPTION TESTS.**
- C) LOCATE ONLY COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT IN AREAS AT RISK OF FLOODING, CONSIDERING THE PROPOSED VULNERABILITY OF LAND USE.**
- D) INCLUSION OF APPROPRIATE ALLOWANCES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE.**
- E) INCLUSION OF SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE PROPOSALS (SUDS) WITH AN APPROPRIATE DISCHARGE LOCATION.**
- F) PRIORITY USE OF SOURCE CONTROL SUDS SUCH AS PERMEABLE SURFACES, RAINWATER HARVESTING AND STORAGE OR GREEN ROOFS AND WALLS. OTHER SUDS COMPONENTS WHICH CONVEY OR STORE SURFACE WATER CAN ALSO BE CONSIDERED.**
- G) TO MITIGATE AGAINST THE CREATION OF ADDITIONAL IMPERMEABLE SURFACES, ATTENUATION OF GREENFIELD (OR FOR REDEVELOPMENT SITES AS CLOSE TO GREENFIELD AS POSSIBLE) SURFACE WATER RUNOFF RATES AND RUNOFF VOLUMES WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT SITE BOUNDARY.**
- H) PROVIDE CLEAR MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS OF STRUCTURES WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING SUDS ELEMENTS, RIPARIAN OWNERSHIP OF ORDINARY WATERCOURSES OR CULVERTS, AND THEIR ASSOCIATED FUNDING MECHANISMS.**



Neighbourhood Plan Projects

5. Neighbourhood Plan Projects

- 5.1. In addition to the Policies set out in the previous section, a number of local issues have been highlighted during the preparation of the Plan that are best captured as projects. These do not form part of the statutory architecture of the Neighbourhood Plan but seek to highlight how specific local issues might be addressed. Where relevant, some of these ideas could be taken forward and developed into policies as part of future evolutions of this Plan or other statutory planning documents.
- 5.2. The projects are set out below with further information on delivery and implementation provided in the implementation plan that accompanies this Neighbourhood Plan.

PROJECT 1: OLD SALE YARD SITE

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS IMPROVEMENTS TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE OLD SALES YARD SITE CLOSE TO WYMONDHAM STATION WHILST THE SITE REMAINS UNDEVELOPED.

PROJECT 2: PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST WAYFINDING

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST WAYFINDING ACROSS THE PARISH AND THE DELIVERY OF A NEW, EFFECTIVE AND CONSISTENT LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN INCLUDING ONLINE MEDIA, PHYSICAL MAPS, SIGNAGE AND WAY-MARKING. THE PROPOSED PLAN SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE FULL RANGE OF TYPES OF FOOTPATHS AND CYCLE WAYS AND SEEK TO HIGHLIGHT AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES THAT IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE. THE PLAN SHOULD SEEK TO INCORPORATE NATURAL AND BUILT HERITAGE INTERPRETATION WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

PROJECT 3: DIVERSITY OF GREENSPACES

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS A REVIEW OF PARKS, GREEN SPACES AND OTHER GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN WYMONDHAM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGY AND VISION THAT ENSURES THE CONDITION, VOLUME AND CHARACTER OF PROVISION MEETS COMMUNITY NEEDS. PARTICULAR CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ENSURING THERE IS A BALANCE BETWEEN AMENITY GREENSPACE AND WILDER GREEN SPACES. WHERE CHANGES ARE PROPOSED STAKEHOLDERS WILL NEED TO IDENTIFY HOW LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE WILL BE ADDRESSED.

PROJECT 4: DE-CLUTTERING

WHEN PUBLIC AREAS ARE REDEVELOPED OR NEW INFRASTRUCTURE IS ADDED OR UPGRADED, THE OPPORTUNITY SHOULD BE SEIZED TO REMOVE OBSOLETE ITEMS AND CONSOLIDATE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT REMAINS REQUIRED. PARTICULAR ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE TOWN CENTRE WHERE CLUTTER HAS ACCUMULATED IN PARTICULAR LOCATIONS WITH THE CONSEQUENCE OF REDUCING THE QUANTITY OR UTILITY OF PUBLIC SPACE.

PROJECT 5: WYMONDHAM GATEWAYS

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS THE ENHANCEMENT OF GATEWAYS TO THE TOWN TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S FIRST IMPRESSION OF WYMONDHAM AND IMPROVE OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF THE AREA. ENHANCEMENTS MIGHT INCLUDE THE INSTALLATION OF HIGH QUALITY TOWN SIGNAGE, PLANTING OR GATEWAY MARKERS. GATEWAYS WOULD INCLUDE JUNCTIONS OFF THE A11 AND ARTERIAL ROADS INTO THE TOWN.

PROJECT 6: TOWN CENTRE SIGNAGE

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUPPORTS A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF SIGNAGE, INTERPRETATION AND MAPS IN THE TOWN CENTRE AND THE DELIVERY OF A NEW, EFFECTIVE AND CONSISTENT STRATEGY FOLLOWED BY THE NEW SIGNAGE ITSELF. NEW MATERIAL SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO HELP VISITORS ORIENTATE THEMSELVES AND IN PARTICULAR RECOGNISE THE 'STRING OF PEARLS' OF HERITAGE ASSETS IN THE TOWN FROM THE WYMONDHAM HERITAGE MUSEUM, MARKET CROSS, BECKET'S CHAPEL AND WYMONDHAM ABBEY.



Implementation & Monitoring

6. Implementation and Monitoring

Implementation

- 6.1. The policies contained in this Neighbourhood Plan will be applied by South Norfolk Council to future development proposals. The policies and projects will also be used by Wymondham Town Council to shape future strategy and investment.
- 6.2. The implementation of the projects set out in the Neighbourhood Plan will require the co-ordinated input and cooperation of a number of statutory and non-statutory agencies, private sector organisations and the local community. In order to support the implementation of the projects, a separate implementation plan has been prepared. This document is not part of the Neighbourhood Plan but simply includes information on potential actions to progress the delivery of specific projects.

Monitoring

- 6.3. Wymondham Town Council will monitor the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan and consider whether formal review and updates are required over the period to 2038. During this period it is likely that the planning system will be subject to change and reform, for example a new Planning Bill is expected during 2022. Change such as this means that will be particularly important to monitor impacts on Neighbourhood Planning and respond as necessary.

Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan Summary of SNC comments and alterations

The purpose of this note is to highlight the feedback on the Submission Draft Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan (March 2022) from SNC's Cabinet in April 2022 and subsequently in June 2022 and in July 2022 and to summarise some of the changes that have been made in response.

A number of additional alterations have been made to the plan in response to feedback from SNC officers as part of the Regulation 16 consultation process; primarily relating to adding further information to the green infrastructure policy plans.

The document should be read alongside the updated Neighbourhood Plan.

Comments received on 03/05/2022

Following the Cabinet committee held on 19th April, where members considered the proposed Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan, I am now writing to supply some detail relating to concerns raised during that meeting. In general, Cabinet were concerned that the current draft Neighbourhood Plan does not offer a great amount of locally specific detail on which the Council's planners and Planning Committee can base their decisions. As one of the largest settlements in South Norfolk, experiencing significant growth in terms of housing and the economy, and with a number of important environmental assets, members feel that the Neighbourhood Plan could usefully reflect these issues. More specifically, members are concerned that the draft Plan is silent on certain key issues, as follows:

There is no reference to the strategic gap between Wymondham and Hethersett, which has always been considered to be very important for the town. Although this is currently part of the Local Plan (Development Management Policies document, Policy DM4.7) and is referred to in the emerging GNLP Policy 2, it was felt the Neighbourhood Plan should reference the importance of these policies and (although only a small amount of the area designated as the strategic gap lies within the neighbourhood area) the importance of the retention of the Wymondham element of the gap in future Local Plan reviews (assuming this can be related to previous feedback from the community). It may be useful to reference that the strategic GI corridors / green ribbons in Policies 6 and 7 encompass parts of the strategic gap, which could help protect it in another way. You may also wish to include an inset map illustrating the strategic gap and the element that lies within Wymondham parish.

- Narrative and plans have been added to the background section that identifies and explains the strategic gap and highlights existing policy protections.
- In addition to this, reference has been included in Policy 6 that provides an additional level of protection/promotion for the retention of the strategic gap. The policy wording states that "...green infrastructure network in Wymondham will be encouraged and supported. Particular contributions that would be welcomed include: Interventions that conserve and enhance the high quality landscape setting that makes up the strategic gap between Wymondham and Hethersett".

The Neighbourhood Plan could further emphasise and reference the importance of connectivity with the wider area, including locations such as Hethersett and the University. It would be useful to

reference the newly opened Kett's Country Trail and associated Abbey Trail circular route, which recently opened.

- Further narrative on the accessibility of Wymondham and how important this is to driving growth have been added. For example links to Norwich, the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and University of East Anglia etc. has been provided in the background section.
- Kett's Country Trail and Wymondham Abbey Trail have been referenced and images included to illustrate the routes

There is relatively little content in terms of local industry and employment. Wymondham is a strategic location and earmarked for residential and employment growth, yet there is very little specific reference to these issues (e.g. Browick Road – future employment growth).

- Further background information has been provided describing local economic development issues.
- Further information has been provided in the background section on existing employment allocations and the economic development context of Wymondham on the A11 tech corridor including a diagram from the GNLP.

Wymondham will continue to grow as a strategic location yet the Plan doesn't explore preferences for general future growth locations around the town, or the idea of a new settlement in the area. Is there anything that was captured in previous community engagement that could be used to provide some detail in this regard?

- Text and plans have been added to identify Wymondham's location within the emerging Local Plan strategic growth area and to highlight proposed new housing allocations.
- Narrative has been added to explain the how the strategic planning documents propose to address large-scale growth via new settlements.
- The community engagement undertaken and the Neighbourhood Plan team were not supportive of further significant housing growth at this point and so no policies are included that seek to deliver this.

The importance of the railway station and how it links to public amenity, the town centre and important green spaces could be further emphasised. Consideration could be given to the inclusion of a map illustrating local public transport nodes and any particular connections which the Plan seeks to encourage.

- A plan has been added to illustrate issues of severance in the background to policy 8.
- Further explanatory text has been added to the background to policy 8.
- A good practice image has been added to policy 8 to illustrate an example of dedicated walking and cycling routes.
- Policy 8 wording has been modified to reflect this feedback.

As regards Policy 5 'Important Views and Vistas', can the supporting text bring out in more detail what the process entailed in order for these particular views to be identified? The map accompanying this policy could be slightly larger scale and cones could be used instead of arrows in order to show the extent of the protected view.

- The plan has been amended to reflect this feedback.
- Narrative has been included to explain how views were identified and assessed.

- A diagram has been inserted to illustrate the different landscape characteristics across South Norfolk.

Certain of the projects listed in section 5 could be adapted into meaningful policies (e.g. Project 5 – Wymondham Gateways) . In addition, a project such as ‘Project 3 – Diversity of Greenspaces’ could be carried out to inform a comprehensive green space / green infrastructure policy for Wymondham, as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, rather than as a project to be carried out at some point in the future.

- On balance it is proposed to retain the projects as projects rather than to seek to convert them into policies at this stage given 1) the character of the proposals are considered to be closer to projects than policies and 2) the time and cost that this would incur in the context of limited community interest expressed in these ideas.
- Narrative has been added that suggests that the projects could be developed into policies in due course.

Consideration could be given to the inclusion of more maps / images, where necessary (e.g. in addition to the potential maps discussed above, the Plan could include - a map showing areas at risk of flooding, to support a more locally-specific Policy 10; photos/images to illustrate good practice in relation to Policies 2 and 3, for example)’

- Generally more maps, diagrams, illustrations and photographs have been added to support and help to communicate issues and policy ideas.
- Maps illustrating areas at risk of flooding were already provided in the opening section. The Map illustrating surface water flooding was moved to Policy 10 to help add context.
- Information on good practice re: flood prevention was added to Policy 10.
- A diagram illustrating the principle of SuDS was added to Policy 10.
- A diagram illustrating the principles of well designed public spaces included at Policy 10.
- A diagram illustrating different forms of green infrastructure included at Policy 7.
- An image showing integrated footpaths & cycle paths included at Policy 8.
- An image showing a good practice case study of Sensitive new residential development is included in Policy 4.
- A selection of images added to highlight some of the common local building materials and styles to Policy 4.

Comment received on 28/06/22

- 1. In the table of contents, it might be helpful to include nested contents beneath the ‘Neighbourhood Plan Policies’ heading, to show the various policies and where they can be found in the document.**
 - The table of contents has been updated to reflect this.
- 2. Just a note on the format of policy section headings and policies themselves. Could these perhaps be made a little more distinctive? For example, to make the policies stand out a little more it might be helpful to have them within coloured boxes. Also, ideally, policy text should all be kept on the same page (Policy 3, for example, is split across two pages). The policy section headings sometimes get a little lost in the flow of the text and it might**

be helpful to have each of these new sections starting on a new page, perhaps with the heading in a larger font.

- Policy text has been updated to make sure they are all on one page with each policy starting on a new page + a larger font. In order to maximise web accessibility as per previous suggestion from SNC policies are set out in the main body text.
- 3. **Para. 2.15 - should it say 'The Neighbourhood Plan does *not* seek...'?**
 - Amended.
- 4. **Para. 2.34 could probably be summarised rather than fully setting out each of the conditions.**
 - Amended.
- 5. **Re. Figure 12 - a more specific map showing the extent of the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland character area boundary can be found in the Landscape Assessment document, here: [Landscape Assessment, Volume 4, Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland \[PDF\] \(southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk\)](https://southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk), if this is helpful.**
 - The more detailed plan has been included.
- 6. **Para 4.28 - it might be worth mentioning that the other character area referred to is Area B2 - 'Tiffey Tributary Farmland'.**
 - Amended.
- 7. **Para 4.32 – In order to aid clarity, could the second sentence be presented as a bullet-point list, i.e. –
'The process for identifying new views included –
 - A number of site visits;
 - An appeal for the Neighbourhood Plan Team to identify views that were important to them;(...)'**
 - Amended.
- 8. **Figure 14 is slightly difficult to read due to its resolution. I know there were a few issues with resolution and web accessibility during the original submission, but if there is a way to improve clarity here that would be helpful.**
 - The scale of the plan and the amount of detail contained in it makes it difficult to read at A4. We have therefore included a weblink to allow readers to view the plan at a larger scale and manipulate that plan.
- 9. **Figure 17 seems quite large. If the size were reduced it might allow Policy 8 to fit on one page?**
 - Amended.
- 10. **The revised GI maps look good and helpfully demonstrate the location of sites that are within the corridors/ribbons. As a suggestion, it might be helpful if there is a way in which**

the different assets could be numbered and then referred to by name and location in the text. I'm aware it's quite a small scale map with some smaller, residential spaces identified in the built up area - might an option be to show these on an additional larger scale, inset map of just the built-up area, with the smaller sites labelled? Also, the use of a different shade of green for the Tiffey Valley and Melton Rd corridors might need explaining in the map legend (e.g. you may wish to distinguish between G.I. sites and G.I. corridors in the legend, to aid clarity).

- The plan has been amended to differentiate GI sites and GI corridors.

11. The Council's Green Infrastructure Officer has also responded to state that the assets / tree belts marked up in the attached maps provide important wildlife corridors and could usefully be identified on the map.

- The plan has been amended to include additional some of these additional GI assets/corridors.

12. Thank you for the additional 'notes on updates', which is very helpful. With regard to the note concerning the list of projects, it may be worth adding a point that certain of these projects may (in their delivery) contribute to a future review of the Neighbourhood Plan, with the possibility of project outcomes informing future new or revised policies.

Amended.

Comments received on 05/07/2022

Further feedback on the revised draft Neighbourhood Plan, supplied by our Portfolio Holder for External Affairs and Policy:

1) The Neighbourhood Plan should set out a position on the prospect of future development in the area, stating what may or may not be acceptable and in which general locations, so that the Neighbourhood Plan puts the community in a position to influence and shape future development in and around Wymondham. If the prevailing view is that development should not take place in certain locations, then the Plan should explain this, providing evidence as to why these locations are not considered appropriate.

- Information on the future growth has been provided in section 2 of the plan and references have been made in several places where it is applicable to relevant policies that might inform the location and form of future growth. Consultation with the community and Neighbourhood Plan team did not indicate support for the inclusion of policies that promoted the principle of future growth and the GNLP states that only a relatively small level of new growth is proposed in Wymondham due to the scale of recent development and the existing commitment. It also states that the potential for a new settlement will be investigated through the preparation of its replacement which indicates a process for addressing this issue.

2) It is understood that the Town Council wishes to include a list of aspirational projects within the Plan. However, it is not apparent how these will be funded, who they will be delivered by, and within what timeframe. Also, which of these projects are a greater priority than others? The list should form part of a more detailed action plan and should only include aspirations which cannot be delivered through planning policy. The plan should be clear to residents of the town on what is going to be achieved and how the Neighbourhood Plan will make life better.

- Information on delivery and implementation has been included in the Implementation Plan that accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan

Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan – Submission Version

Proposed Reg. 16 Response from South Norfolk Council

Section of document	Comments
<p>Policy 6 – Strategic Green Infrastructure Network</p> <p>Policy 7 – Wymondham Green Ribbons</p>	<p>The Council is pleased to see that its earlier suggestion of including the location and extent of existing green infrastructure assets on the maps supporting Policies 6 and 7 has been taken up. However, there doesn't seem to be any description or labelling of these assets. The Council considers that it would be beneficial for the map to include numbered annotation of these assets which cross references a numbered list identifying each asset by title and description, within the supporting text.</p> <p>It is felt that these amendments will help to improve the clarity of the policy for decision makers.</p>
Policy 10 – Surface water flood risk	<p>The Council notes that this policy has been suggested as an addition by the Lead Local Flood Authority during the Reg. 14 consultation stage. Whilst it is not refuted that policies addressing such issues can be beneficial within Neighbourhood Plans, it is not particularly clear how this policy materially adds to existing policies and guidance at the national and local level. Neighbourhood Plan policies are expected to be <i>'distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context or the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared.'</i>¹ In addition, plans should avoid <i>'unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area'</i>². The Council suggests that the policy could therefore benefit from identifying locally known flooding issues that augment the national data sets that already exist. For example, although the supporting text in paragraph 4.62 refers to records, there is no mention within the policy of specific locations that are prone to surface water flooding.</p>

¹ Planning Practice Guidance – Neighbourhood Planning; How should the policies in a neighbourhood plan be drafted?; Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306

² NPPF; para. 16.f)



Equalities and Communities Impact Assessment

Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Vicky West

Date of Assessment: 16/03/2021

1. What is the proposed Policy (please provide sufficient detail)?

For the purposes of the assessment the term 'Policy' relates to any new or revised policies, practices or procedures under consideration.

The **Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan** is a community-led document for guiding the future development of the parish. It concerns the use and development of land between 2022 and 2038. It is the first Neighbourhood Plan that has been developed by and for the community of Wymondham. Once the Plan is made (adopted), it will become part of the statutory Development Plan for South Norfolk, and South Norfolk Council will use it (alongside documents making up the Local Plan) to determine planning applications covered by the neighbourhood area. The Parish Council will also use the Plan to respond to planning applications.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been developed under the Localism Act (2012) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), giving communities the right to shape future development at a local level. The Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan will complement existing local and national planning policy, providing a valuable level of local detail attained through consultation with residents and businesses, as well as through desk-based research.

The Neighbourhood Plan incorporates an overall vision for the parish, a series of objectives on different themes, and a range of policies that seek to achieve these objectives. The Plan was developed over a period two years before being submitted to South Norfolk Council in February 2022, and the process has involved an exhaustive programme of evidence gathering and community and stakeholder involvement. South Norfolk Council will shortly be considering the submitted documents to ensure they meet certain criteria, before progressing the Plan to a Regulation 16 consultation. Following this, the Plan will undergo an independent examination, a referendum and (if successful) its final adoption.

The Neighbourhood Plan vision is as follows:

'One Wymondham: A traditional and vibrant market town in the Norfolk countryside, with an inclusive community that values its heritage and greenspaces whilst embracing the future.'

The objectives that seek to achieve this are split amongst the themes of:

- Development and Design
- Environment and Landscape
- Business and Employment

2. Which Protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010 does this Policy Impact:
(Indicate whether the impact could be positive, neutral or negative)

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact
Age	✓		
Disability	✓		
Race		✓	
Sex		✓	
Religion or Belief		✓	
Sexual Orientation		✓	
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓	
Pregnancy/Maternity		✓	
Gender Reassignment		✓	

3. Which additional Communities characteristics does this policy impact?

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact
Health	✓		
Place inc. Rurality	✓		
Low Income and Poverty	✓		

4. What do you believe are the potential equalities impacts of this policy?

Please include:

- Partnership organisations worked with in the development of this policy
- Evidence gathered to inform your decision
- Where you have consulted, Who and How this has informed the decision/policy
- Any other groups impacted not detailed above

Note: Impacts could be positive, neutral, or negative and impact groups differently

Like most Local Plan documents that are concerned with the development and use of land, the Protected Characteristics that are most impacted are Age and Disability. The former due to the pressures facing young people being able to afford housing in the community, and access employment locally, for example. The later by access to and movement around the town. The Neighbourhood Plan takes measures to address these issues, primarily through a series of policies; Policy 1 Town Centre Vibrancy, Policy 3 Planning the Public Realm and Policy 8 Integration and Accessibility for All, which seek to support a range of improvements which would provide for the needs of these different groups within the community.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes statements of evidence and justification alongside each of the proposed policies, explaining how public consultation with residents, as well as factual research, has informed the policy being proposed. One of the supporting documents published alongside the Neighbourhood Plan is a Consultation Statement which provides more detail of how and when public consultation and engagement was carried out, what the results of this were, and how these results have impacted subsequent development of the policies.

A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was formed by the Town Council to lead on the project with the help of external consultants. Throughout the process the steering group ensured that the local community and stakeholders were kept informed of the process and were able to get involved in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Stakeholder bodies that were consulted included Norfolk County Council, neighbouring parish and town councils, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England, and South Norfolk Council, amongst others.

Communications methods used during the process included the town council website; the parish magazine; posters; flyers etc. During the plan process, several public and stakeholder engagement methods were utilised, including online surveys, meetings and a face-to-face exhibition. This culminated in a statutory, pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan consultation that took place with the community and stakeholder bodies prior to the Plan being submitted to the Council.

The engagement and consultation process allowed the emerging policies to be discussed, tested and updated with local residents and stakeholders, before the draft Plan was finalised for submission.

Support has been provided by South Norfolk Council, in the form of officer guidance, but also through a grant award. Financial support was also provided by the national support body, Locality.

5. What do you believe are the potential communities' impacts of this policy?

Please include:

- **How the policy can meet agreed priorities**
- **Evidence gathered to inform your decision**
- **Partnership organisations worked with in the development of this policy**
- **Where you have consulted, Who and How this has informed the decision/policy**
- **Any other groups impacted not detailed above**

Note: Impacts could be positive, neutral, or negative and impact groups differently

As explained above, the overall intention of the Neighbourhood Plan (as demonstrated by the Vision) is to encourage sustainable development and seek to benefit the entire community. The Neighbourhood Plan is required to demonstrate its contribution to sustainable development (encompassing economic, environmental and social sustainability). This is addressed in detail within the Basic Conditions Statement, which is one of the additional, supporting documents that the Parish Council is required to submit alongside its Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan policies cumulatively contribute towards the achievement of economic, social and environmental sustainability, which is summarised in the Basic Conditions Statement.

The Basic Conditions Statement also assesses the Plan against the National Planning Policy Framework Sustainable Development Objectives. The following illustrates those Neighbourhood Plan objectives and policies that help to address the social sustainability objective within the NPPF.

NPPF 2021:

A social objective: to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being;

Contribution through Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan Objectives and Policies:

Policy 2: Back Lane will help to deliver this objective by promoting improvements to areas of public realm.

Policy 3: Planning Public Realm will support this objective by promoting improvements and enhancements to prominent areas of public realm.

Policy 4 Excellence in design will support the delivery of this objective by promoting high standards of design across the Plan area.

Policy 8: Integration and accessibility for all will help to deliver this objective by promoting changes that will support people's wellbeing.

Policy 9: Access to the countryside will help to deliver this objective by promoting improvements to walking and cycling routes which will help support healthy lifestyles.

6. How is it proposed that any identified negative impacts are mitigated?

Please include:

- Steps taken to mitigate, for example, other services that may be available
- If a neutral impact has been identified can a positive impact be achieved?
- If you are unable to resolve the issues highlighted during this assessment, please explain why
- How impacts will be monitored and addressed?
- Could the decision/policy be implemented in a different way?
- What is the impact if the decision/policy is not implemented?

This assessment does not identify any particular negative impacts or equalities-related issues concerning the Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan. This is due, in large part, to the fact that the statutory planning process requires an assessment of the proposed plan's contribution to sustainable development as a matter of course. Neighbourhood Plans are required by law to have undergone appropriate community and stakeholder consultation, and to demonstrate that policies are evidenced, justified, deliverable, and sustainable.

If successful, and once made by South Norfolk Council, the Neighbourhood Plan will primarily be monitored by Wymondham Town Council, but the District Council will also be able to assess its implementation from a development management point of view and the determination of planning applications within the parish.

Signed by evaluator: Vicky West

Signed by responsible head of department: Helen Mellors

Please send your completed forms to the equalities lead (Victoria Parsons) to be reviewed and stored in accordance with our legal duty.

REVIEW DATE - _____

(See Page 2 for details of reviews. Please send a copy of the reviewed document to Victoria Parsons)

Business Rates Pool Projects and Expenditure

Report Author(s): Nina Cunningham
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Portfolio: Cllr Lisa Neal, Stronger Economy

Ward(s) Affected: Bracon Ash and Hethel & Harleston

Purpose of the Report:

This report seeks Cabinet approval for use of South Norfolk Council's remaining allocation of the Norfolk Business Rates Pool (2020/2021) to support the following projects:

1. £300,000 contribution towards infrastructure works to unlock the allocated Hethel employment land
2. Up to £125,000 additional funding towards the Harleston public realm works scheme.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 Cabinet to approve a financial commitment of £300,000 to support the delivery of the Hethel Employment Land Infrastructure improvements from the Council's allocation of the Norfolk Business Rates Pool 20/21.

- 1.2 Cabinet to approve an additional financial commitment of up to £125,000 to support the delivery of the Harleston public realm works project, from the Council's allocation of the Norfolk Business Rates Pool 20/21.
- 1.3 Delegate to the Director of Place in consultation with the S.151 officer to finalise the funding arrangements for both projects, including the expenditure profiles and use of additional funding.
- 1.4 Subject to appropriate legal and procurement advice, delegate to the Director of Place the signing of any required contracts and procurement requirements associated with these funding contributions.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek a financial commitment towards two projects from South Norfolk Council's remaining £425,000 allocation from the 20/21 Norfolk Business Rates Pool.
- 2.2 South Norfolk Council was awarded £675,000 from the Norfolk Business Rates Pool 20/21. At the time of the award, funding was not ring-fenced for specific projects.
- 2.3 Hethel's allocated employment land requires a significant level of investment to unlock the c.20ha of employment land. £300,000 is being requested as match funding towards the infrastructure costs to deliver a roundabout and new access road for this employment site.
- 2.4 This infrastructure will improve the access arrangements for Lotus expansion plans, advanced engineering and manufacturing businesses and Hethel Innovation Centre. Once the allocated employment land is developed and occupied, this is expected to deliver c. 870 new jobs and £57m of new GVA p/a to the local area.
- 2.5 Due to increased cost of construction material, (attributable in part to material shortages caused by the war in Ukraine and general inflation) additional funding of up to £125,000 is being requested to support the completion of the Harleston public realm scheme.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the Norfolk Leaders' May 2021 meeting it was agreed that the approach adopted to business rates pool distribution would be to divide the confirmed allocated amount based on 1/10 per District and 3/10 for Norfolk County Council. As the *Outturn saved levy* was agreed a c. £6.747m, this equated to an allocation of £675,000 to SNC.
- 3.2 **Hethel Employment Land** – Hethel employment land has been identified as a focus for further jobs growth in order to achieve the core spatial planning objective "to promote economic growth and diversity and provide a wide range of jobs", including a requirement to expand Hethel by around 20ha to focus on advanced engineering and the growth of technology capabilities.
- 3.3 An allocation of land to fulfil this requirement is established within the Site Specific Allocations and Policies of South Norfolk. As the proposed infrastructure provides

a number of access points to this employment land, this would fulfil the intention of the policy and would enable further expansion as/ when required.

- 3.4 Due to the importance of this site, a collaboration between New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP), Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk Council, Group Lotus and Hethel Engineering Centre has been operational for number of years. Deliverables to date include a number of site-specific studies including an overview of employment sites along the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor, a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) analysis, an indicative masterplan for the Technology Park and outline designs for the required infrastructure.
- 3.5 The benefits of unlocking this employment and facilitating the growth of existing businesses, notably Lotus, were recognised by central Government in 2021 with the award of c. £600,000 *Community Renewal Funding* to create a sustainable and innovative energy solution within a rural setting to accommodate the growth plans of existing and new occupiers within this area. This proposal is due to be completed in December 2022.
- 3.6 **Harleston Public Realm Improvements** - On the 22 November 2021, Cabinet endorsed a financial contribution of £678,527 towards the scheme to reduce traffic in the town centre and create a pedestrian priority zone. It was agreed that these works would be funded from the 19/20 Norfolk Strategic Fund (£428,527) and 20/21 Norfolk Business Rates Pool (£250,000). A procurement exemption to use Norfolk County Council to deliver the scheme via their lead contractor Tarmac, was also agreed.

4. Current position/findings

- 4.1 **Hethel Employment land** - Delivery of this infrastructure is in line with the emerging *Greater Norwich Local Plan* as it will facilitate and expedite growth in a key allocated employment area. Once built out, this land will provide access to high value jobs generated through new supply chain opportunities and inward investment from new and local businesses that move and grow into the area.
- 4.2 Provision of the infrastructure will not only unlock the remainder of the allocated employment site but will also provide more appropriate infrastructure to support the growth of existing businesses. The growth in jobs and manufacturing at the site will result in increased traffic and heavy goods vehicle movements. The proposed roundabout and link road scheme will help provide a solution to this by improving and enhancing traffic circulation around the site and as well as bringing forward enhancements to promote other travel modes, such as cycling.

- 4.3 First stage designs, indicative budget costings and a delivery programme have been resourced and completed by Norfolk County Council and signed off. These will be used to inform the detailed design and a planning application which is expected to be submitted early 2023.
- 4.4 The land requirement for the infrastructure will be provided by Lotus subject to the funding package being secured.
- 4.5 All infrastructure will be built to an adoptable standard and once completed, will be adopted by Highways England.
- 4.6 South Norfolk Council has submitted a funding application to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to secure additional funding to help deliver this scheme.
- 4.7 If the funding package is secured, it is anticipated that the infrastructure will be in place by early 2024.
- 4.8 **Harleston Public Realm Improvements** – Delivery of the scheme is underway and on schedule for completion in December 2022. The scheme is being overseen by Harleston Project Board (the Board).
- 4.9 In June 2022, NCC made the Board aware that due to unforeseen circumstances and challenging market conditions, cost increases amounting to an additional c.4% per month on material costs needed to be factored into the budget. The Board were asked to review a series of valued engineered options. After due consideration of the potential increase cost implications of £125,000, the Board recommended that the proposal should continue to deliver the original outcomes agreed.
- 4.10 On the recommendation of the project board, revised build costs have therefore increased from c.£776,000 to c. £890,000.

- 4.11 The original scheme breakdown is set out below follows:

Build element	Cost
Design fees	50,000
Construction cost	726,000
Sub Total construction costs	776,000
Grand total	776,000

- 4.12 To overcome the rises in construction materials, revised organisational contributions are included below for consideration.

Organisation	Contribution (Nov. 2021)	Revised contribution (Sept 2022)
NCC Active Travel 2 fund	44,275	NIL
NCC further contribution	100,000	159,681
HTC contribution	30,000	30,000
Norfolk Strategic Fund grant	428,527	428,527
Business rates pool contribution (20/21)	250,000	375,000
Contingency	76,808	103,208

Total)	776,000	890,000
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- 4.13 Should the construction costs exceed £890,000, SNC will request that the gap funding is secured from other stakeholders

5. Proposed action

- 5.1 To allocate £300,000 of the Business Rates Pool towards the Hethel employment land infrastructure project and an additional £125,000 to the Harleston public realm scheme.

6. Other options

- 6.1 Options include:
- 6.1.1 To reduce the financial contribution for both of these schemes
 - 6.1.2 To provide funding support to only one scheme in line with the recommendation.
 - 6.1.3 Non endorsement of the recommendations where funding is not allocated to either scheme.
- 6.2 If any of these options are taken forward, the delivery of the next phase of work at Hethel and Harleston public realm scheme will be put at risk.

7. Issues and risks

- 7.1 **Resource Implications** – Staff time will be required to engage with the project board and liaise with Norfolk County Council to deliver the public realm improvements. This will be managed within the existing staff establishment.

Escalating construction costs are likely to have an impact on the viability of both construction projects. Regular engagement with contractors will continue to ensure costs are managed appropriately and that the financial viability of the projects are kept under continued review.

- 7.2 **Legal Implications** – all relevant licenses and permissions for the projects will be the secured as and if required.

Specialist legal advice will be secured to ensure compliance with all relevant UK Subsidy Control requirements.

Legal advice will be secured to inform any contractual obligation which the Council is required to enter into to secure the delivery of the afore mentioned schemes.

- 7.3 **Equality Implications** – the Harleston and Hethel schemes will deliver safer access to the respective locations. In addition, the Harleston scheme will deliver enhancements including wider pavements, additional seating areas and an overall increase in the provision of disabled car parking spaces.

- 7.4 **Environmental Impact** – Hethel Employment Land: Compliance with all planning requirements including the provision and adherence of an Environmental Impact Assessment (if required) will be complied with.

There is a recognition that building additional vehicle access to Hethel's employment land, could run contrary to the principles of sustainable transport

Design measures will be put in place to promote active travel (including walking and cycling) within the internal road scheme serving the site.

Harleston Public Realm: once delivered, the scheme will provide an improved environment for residents, businesses, and visitors by reducing through traffic in the town centre. Mitigation of disruption during the public realm work is being managed by Norfolk County Council.

- 7.5 **Crime and Disorder** – officers consider that there will be no adverse effects from the proposed projects.
- 7.6 **Risks** – the primary risk for both projects, is the stated increase in the cost of construction materials. There is an additional risk that market conditions remain uncertain, and costs increase still further. Officers will work with the project lead and the boards to help mitigate this risk.
- 7.7 Risk registers will be produced and maintained throughout programme delivery.
- 7.8 Both programmes are reliant on working closely with external stakeholders. There is a reputational risk associated with poor stakeholder engagement leading to disengagement and possible negative publicity. Effective stakeholder management will be practiced on both schemes.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 Hethel Technology Park is a key strategic site with significant expansion plans. If approved, this proposal will support the growth and development of the area and safeguard this important employment land allocation, unlocking the site to realise its full potential.
- 8.2 As Harleston public realm scheme is now well under way, increasing the financial commitment at this stage is prudent as it will avoid any time delays which would increase the likelihood of further inflation adding to the final cost.

9 Recommendations

- 9.1 Cabinet to approve a financial commitment of £300,000 to support the delivery of the Hethel Employment Land Infrastructure improvements from the Council's allocation of the Norfolk Business Rates Pool 20/21
- 9.2 Cabinet to approve an additional financial commitment of up to £125,000 to support the delivery of the Harleston public realm works project, from the Council's allocation of the Norfolk Business Rates Pool 20/21.
- 9.3 Delegate to the Director of Place in consultation with the S.151 officer to finalise the funding arrangements for both projects, including the expenditure profiles and use of additional funding.
- 9.4 Subject to appropriate legal and procurement advice, delegate to the Director of Place the signing of any required contracts and procurement requirements associated with these funding contributions.

First Class Customer Service – Customer Experience Phase One

Report Author(s): Corinne Lawrie
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Portfolio: Governance and Efficiency

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

This outline business case provides a proposal for initiating a Discovery exercise to identify and map out the current end-to-end customer journeys, the associated customer experience at each touchpoint and potential benefits that a customer experience management platform could deliver.

Recommendations:

Cabinet to agree:

1. To initiate the discovery phase as the first phase towards establishing the current state, the future state and the underpinning technology to inform a fully costed business case for investment to delivering First-Class Customer Service.
2. To utilise £60,500 of South Norfolk Council's Earmarked Reserves for consultancy resource to support the One Team to produce a detailed business case for the delivery of First-Class Customer Service.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the need to seek consultancy support to further explore the One Team vision for delivering first-class customer experience from a people, process and technology perspective.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet approval to initiate the discovery phase to accurately inform what first-class customer service means for the One Team and to deliver a fully costed

business case for the technology solution(s) that underpins the vision for first-class customer service.

- 1.3 Our transformation programme continues to deliver efficiencies through system consolidation and building the firm foundations for future transformation and investment in Microsoft 365 presents opportunities for us to take our transformation agenda further through the integration of business intelligence with customer relationship management.
- 1.4 Customer relationship management and business intelligence are two tools that deliver similar benefits: Understanding and analysing data to make better business decisions, improve customer relationships, forecast and impact business performance.
- 1.5 Customer relationship management and business intelligence can be delivered independently but together they are complementary. For instance, business intelligence can show us how many customers were unsatisfied with organisational services, whilst customer experience management allows us to find out what has been the reason for dissatisfaction through built-in tools and automation. Similarly, business intelligence can tell us the number of customers accessing our products and services; customer experience management platform can tell us how customers access our services and enable us to segment our profile to improve our marketing effectiveness to grow our revenue base and further prevent failure demand.
- 1.6 The backdrop of increasing demand and rapidly changing customer expectations all contribute to the need to use technology to enable transformation and to position the council well to realise savings through deeper demand management and service transformation over the MTFS period.

2. Background

- 2.1 South Norfolk Council and Broadland District Council's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024, set out its vision to; *“work together to create the best place for everyone, now and for future generations”*. A key element of achieving this vision is the commitment to *“putting the customer at the heart of everything we do.”*
- 2.2 The ICT and Digital Strategy set out the compelling case to improve and transform our service offering through the innovative use of technology. With a focus on first class customer service and a reduction in the cost of end-to-end service delivery, whilst enabling customers to interact with us in a modern and efficient way.
- 2.3 To achieve a first-class customer service the following outcomes have been agreed:
 - **Principle 1 - Right First Time:** Reduce cost and failure demand by getting it right first time, minimising repeat contact and keeping the customer informed.

- **Principle 2 - *Every Contact Counts*:** Making connections based on customer data and joining up our service offering to benefit the customer.
- **Principle 3 – *Delivering an Excellent Customer Service*:** Customers can access our services at a time that suits them 24/7, using their channel of choice and receive a consistent customer experience.
- **Principle 4 – *Grow a ‘Customer-first’ Culture*:** Invest time in understanding customer needs and customer demand. Learning from customer feedback and insight to target services to those that most need them.
- **Principle 5 – *Organised around customer need*:** Use technology to transform our approach to service delivery, streamlining services and removing obstacles. Thereby enabling the council to provide more tailored/ value added services for those who need them.

- 2.4 The adoption of digital capabilities and new technologies is essential to achieving our transformation ambitions through redefining customer journeys, streamlining transactions and processes to reduce inefficiencies, reduce failure demand and enable the One Team to achieve an optimised model of customer experience.
- 2.5 To understand the customer experience across the One Team and identify the benefits that could be realised against each outcome set out above a discovery phase is required with an estimated total cost of £110,000 with South Norfolk Council’s total contribution of £60,500.
- 2.6 The discovery exercise will include an analysis and assessment of where and how the customer journey and customer experience within service areas can be improved along with a Future-State analysis and construct of what First-Class Customer Service should look like from a People, Process and Technology perspective – the sorts of solutions we should consider, and the level of business benefit we can expect to achieve through the implementation and adoption of the proposed solutions to make a significant contribution to our transformation agenda.
- 2.7 This Discovery Phase will be Phase 1 of a wider initiative to implement First Class Customer Service and will serve to inform the content of this initiative in terms of the current situation, the opportunity for improvement, the sorts of solutions we should implement, the associated cost and timeframe estimates, and the resulting business.

3. **Current position**

- 3.1 In 2021, the One Team initiated a Key Business Systems Review with the intention of producing a roadmap for system consolidation that supports the One Team collaboration, namely our Systems Transformation Programme.

- 3.2 The review identified at a high-level some key challenges and shortfalls in the customer experience and digital offer. However, more detailed analysis is needed to better inform the solutions we could implement and the quantifiable benefits that could be realised against an estimated £560,000 investment of a digital customer experience platform.
- 3.3 A summary of the findings from the Key Business Systems review are highlighted below:
- Limited system integration between the councils and different departments within them.
 - Different and inconsistent customer journeys across the two councils and its systems.
 - No central customer record or ability to share customer information across the councils and its services as customer information is currently stored in disparate systems which do not communicate with each other.
 - Large technical debt and multiple ICT workaround fixes that absorbs resource and capacity.
 - Multiple customer records without a master record and unconnected accounts.
 - Limited Case Management functionality or the ability for different business areas across each council to work collaboratively.
 - A fragmented customer service operating model, with little resilience against a backdrop of increasing demand.
 - A lack of joined up data, management information or reporting.
- 3.4 We have made considerable progress in investing in our foundations through the consolidation of our line of business systems to provide a stable platform for transformation.
- 3.5 The opportunities presented by the Beyond the Horizon programme has further influenced the need to shift transformation towards the way we serve our customers and the experience they receive through a programme of transformation work called 'First-Class Customer Service' that is enabled through technology.

4 First-Class Customer Service as Transformation

- 4.1 First-Class Customer Service positions technology as an enabler and sets out to maximise the efficiency of our One Team collaboration by transforming the way we deliver our core services to release efficiencies with the end goal of delivering first-class customer service.
- 4.2 The need to deliver a first-class customer service is coupled with the backdrop of ever-increasing demand and rapidly changing customer expectations all contributing to the need to use technology to enable transformation and to position the council well to realise savings through deeper demand management and service transformation over the MTFS period.

- 4.3 If we do not seize the opportunities technology can deliver to support the transformation of service delivery our ability to effectively resource increasing demand will become more costly, hampering how customers feel about their interactions with the One Team and the customer experience they receive.
- 4.4 Currently our digital offer is limited, with most of our demand serviced via our higher cost channels such as, phone. The table below outlines the demand over a 12-month period with an estimated cost.

Average cost per transaction by channel					
Source	Face-to- Face	Telephone	Post	Online	Webchat
PWC Report	£10.54	£3.39	£12.10	£0.80	£0.15
One Team cost	£58,001.62	£1,252,957.56	£195,117.49	£39,888	N/A
		*Based on 369,604 calls/year		*49,860 transactions	

- 4.5 Our current digital offer consists of 70 webforms which although allow for online input by the customer the back-office processing of these requests still requires large volumes of manual intervention and administration.
- 4.6 An investment in a technological solution such as a customer experience management platform, alongside other technology can achieve smooth, collaborative management of customers, accurately channel and predict demand for services to ensure customer requests are promptly dealt with in a way that reduces failure demand, removes pressure on back-office departments and reduces the long-term cost of service delivery.

5 Potential Benefits realised by other Local Authorities

- 5.1 The benefits of delivering a first-class customer service relates to cost and efficiency savings. The following examples provide an overview of the benefits that other local authorities have realised through the implementation of a similar customer experience platform.
- Improved Customer choice and access through the provision of additional digital contact channels e.g., online portal, chat, that reduces the costly human intervention. For example, Durham County Council has seen the number of customer requests being made online soar since launch. This dramatic shift in contact channel has already identified over **£250,000 in annual savings**, a figure that continues to grow over time.
 - Replaces poor working practices that waste time, improving efficiency and enabling more value-added work to be completed. For example, North West Leicestershire Council created time efficiency savings through integrating online forms of **1,641 working hours** equivalent to **226 working days**.
 - Increase customer satisfaction, customer experience and service quality through the introduction of automated workflows, robotic processes and a reduction in failure demand. For example, Wrexham Borough Council adopted a CRM and

looked at providing timely reminders to residents about their bin collection days. This has resulted in:

- **48% reduction** in missed bin calls
 - **27% reduction** in contaminated recycling bins
 - **8hr job** that is now fully automated without human intervention.
- Targeted marketing campaigns around services, events, business and tourism to build levels of engagement and yield improved marketing success by enabling us to better understand and segment our customers.
 - Better communication and knowledge sharing between services and departments.

6 Anticipated Savings

6.1 The potential initiatives that could be delivered and the anticipated savings for the Council, based on examples achieved by other local authorities, are outlined below:

- **Delivering an Excellent Customer Service:** A channel shift initiative aimed at achieving a conservative 40% channel shift to online channels could deliver **£369,603 of annual savings**. Whilst enabling customers to access our services at a time that suits them 24/7, using their channel of choice and receive a consistent customer experience.
- **Right First Time:** Reduction in failure demand using automated progress notification, keeping the customer informed and reducing repeat contact could realise **9FTE to focus on more value-added activities**.
- **Every Contact Counts:** Making connections based on customer data and joining up our service offering to benefit the customer could allow us to reduce missed bin reports by up to **40%** using SMS alerts to customers to inform them of service disruption which means their bins may not be collected and reducing failure demand.

6.2 The above initiatives and their anticipated savings are not an exhaustive list but rather an outline of the potential. The full business case delivered from the outputs of the discovery phase will provide a more accurate picture of savings and return on investment.

7 The Discovery Phase Approach

7.1 The discovery phase is designed to better understand the current customer offering across services, document the current landscape as well as the future state of customer experience and outline the technological solutions that could deliver it.

7.2 The discovery phase and analysis will take approximately 6-8 weeks, this is looking at as-is processes to identify current state and where potential efficiencies could be achieved through the digitalisation of end-to-end customer journeys and the technological solutions that underpin it.

- 7.3 It is recommended that this discovery phase is undertaken to better understand costs, benefits and implications with a view to building a full business case for a customer solution(s) that delivers against our strategic principles. An outline of the proposed approach is detailed in the table below.

Activity	Description
Discovery phase	A review of all customer processes, identify the prioritisation of these processes for digitisation and understand the potential benefits of implementing the new digital platform. Appraise the required roles and responsibilities to deliver the solution and highlight resourcing gaps. Assessment of current market. Alignment of options against requirements, Initial recommendations. A full Cost-benefit analysis and presentation of options for delivery
Decision Point	Decision point on Full business case findings
Evaluation and Procurement	Finalise SNBC requirements and take to market, assist with assessments and interviews, assist in final decision making
Configuration (install / set)	Mobilise, define, agree key components and standards. Create relevant templates to expedite delivery and ensure consistency of build and configuration
Total	£85,000 - £110,000

- 7.4 It should be noted that this discovery phase will not deliver a customer experience management solution, but a suggested programme of work, costs and benefits to inform the full business case. Only after the completion of this discovery phase can a full business case be presented, and approval sought for the required investment.
- 7.5 It is anticipated that the total cost of implementation of a customer experience management solution is estimated at c£560,000 over the course of two financial years. The full cost is likely to be impacted by the delivery model and chosen option as recommended and approved at full business case decision stage.
- 7.6 Based on the initial licensing assessment of authorities of a similar size the licensing costs could be c£79k - £105k per annum.

8 Indicative Timescales

- 8.1 Outlined in the table below are some indicative timescales associated with the delivery of a fully costed business case. These timescales are indicative and will be influenced by capacity within teams to support the discovery phase analysis alongside other in-flight projects, procurement process and supplier lead in time.

Activity	Indicative Timescales
Cabinet agreement to proceed to discovery phase	Q3
Discovery phase completed	Q4
Full Business Case to Cabinet	Q4

9 Procurement

- 9.1 The most appropriate procurement route will be followed to allow for the work to be completed.

10 Proposed action

- 10.1 It is proposed that South Norfolk District Council initiates the discovery phase to inform the vision of first-class customer service and the proposed technological solutions and programme of work that could deliver it.

11 Other options

- 11.1 **Option 1 - Do Nothing:** Cabinet could choose not to initiate the discovery phase to inform our approach to first-class customer service. Continue with current disparate line of business systems and fragmented customer journey. This option would preserve the current technology architecture and customer experience and see IT services continue to build bespoke point-to-point solutions for the integration of applications, using middleware or process automation tools where point-to-point integration is not available.

Pros	Cons
Tried and tested approach	Relies on limited in-house resource
Some in-house resource already skilled	High technical skill level required
No additional capital or revenue investment needed	Does not provide workflow and SLA management around customer interactions
	Is not providing a consistent and improved customer experience
	Does not move the Councils forward on delivery of their digital and IT strategy.
	Incurs continuation of technical debt with increased risk and cost from managing increased demand.

12 Issues and risks

- 12.1 The full business case may present an inviable position of investment or may not be approved. If the full business case is not approved there will remain value from the analytical work that has been completed in the discovery phase in understanding customer demand and making small scale improvements that contribute towards our transformation agenda.

- 12.2 A CRM solution may not be the recommended solution after analysis.
- 12.3 As part of the discovery phase there may be wider recommendations that will need considering under the First-Class Customer Service transformation programme which may require further investment.
- 12.4 **Resource Implications** – Although the discovery phase is likely to be light touch, timing to engage the organisation in this work is critical and will need to be assessed against the wider programmes and projects already underway such as, Beyond the Horizon and the IT Fundamentals work as to not overburden teams with the volume of change.
- 12.5 **Legal Implications** – using a procurement framework for this evaluation and appointment ensure compliance with public contract regulations.
- 12.6 **Equality Implications** – None. This is not delivery or implementation.
- 12.7 **Environmental Impact** – None
- 12.8 **Crime and Disorder** – None

13 Conclusion

- 13.1 The need to transform the way we deliver our services was identified in the Key Business Systems review and the ICT and Digital strategy. The reasons for addressing digital customer experience are:
- Satisfying customer expectations of digital services;
 - Improving customer service and interacting with customers the way they expect now, and will increasingly expect in the future
 - Reducing failure demand, by giving feedback to residents, by getting things right first time online, without need for more costly contact
 - Enabling future demand management.
 - Increasingly allowing the council to deliver with partners, and to encourage customers that would like to do so to support themselves, redirecting resource to those that most need it
- 13.2 An improved customer experience is thought to have the potential to deliver efficiencies and contribute towards the delivery of our MTFS. By embarking on this discovery phase enables us to more accurately quantify the benefits that can be achieved prior to investment.

14 Recommendations

- 14.1 Cabinet to agree:
1. To initiate the discovery phase as the first phase towards establishing the current state, the future state and the underpinning technology to inform a fully costed business case for investment to delivering First-Class Customer Service.

2. To utilise £60,500 of South Norfolk Council's Earmarked Reserves for consultancy resource to support the One Team to produce a detailed business case for the delivery of First-Class Customer Service.

Background papers

None

Using intelligence to achieve a First-Class Customer Service

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Portfolio: Governance and Efficiency

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to set out how the Council proposes to use data and intelligence to drive delivery of the ambitions set out in our Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024, to position the council well to realise savings through service transformation and ultimately, deliver a first-class customer service.

Recommendations:

1. Cabinet to recommend to Council the agreement of funding to establish a Business Intelligence Service as set out in section 4.7 of the report.
2. Cabinet to recommend to Council that funding for 2022/23 is drawn from the corporate contingency.
3. Cabinet to recommend to Council that funding for the Business Intelligence Service is built into the base budget from 2023/24.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out how the Council proposes to use data and intelligence to drive delivery of the ambitions set out in our Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024, to position the council well to realise savings through service transformation and ultimately, deliver a first-class customer service.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council agreed in March 2020 to move forward with implementing the four-year Strategic Plan which sets out the vision and priorities of the Council.

- 2.2 At the heart of the **Strategic Plan 2020-2024**, is the vision for our place:

‘Working together to create the best place for everyone, now and for future generations’

- 2.3 This vision is underpinned by the Council’s strategic priorities:

- Growing the economy
- Supporting individuals and empowering communities
- Protecting and improving the natural and built environment, whilst maximising quality of life
- Moving with the times, working smartly and collaboratively

- 2.4 The last ambition sets a priority for how we will work in order to deliver the plan. As part of this, our key ambition for the two Councils is to use the best of technology, customer insight and the right resources to deliver value for money services for our customers.

- 2.5 How we said we would achieve this in our **Strategic Plan 2020-2024**:

- Continuously challenging ourselves to ensure we **utilise our resources in the best possible way** and seize opportunities as they arise
- Becoming **an agile, flexible and collaborative organisation**, working across traditional local government/organisational boundaries and driving and adapting quickly to the changing environment
- Continuously improving our customer service offerings to best meet our customers’ needs, **using evidence and data to drive our services**
- Continuing to **use the best technology for the job in hand** and making best use of the opportunities that digital ways of working can bring. Alongside making our digital platforms easy to access
- **Investing in our team and technology** to develop a forward thinking and growth focussed organisation
- Trying out and **testing new approaches and ideas, using the best evidence that we have to inform our decisions** and sharing best practice

- 2.6 To date, we have embarked upon an ambitious transformation agenda, consolidating systems, processes and policies to build the foundations of effective

and efficient service delivery; ultimately improving the experience for our customers. As we anticipate the cumulative impact of increasing demand, increasing customer expectation, and emerging budget pressures our transformation agenda will remain a core focus.

- 2.7 Access to and interpretation of rich insights and intelligence will become the key enabler to identifying opportunities for efficiencies and exploring innovative ways to deliver our services and ultimately, the driver of where we focus our transformation activity to increase the programme's success.
- 2.8 Our ICT and Digital strategy, agreed by Members in July 2021, identified that through greater adoption of technology we can begin to convert data to intelligence and make evidenced-based decisions on where to invest but also make advances in predicting and anticipating demand to intervene early.

3. Current position/findings

Context

- 3.1 Demand across the whole of the public sector is rising, with residents and businesses under pressure and needing growing support from local government; particularly in the recent context of Covid and the cost of living crisis. This demand is predicted to grow further over the coming years both nationally and locally. For context, Broadland and South Norfolk combined is predicted to see 19%¹ increase in the population by 2043.
- 3.2 Alongside this, we know that generally, customer expectation is also changing with more of a drive towards 'on demand' type services, providing services in a flexible way to suit different types of customer need and providing good quality services delivered in a timely and efficient way.
- 3.3 With this context, there is a need for us to effectively understand the needs of our customers better, including those who use, or will use, services and the key outcomes that need to be achieved. In order to do this, we must have good access to, understanding of and use of data and intelligence (termed 'Business Intelligence') to both inform our service delivery, and drive transformation of our services in the future, resulting in potential budget savings. This will also help us to inform our future strategic and delivery plans for the Council in the coming years.

Our use of business intelligence

Current state

- 3.4 Across the Council, we hold, manage and maintain significant amounts of data about the services we provide. We have some services, or parts of services that use data to analyse, understand and improve their operational delivery. But we

¹ ONS

also have areas where we only use data to meet statutory or delivery plan/strategic reporting requirements.

- 3.5 **Using data and intelligence to inform service delivery** – as we currently have no central data store or reporting system in place, extracting data and intelligence from our systems is time consuming across the organisation and often, hard to access. Each service area where a system is used, has its own methods of extracting data and intelligence, which is often stored in multiple places and in a range of formats. This makes it difficult for us to bring together data sources from multiple services to understand where we need to target transformation initiatives and resource to give us the best return.
- 3.6 **Using data and intelligence to understand our performance** – understanding and reporting on our performance as a council at present, is largely a manual process. Understanding our performance, which should be something we are able to do all the time, is time consuming and draws on staff resources. Our longer-term ambition is to enable performance information to be accessed automatically and readily available enabling us to free up capacity to analyse the data and provide insight to help improve services for customers.
- 3.7 **Framework** - At present, neither Council has a framework for how we plan to use, manage and store our data and intelligence. This means we do not have a consistent approach and are potentially missing out on opportunities to improve our use and analysis of intelligence.
- 3.8 **Skills and resources** – at present, whilst we have staff across the organisation who are responsible for producing data and some analysis, we do not have dedicated staff with the right skills who can provide deeper levels of insight and analysis.
- 3.9 **Storage** – Across the Council, we gather and store data in a range of disparate ways, from utilising existing tools linked to specific service systems, extracting data from systems and placing it into MS Excel Spreadsheets and sometime using paper forms. We know this approach has a range of associated issues such as; risk of data corruption (being copied from one place to another), data integrity and difficulties in retrieving previous data as there is no central storage repository or system.
Do you want to have a final scan
- 3.10 As prioritised by Members in the Delivery Plan 2022-24, work has been underway, working in partnership with consultants, to explore the opportunities that business intelligence and data could bring to the organisation. This exploratory work has been to date, funded through the Covid budget. This work has included delivering a 'pilot' projects based on our telephony system and housing system and utilising an analysis and visualisation tool from Microsoft called 'PowerBI'. PowerBI allows the organisation to visualise the data we hold, connect different data sets and bring the data to life.

Telephony pilot

3.11 The purpose of the pilot was to explore whether we were able to bring our data into a single storage point, transform and visualise data using an in-house solution and a view to the resources and costs to deliver a service for business intelligence. This pilot has been successful and has given us:

- A greater understanding of customer contact e.g. successful calls, abandonment rates, wait times, average call times, call types. This will allow us to be able to manage our service resource more effectively.
- The ability to identify trends in our customer contact behaviour e.g. peak call times, by day or by hour. This will allow us to make sure we have the right resource at the right time for our customers.
- The ability to predict future customer behaviour to anticipate changing demand on services.
- The ability to focus on the analysis – by providing the data automatically, it has enabled services to focus resource and effort on insight and analysis, to improve services and better manage resource.
- The ability to be more productive - before the pilot, it was taking circa 0.2 FTE (1 day a week) to manually create a report, providing the management team with telephony abandonment rates each week (averaging at 48 days a year spent just on creating the reports). As a result of the development of a telephony dashboard, we have been able to provide a more detailed dashboard, providing a range of data (see first bullet point) which automatically updates every day. This will remove the need for weekly reports and has released resource back into the business to work on improving our customer experiences by matching resource to peak demand times.
- The ability to release our managers/team leaders from running back-end reports on the telephony system when they need to know operational data, by providing them a dashboard of data through a touch of a button.

Housing pilot

3.12 Alongside the above pilot on telephony, we also conducted some initial work looking at housing and homelessness data. This pilot has been successful and has given us:

- The ability to combine datasets and provide new insights e.g., it allowed us to visualise those on the housing list by geographic location and their most recent application date. It also allowed us to identify customers who were on the housing list for long periods of time and either never made a bid or had not bid for some time. This will allow us to remove these inactive cases from the housing list, to better prioritise customers most in need.
- The ability to visualise and understand the primary underlying reasons for customers presenting as homeless, which will allow us to better target resources in prevention.
- The ability in the future, to manage customer expectation when it comes to housing list applications by providing real time information about wait times for the housing list.

Strategic drivers for change

- 3.13 **Service delivery for customers** – as demand for services is changing, it is even more important for us to understand this demand in more detail and make sure we are able to ask the right questions to improve our service offering. It is key we are able to not only use data and intelligence to understand ‘what has happened’ but also to understand ‘why is it happening, what could we do differently, what happens if we change xyz’ and predict what might happen in the future.
- 3.14 **Wider context** – local government has faced a sustained reduction in the funding from Central Government over the last few years, with district councils having taken the hardest financial hit², with districts seeing a 35% reduction in the overall real terms spending power between 2010-11 and 2020-21. Broadland and South Norfolk Councils, like many local Authorities, continue to operate in a climate of financial uncertainty with increasing demands on services alongside unpredictable future changes to government funding, from the potential changes to the Business Rates Retention Scheme and the Fair Funding Review, as well as a lack of clarity around the New Homes Bonus funding. This context provides the Council with the need to continuously review our service delivery models to ensure they remain efficient, effective and relevant to our customers. Key to this will be the data, intelligence and insight we use to inform the decisions we make in the future.
- 3.15 **Open and Transparent Services** – both Central Government and the LGA are promoting the increasing need for local government to release open data, enabling data and insight to be used more meaningfully to engage with the public and other public services. Recently, the Levelling Up White Paper also announced Governments move towards establishing a new independent body in England focussed on data, as well as a new Spatial Data Unit, aiming to empower citizens with information about their local area and drive data transformation.

Potential Benefits

- 3.16 A well-established Business Intelligence function will underpin effective service delivery, the optimisation of resources, strategic decision-making and our understanding of the customer:

Table 1 – business intelligence benefits

Customer Insight & Intelligence	Operational Insight & Intelligence
Understand the needs, wants and preferences of our customers and target services accordingly (e.g. government grants)	Enables monitoring of business activities (in real time if needed) to ensure we deploy our resources in the most effective way
Ability to make evidence-based decisions on service levels, locations and resources to meet customer demand	Helps to identify what is working, what might be inefficient and help inform continuous improvements in services delivered to our customers

² [Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

Better support us with targeting our communications through greater awareness and understanding of the customer through the data we hold	Provides clear evidence for both strategic and operational decision making
Aids us to inform service changes based on customer trends (e.g. 'on demand' service)	Allows for openness and transparency of our data internally and externally

4. Proposed action

- 4.1 In order for us to take advantage of the benefits that intelligence and data could give to use to improve our customer offering, it is critical that we invest in the right resources and technology. To enable us to do this, it is recommended that we invest in establishing a new Business Intelligence Service, alongside the proposed technology required. The proposal for this is outlined below.

Business Intelligence Service

- 4.2 We are proposing to establish a new Business Intelligence Service across the organisation. As set out above, this is something we do not currently have within our existing resources. A business intelligence service will enable the organisation to deploy, manage and use business intelligence tools and technology to improve customer services.
- 4.3 Below is an overview of what the new service would be doing:
- Provide a secure repository of 'clean' data which becomes a trusted and consistent reference point for reporting, trend analysis, planning, decision making and cost/benefit analysis.
 - Automate reporting to reduce time spent on resource intensive, manual data gathering will release capacity to focus on high value performance and data analysis.
 - Produce, up to date, dashboards which provide key performance data, at the touch of a button, right across the organisation. This can be both internally (team leader through to senior leaders) and eventually externally (members and residents)
 - Provide a tool for innovative analysis of service data and releases existing resource time to carry new insights which identify areas for improvement, savings, revenue generation and inform decision making.
 - Facilitate cross organisational data analysis and open opportunities for wider data sharing with other organisations in a secure and controlled way.
 - Provides a basis for many intelligent technologies which we may want to consider that will support service transformation.
 - Supports compliance with data retention legislation and provides an auditable repository for data. Provides consistency of data and data governance protection
 - Embeds specialist skills within the One Team and standardises reporting functionality which will enable us to build a cohort of Power BI expertise removing the risk of a single point of failure.

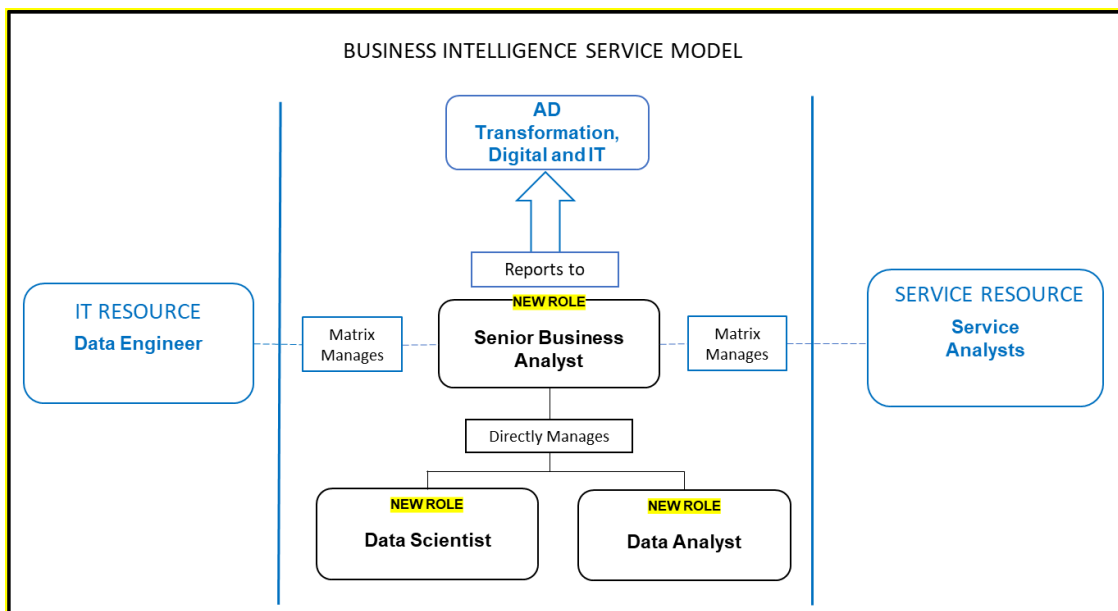
- Delivers a flexible, scalable 'in house' solution over which we have the control to amend, change, develop without incurring further costs
- Currently services spend considerable time running both regular and ad-hoc reports to meet reporting requirements and requests for information. We anticipate that moving to this approach will release capacity that can be redeployed onto analysis that we help us understand how best to deliver services to customers in the most effective and efficient way and to drive continuous service improvement.

Technology to enable the service

- 4.4 The 'pilot' established that the best approach for us is to develop our business intelligence model 'in-house' using tried and tested tools from the **Microsoft suite** of services (Microsoft Azure and Microsoft PowerBI). This enables us to build our central data storage at a pace which is suited for the organisation. Whilst these tools are already available and used by the Council, to deliver the proposed business intelligence model, we need to increase the capacity and usage of the tools, which will require investment for the Council (see table below).

Resources to enable the service

- 4.5 We anticipate that the Business Intelligence Service will need specialist resource to ensure that the service is correctly managed, governed and has sufficient resource to deliver and maintain a range of services across the organisation. The table below shows the key roles, where they will sit in the structure and includes a brief overview of the responsibilities and connections with existing roles.



Senior Business Analyst – Responsible for governance of the Business Intelligence Service. Responsible for interpreting data to provide insight and analysis to the organisation. Line management and matrix management responsibilities for the team

Data Scientist – Responsible for modelling and transforming data to create an information resource for the Data Analysts

Data Analyst – Responsible for interpreting data to provide insight and analysis to the organisation

Investing in skills and people to unlock future efficiencies, income and savings

4.6 The majority of the funding we are asking for will be used to bring in specialist skills which are in short supply across the One Team. This will not only help us develop insights and opportunities in the short to medium term but will also help us build our analytical skills across the wider organisation, enabling service areas to interrogate their own operational data to drive improvement and efficiencies. For instance, our pilot Telephony dashboard can already identify peak customer demand by (day/hour) which services will be able to use to match their resource to customer demand to reduce wait times, abandonment rates and increase the customer experience. It can also show where customers abandon a call by time so we can better understand why customers abandon their call and whether it's linked to our messaging about other channels (i.e. on line webforms). This information will be available to services at the touch of a button enabling service managers to drive their own continuous improvement, without the need to involve the transformation team gathering data manually be running multiple back-end reports or asking advisors to keep a manual count.

Costs of service

4.7 The costs of operating a Business Intelligence Service which can support and serve the needs and requirements of the whole organisation are set out in table below in paragraph 4.7

4.8 This is breaks down between the costs for technical products and cost for the resources and consultancy.

4.9 We know that Data Analysts and Data Scientists are highly sought after and can be difficult to recruit in the marketplace. The resources budget we are asking for gives us the flexibility to tailor our approach to as required. This could be though substantive recruitment, by growing our own skills through graduate apprenticeships, buying in specialist consultancy as needed or a mixture of all of these approaches.

Table 1 – Budget Required

Business Intelligence Service (costs are based on 22/23 prices)	Budget Required (£)				
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Technical Costs	0	12,868	15,146	19,861	19,861
Resource & Consultancy Costs (on-costs included where relevant)	45,281	121,241	171,910	166,910	166,910
Totals (combined)	45,281	134,109	187,056	186,771	186,771
(45/55 applied) BDC	20,376	60,349	84,175	84,047	84,047
SNC	24,905	73,760	102,881	102,724	102,724

The vast majority of the investment needed to deliver the service, will be in skills and resource as we are utilising existing IT tools.

Invest to save – financial case

- 4.10 A business intelligence model has the scope and opportunity to create efficiencies in the way we work in relation to productivity, alongside potential saving to Council budgets (or income generation). Quantifying the exact amount the Council could save through a business intelligence model is difficult, as the value in the model comes from seeing and understanding the data, and in turn, using this insight to make changes to the way we operate. It is expected however, based on research and other Councils experiences, that the investment required to deliver the service would be covered by the savings or avoidable cost which could be made as a result of changes to the way we operate, based on the insight and intelligence created by the business service. The below table provides an overview of the forecasted invest to save model. It is estimated that by 2027/28, the business intelligence service will have delivered return on investment of over 100% against the cost of service for South Norfolk.

Table 2 – Invest to Save Return

Business Intelligence Service			Invest To Save Return (£)			
(costs are based on 22/23 prices)						
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Phase 1						
Phase 2						>>>
Totals (combined)	45,281	134,109	187,056	186,771	186,771	186,771
(45/55 applied) BDC	20,376	60,349	84,175	84,047	84,047	84,047
(45/55 applied) SNC	24,905	73,760	102,881	102,724	102,724	102,724
Return on Investment (forecasted)	0%	10%	25%	50%	100%	110%
Savings and/or avoidable cost through productivity (forecasted in year)	0	13,411	46,764	93,386	186,771	205,448
Savings and/or avoidable cost through productivity (forecasted cumulative)	0	13,411	60,175	153,561	340,272	545,720
(45/55 applied) BDC	0	6,035	27,079	69,102	153,122	245,574
(45/55 applied) SNC	0	7,376	33,096	84,459	187,150	300,146

- 4.11 The introduction of the business intelligence service would enable the effective delivery of our transformation agenda. To deliver the invest to save model, we have already identified a number of potential avoidable savings through the extension of the pilot work. The table below outlines the anticipated benefits that we may see through the introduction of a business intelligence service:

Automation of reporting and reduction of duplication	Overall, we have identified 12.29FTE across the organisation who regularly spend time on data gathering and reporting. This has the potential avoidable cost of £303,000 per annum . This resource could be released back into more valuable work which drives efficiencies and savings.
Avoiding spend on 3 rd party software and tools for insight and analysis which could be delivered in house by the business intelligence service	Recently one of our services areas purchased a 12-month contract for a specialist data analysis and insight service at a cost of £40,000 per annum. By delivering this in house, we could look to save over £200,000 over a 5-year period.
License costs from existing reporting tools	Many of our systems have their own reporting tools. There is a potential to replace one of our core reporting tools used across a range of services, with PowerBi, giving greater analytical potential. We estimate this could save circa £6,500 per annum.

4.8 Alongside this, we have identified a number of examples from other Councils where they have used business intelligence to drive efficiencies and savings. As we progress from phase 1 to phase 2 of the model, there is the ability for us to business intelligence to deliver similar outcomes.

How other Councils have used business intelligence

Using business intelligence dashboards to focus effort on high demand areas

- Dorset County Council utilised business intelligence to create digital dashboards which allowed for their staff to access Children's records in a more efficient way. This delivered direct time savings, and the associated avoidance of increased costs, but also provides a more effective service by allowing staff to make earlier interventions and hence improve outcomes. Dorset were able to offer better targeted and more services with the same resources as a result. ***They estimated this saved them £1.2m a year through a significant drop in contacts leading to referrals.***

Bringing data sets together to provide new insights

- South Cambridgeshire District Council used business intelligence to drive cost savings in their Waste collection service, through combining the different datasets of addresses and outputs of a route optimisation analysis, resulting in a reduction of the number of route collections and vehicles without reducing quality of the service. ***They estimated this saved them £200,000 a year.***
- Camden Council used business intelligence to combine different demographic datasets about their customers from 16 back-office systems, to create a single picture of their residents usage of services. This resulted in saved administration time, provided more seamless services and greater opportunities to spot fraud. ***They estimated this saved them £200,000 a year.***
- LB Hammersmith and Fulham in set up an insight and analytics team was set in 2014, which has ***saved over £1 million*** by bringing data set together to

reducing false and fraudulent claims relating to Council tax single person discount, concessionary fares, properties not on the Council tax register, and properties declared as empty. If we ran a similar data matching exercise across the South Norfolk Council Tax base, we **could look to save up to £600,000** based on the experiences of Hammersmith and Fulham.

Next steps

4.12 Following agreement to fund a new business intelligence service for the organisation, there are some key activities which will take place.

Phase 1 (2022/23 – 2023/24) Getting the building blocks in place

- Recruit to the roles required and enable the technology in the most cost-effective way, to deliver the service as outlined in section 4.5
- Begin a phased roll out of the business intelligence model across the organisation – this will be done by bringing operational data into a central data store on a service-by-service basis
- Design and develop a new open and transparent approach to providing our strategic performance data on our website
- Continue to expand the work we are doing in our pilot, particularly focussing on our corporate data such as HR and Finance. Work has begun on the development of the HR and Finance dashboards, which will enable the organisation to have increased budget management oversight and control, plus a consistent view of information easily accessible. This will provide productivity savings (estimated around circa one day per month per Finance Business Partner spent on creating reports currently), releasing Finance and HR Business Partners to focus on more valuable work such as driving efficiencies across the business. It is also predicted that savings can be created by bringing datasets together to create new insights. For example, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham reduced spend on agency staff by 26% (£23.5m in 19/20 to £17.5m 20/21) through combining agency costs and workers data which previously, had never been combined to provide insight. It is estimated that we will have delivered the first iteration of both the HR and Finance dashboards within 6 months.

Phase 2 (2025/25 – 2027/28) Transformational use of our data and intelligence

- Work with services to start using their data and intelligence to drive improvements to services for customers, bringing in data from other organisations where possible. Some potential key focus areas may include:
 - Planning & Housing – looking at the benefits and value of bringing together different datasets such as planning application types and housing need to look at predicted housing demand vs supply
 - Planning & Building Control – bringing together datasets to help us understand upcoming developments and ensure that we have the right people with the right skills and training to support those projects and maximise our income in the market place
 - Business Rates – visualising data through mapping to understand where empty commercial properties are, supporting us to drive marketing initiatives and direct resource

- Council Tax – bringing together data to identify where council tax discounts and council tax benefits are awarded where they potentially shouldn't be and also by identifying 'live' addresses that are not listed for council tax and benefits purposes.
- Using data to determine our priorities for transformation of our services

5. Other options

- 5.1 There is an option to continue as we are currently and not investing in a new intelligence service and operating model. However, this would come at the risk of not being able to fully achieve our ambitions of driving a first-class customer service and transformation agenda. We would continue to have a less effective and efficient way of utilising intelligence for the customer and service improvement. The desire from service areas for data insight and analysis will continue to grow nevertheless and if we cannot provide this as a service within the One Team then we will need to buy in services.

6. Issues and risks

- 6.1 **Resource Implications** – The proposals listed in section 4 above outline the costed model for delivering a Business Intelligence Service to achieve a first-class customer service offering. These proposals include the funding required to deliver this model and will be an increase to the existing budget for the Council.
- 6.2 **Legal Implications** – None applicable to this report.
- 6.3 **Equality Implications** – None applicable to this report.
- 6.4 **Environmental Impact** – None applicable to this report.
- 6.5 **Crime and Disorder** – None applicable to this report.
- 6.6 **Risks** – None applicable to this report.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 In summary, this report has set out how the Council proposes to use data and intelligence to drive delivery of our ambitions in our Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024, and ultimately deliver a first-class customer service for our communities and businesses. As demand changes, expectations grow and the context we are working in evolves, it is ever more important that we are able to efficiently and effectively access, manage, maintain and use our data and intelligence as an asset, to improve our customer offering.

8. Recommendations

1. Cabinet to recommend to Council the agreement of funding to establish a Business Intelligence Service as set out in section 4.7 of the report.
2. Cabinet to recommend to Council that funding for 2022/23 is drawn from the corporate contingency.
3. Cabinet to recommend to Council that funding for the Business Intelligence Service is built into the base budget from 2023/24.

Background papers

Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Delivery Plan 2022 – 2024

ICT & Digital Strategy

Peer Challenge Feedback and Action Plan Report

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Portfolios: External Affairs and Policy

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide background to the context and purpose of South Norfolk and Broadland Councils' Peer Challenge and to outline the Peer Teams' key findings as represented in their Feedback Report, a proposed plan of action based on their recommendations, and the next steps.

Recommendations:

1. For Cabinet to approve the publishing of the Peer Challenge Report
2. For Cabinet to adopt the Peer Challenge Action Plan

1. Summary

- 1.1 South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils recently invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to hold a Peer Challenge between the 11th and 15th July 2022. Following receipt of the Peer Team's report (see Appendix 1) to keep in line with the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge Guidance South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils have six weeks to publish the report and an action plan based on the proposed recommendations.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Peer Challenge involved a small team of Local Government Peers (Members and Officers) spending time with the Councils and with key partners to observe and engage with the work we do and to identify good practices and key areas for development.
- 2.2 The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

- 1) **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Are the councils delivering effectively on their priorities?
- 2) **Organisational and place leadership** - Do the councils provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
- 3) **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
- 4) **Financial planning and management** - Do the councils have a grip on their current financial position? Do the councils have a strategy and a plan to address financial challenges?
- 5) **Capacity for improvement** - Are the organisations able to support delivery of local priorities? Do the councils have the capacity to improve?

In addition to these questions, SNDC and BDC asked the peer team to provide feedback on:

- 6) **The joint partnership** - Are South Norfolk and Broadland Council's heading in the right direction? Is the partnership delivering against priorities? What opportunities are there to go further?

3. **Current position/findings**

3.1 The key findings of the Peer Teams Report are as follows

Local Priorities and Outcomes

- The peer team praised the work being done with town and parish councils, especially through the town and parish councils forum, though questioned the capacity of smaller councils to participate due to the time requirements on their clerks.
- The peer team was impressed with the work done during the COVID-19 pandemic across organisational boundaries, especially through the Help Hub.
- The team highlighted that the councils have some of the highest performing results in the country with tax collection rates being spotlighted.

Organisational and Place Leadership

- Focus was given to the planning teams' work on nutrient neutrality, with partners naming the councils as regional leaders in their response to the crisis.
- The work being done with the Agri-food sector generally was praised however, there were concerns over the future of the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Given the phenomenal work being done by the Help Hub, the peer team following the advice of external partners would welcome the Hub expanding to cover mental health elements.

- The peer team felt that the great being done by the two councils should be better highlighted both externally and internally as we are underselling our achievements.

Governance and Culture

- The peer team highlighted the number of council meetings within the governance process between panels, overview and scrutiny, cabinet, and full council which creates a demand on officer time that could be remedied via a streamlined process and alignment of portfolios.
- The peer team raised concern over the lack of active joint working groups between South Norfolk and Broadland Councils and suggested setting up to discuss and develop the joint partnership's vision and ambition.
- The peer team highlighted member behaviour as a key concern, having been told of junior officers being shielded from key meetings.

Financial Planning and Management

- The peer team praised the two councils' financial outlook but questioned, given the expected pressures on finance due to inflation and the rising cost of living whether increased stress testing or reserves may be warranted.

Capacity for Improvement

- The peer team praised the councils for appointing a clean growth and sustainability manager and welcomed efforts to further embed the environmental strategy into the councils' programme of work.

The Joint Partnership

- The peer team heard from the councils' partners that South Norfolk and Broadland are both seen as place and systems leaders across Norfolk
- Following the largely successful realisation of the feasibility report from 2018 the peer team questioned whether it would be time to reset objectives with a new outcome-based vision for the partnership.

3.2 Based on their findings the key recommendations put forward by the Peer Team in their Report are as follows

- **Recommendation 1** - Better celebrate your innovation and best practice initiatives – you are underselling your achievements and role as place leaders.
- **Recommendation 2** - Clarify member and officer roles and responsibilities across both councils and create a culture of trust, mutual respect, confront poor behaviour and encourage challenge.
- **Recommendation 3** - Establish a clear outcome-based joint vision for the partnership – political relationships are undermining the aspiration. Members from both councils need to be on board, standing together to promote the benefits you are achieving.
- **Recommendation 4** - Review the office accommodation move project - listen to the specialists, agree on a realistic timeline and milestones, and then communicate.

- **Recommendation 5** - Streamline processes and procedures around governance to improve officer capacity, resilience, and accountability and take the partnership forward.
- **Recommendation 6** - Strengthen corporate oversight of project and programme management, performance management, and transformation portfolios – empower managers
- **Recommendation 7** - Review, refresh, refine and stress test the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MFTS) at the start of the budget process.
- **Recommendation 8** - Remember the power of consistent and timely communication.

For further detail on the findings of the Peer Team see Appendix 1

4. Proposed action

- 4.1 Based on the findings of the Peer Team and their recommendations it is proposed that the Peer Team's Report laid out in Appendix 1 is published and that the Action Plan laid out in Appendix 2 is adopted.

5. Other options

- 5.1 Cabinet could choose not to adopt the Action Plan, however, this would risk not resolving the issues put forward by the Peer team potentially leading to further negative feedback in their subsequent report on their return in 6 months' time, the recommendations of the Peer Team are also key to the continued success and development of the collaboration.

6. Issues and risks

- 6.1 **Resource Implications** – N/A
- 6.2 **Legal Implications** – N/A
- 6.3 **Equality Implications** – N/A
- 6.4 **Environmental Impact** – N/A
- 6.5 **Crime and Disorder** – N/A
- 6.6 **Risks** – N/A

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 In conclusion to comply with the LGA's guidance the councils must publish the Peer Challenge Report and associated Action Plan within 6 weeks, in doing so and in working on the recommendations proposed by the peer team the two councils will help to resolve the issues highlighted and best place themselves for the challenges of the future.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 For Cabinet to approve the publishing of the Peer Challenge Report
- 8.2 For Cabinet to adopt the Peer Challenge Action Plan

Background papers

None.


LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils

11 – 15 July 2022

Feedback report





1. Executive summary	3
2. Key recommendations	8
3. Summary of the peer challenge approach	9
4. Feedback	11
5. Next steps	28

1. Executive summary

It is a positive time to live, work and visit Broadland and South Norfolk. Situated in the heart of Norfolk covering 1460 square kilometres and home to 123,400 households, Broadland District Council (BDC) and South Norfolk District Council (SNC) are demonstrating what can be achieved through the power of collaboration.

Following a feasibility study in 2018 the two councils set upon the journey of creating one officer team to support the delivery of services across both BDC and SNC.

Under the guidance of a new managing director and senior team, a full staff restructure across the two councils was achieved within 12 months, even a global pandemic didn't derail the plans. It was evident the "One Team" is now fully embedded with many staff unaware of what came before.

There is clearly huge ambition for place across Broadland and South Norfolk. The "One Team" approach offers significant added value to regional, sub regional and district strategic working to further economic growth. For example, working with the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) to secure investments, Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) to deliver a Greater Norwich local Plan (GNLP) and a Greater Norwich Economic Strategy (GNES) attracting funding through the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and developing relationships with businesses, developers, investors and anchor institutions, the councils are unlocking housing and employment growth and leveraging in funding.

BDC and SNC are place leaders, delivering outcomes that shape rather than follow the market, the Food Enterprise Park (FEP), Broadland Food Innovation Centre (BFIC), and Ella May Barnes laboratories and workspace at Norwich Research Park showcase just some of the innovation. This is in a context where many interventions deliver a successful commercial return for the council, which given the extensive evidence of commercial failure rates for innovation and enterprise is a significant achievement across multiple sectors.

The Help Hub is another best practice example of strategic working to improve collaborative operational service delivery across organisations for the benefit of residents which the councils should celebrate more. Bringing together a network of partners and services including the police, health, housing, benefits, voluntary sector, primary care networks and more to provide a bespoke "one stop shop" of support

and advice to individuals or families in their times of need. Peers recommend the councils celebrate the innovation and best practice being delivered to avoid underselling the achievements being made and the staff and members involved in delivering them.

The councils are working at pace to deliver an ambitious transformation programme following a full staff restructure across the two councils. The programme and project management approach has been evolving and now sets out the plan under themed portfolios. The structure beneath this is still to be finalised along with resources and capacity. Staff across the one team have been trained in project management and work within services to deliver projects. Peers recommend BDC and SNC now strengthen the corporate oversight of project and programme management and empower managers to embed the approach corporately and ensure that adequate resources and capacity are in place to deliver. At the same time the councils need to further embed the new performance management framework and make better use of business intelligence to drive improvement and provide consistency across the services.

One of the biggest portfolio themes “Beyond the Horizon” involves projects to facilitate the two councils moving into a single building at the Broadland Business Park. Although there is a clear desire from the Managing Director and leaders of both BDC and SNC to move out of the current accommodation by the end of 2022, the peer team is concerned that the communication and planning for the move lacks clarity, is still evolving and requires clear political direction.

The move will have greater impacts on some members and officers than others, with implications for IT staff who need to decommission buildings, ensure the new building is fit for purpose and deliver a programme of work to oversee the design, interior build and fit out of the new building. Peers have flagged how challenging the ambitious timetable may be to deliver and heard of many obstacles still to be overcome. The peer team recommend that both councils take a short pause to ensure that specialist officers working on the project are listened to, their views are taken on board and aligned to a realistic timescale with key milestones and deliverables. They then need to consistently communicate to all staff and members to dispel any myths and create certainty.

The need for more consistent communications was a theme picked up by peers during their visit. Appreciating it was a very busy time with lots of messages being landed and a peer team happy to listen, it was important what was heard, was triangulated. Staff and members are excited about the changes ahead but there does appear to be “noise in the system” with regard to the messages being relayed and there is a risk that changes are happening so fast that not everyone is keeping up.

Confusion over flexible/hybrid working arrangements - peers heard multiple different views on what had been communicated, what different teams were enforcing and what the future requirements would be having moved to the one office. Dates for the move, whether it was a double move or not, when systems were being aligned and what the new transformation programme looked like were all issues raised. Officers told peers there was no shortage of communications, but it didn’t always feel like the right information. Peers recommend the councils remember the power of consistent and timely communication with quality over quantity.

Both councils are financially sound with reasonable reserves and manageable budget gaps. Investments in wholly owned companies are delivering healthy levels of commercial income and there are robust budget setting and budget monitoring procedures. However, given the increasingly challenging and uncertain economic situation - rising inflation, rising interest rates, fuel and energy costs, cost of living pressures on households, increasing pressure on pay, nutrient neutrality, recruitment and retention - the 2023/24 budget process will be more challenging than any in recent years.

Peers recommend the councils stress test the underlying assumptions (interest rates, inflation, collection rates, pay uplifts, interest repayments from councils’ owned companies etc) and model different scenarios to inform the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the associated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MFTP). The planned MFTS and MFTP refresh around July/September at the start of the detailed budget process will also inform that detailed budget process and enable a one year and medium-term approach to be undertaken, for example helping to ensure an understanding of the cumulative longer-term impacts of decisions such as approach to setting council tax rates.


Streamlining the governance arrangements within each council and across the joint

partnership to bring them more in line with each other and enable greater efficiency, challenge and timely decision making were recommended. There are many examples where reports are going through multiple meetings of cabinet, overview and scrutiny, panels, committees and council before either being approved or having to complete the loop of meetings again. This process is draining capacity and affecting resilience in both organisations and risks impacting on your ambitions and priorities if decisions are not made at the pace required. Consider replacing panels (BDC) and policy committees (SNC) with an enhanced scrutiny function to help improve officer capacity, resilience and accountability whilst enabling councillors to maximise their ability to effectively contribute to decision making and scrutiny.

With regard to the joint partnership, it is performing well against its objectives and delivering the expected savings. Moving forward peers recommend the councils establish a clear, outcomes-based, vision for the partnership which takes it to the next level, beyond the feasibility study. Building on the excellent progress made to date and using the move to a single building as a catalyst to create the next chapter. The creation of an overarching joint committee, to match the already formed but not used joint scrutiny committee would provide the space and governance needed for members to have discussions that relate to both councils and consider the art of the possible.

An outcomes-based joint vision is critical to the success of both councils' economic aspirations. Despite the evidence of a strong track record of delivery, there is a concern that future opportunities for growth will be limited in scale if the joint working across the Greater Norfolk's officer teams is not supported by equal political collaboration in the form of effective governance for shared priorities across organisations. Achieving long term economic goals such as the Cambridge to Norwich Tech Corridor will be more viable if the leaders of BDC and SNC could be seen standing together at strategic partnership fora. For the future of the partnership, peers encourage members to set aside differences and work together for the benefit of residents, businesses and partners.

Both councils would benefit from creating a culture where challenge is encouraged, trust and mutual respect is absolute and poor behaviour is called out. Peers received reports of poor behaviour between members and officers, members and members and officers and officers. They heard of examples where junior staff were being



shielded from member meetings to avoid uncomfortable or upsetting situations, officers blaming other officers and members challenging and discrediting professional officer advice. This is unacceptable and is impacting on morale and resilience. Peers recommend clarifying roles and responsibilities to support this. Both BDC and SNC have so much to be proud of and celebrate – make officers feel valued, attract and retain the brightest and best and let your ambitious, innovative and bold reputation speak for itself.

2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the councils:

2.1. Recommendation 1

Better celebrate your innovation and best practice initiatives – you are underselling your achievements and role as place leaders.

2.2. Recommendation 2

Urgently clarify member and officer roles and responsibilities across both councils and create a culture of trust, mutual respect, confront poor behaviour and encourage challenge.

2.3. Recommendation 3

Establish a clear outcome based joint vision for the partnership – political relationships are undermining the aspiration. Members from both councils need to be on board, standing together to promote the benefits you are achieving.

2.4. Recommendation 4

Review the office accommodation move project - listen to the specialists, agree a realistic timeline and milestones and then communicate.

2.5. Recommendation 5

Streamline processes and procedures around governance to improve officer capacity, resilience and accountability and take the partnership forward.

2.6. Recommendation 6

Strengthen corporate oversight of project and programme management, performance management and transformation portfolios – empower managers.

2.7. Recommendation 7

Review, refresh, refine and stress test the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MFTS) at the start of the budget process.

2.8. Recommendation 8

Remember the power of consistent and timely communication.

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1. The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- Lead Peer – Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive – Cherwell District Council
- Member Peer – Ian Hudspeth (Conservative), Former Leader – Oxfordshire County Council
- Officer Peer – Terry Collier, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, Spelthorne Borough Council
- Officer Peer – Dan Gascoyne, Deputy Chief Executive – Colchester Borough Council
- Officer Peer – David Shepherd, Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration – Kirklees Council
- LGA Peer Challenge Manager - Kirsty Human
- LGA Project Support Officer – Daniella Howell

3.2. Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Are the councils delivering effectively on their priorities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Do the councils provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?

4. **Financial planning and management** - Do the councils have a grip on their current financial position? Do the councils have a strategy and a plan to address financial challenges?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Are the organisations able to support delivery of local priorities? Do the councils have the capacity to improve?

In addition to these questions, BDC and SNC asked the peer team to provide feedback on:

6. **The joint partnership** - Are Broadland and South Norfolk Council's heading in the right direction? Is the partnership delivering against priorities? What opportunities are there to go further?

3.3. The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the councils and the challenges they are facing. The team then spent five days onsite in Broadland and South Norfolk councils, during which they:

- Gathered information and views from more than 65 meetings, and a tour of both districts in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke to around 225 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and councillors.

4. Feedback

4.1. Local priorities and outcomes

In February 2020 the two councils formally agreed a joint strategic plan “[Our Plan](#)” setting out their vision and ambitions jointly and autonomously. This was a key ambition of the partnership feasibility study and engaged members from both councils in developing strategic priorities for the next four-year period. Officers and members recognise and understand the vision and priorities, how their work helps to deliver them and how they support the partnership.

In April 2022, a two-year delivery plan commenced, outlining the specific projects and activities that will be delivered to achieve the ambitions set out within “Our Plan”.

Despite the impacts of the pandemic, through conversations and oversight of performance reports, it was clear to peers that the councils have managed to deliver on a number of priorities. A redesign of the community hub model was achieved, involving more partners and further empowering communities. Building work continued on the Broadland Food Innovation Centre (BFIC), Broadland Country Park was opened to the public, St Giles Park development at Cringleford was awarded an accelerated construction grant and leisure facilities in South Norfolk reopened in line with COVID measures to support communities through the recovery phase. These and many more are achievements to be proud of and celebrated.

Although there are regular reporting mechanisms, the new planning and performance management framework needs to be further embedded. There are plans to make better use of business intelligence (BI) and enhance mechanisms to access BI. This capability needs to use data intelligence and evidence-based reporting to drive improvement and make linkages across multiple service areas, systems and synergies between the two councils. priorities and ambitions to ensure the councils are investing in the right areas. Peers encourage you to include partners in this approach.

As the approach to transformation, project, programme and portfolio management is agreed and finalised, it will be necessary to align these with the two-year delivery plan in order to avoid duplication, to clearly identify interdependencies and to effectively manage resources. Given the pace of change and delivery, ensuring the Medium-Term Financial Strategies (MTFS's) and Medium-Term Financial Plans

(MTFPs) are aligned with the vision and priorities is also business critical.

Further developing and embedding the use of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) to improve and mitigate issues arising out of new projects and programmes is also an important area for consideration. The implications for staff with the office relocation is one example where they can add significant value.

Both [BDC](#) and [SNC](#) are delivering well against national performance measures. Council tax collection rates are the amongst the very highest compared to other councils in the Cifpa comparison group and both councils are low spending on housing, planning and environmental services.

The “One team” came together to deliver throughout COVID19 with minimal service disruption. There was a positive approach to redeployment, with officers switching roles to litter picking, stewarding, supporting the Help Hub, collecting waste and working with partner organisations including the NHS, public health and the county council. Relationships and connections at the hyperlocal level during this time have been harnessed and continue to support residents primarily through the help hub.

There is active engagement with circa 200 town and parish councils through the Town and Parish Forum which meets for two hours every month. There are opportunities for agenda items to be proposed by members and this is encouraged. The forum is broadly supported but engagement with the smaller parishes can be problematic, as two hours can be a large part of their contracts for part time clerks. The peer team would however encourage town and parish councils to prioritise attendance at these meetings. District councillors and officers also regularly attend individual town and parish meetings to listen and discuss specific areas of interest.

The councils’ new Pride in Place programme will see the government’s levelling up objectives delivered through locally driven and co-produced services. BDC and SNC have committed their support to this by appointing a Pride in Place delivery manager to work with parishes, towns, residents and voluntary groups to shape and deliver local solutions to local problems. The scope of work includes but is not restricted to, community infrastructure, community leadership and prevention and the local environment. Peers witnessed the parish and town councils support of this and are confident it will deliver substantial benefits to communities when rolled out.

Peers heard of plans to establish a [customer panel](#) across the two councils to

“enable our customers to share their views on how we can best provide and improve our services. It will also help us shape future services”. Whilst challenging, it will be important to attract a diverse pool of people to the panel to strengthen the understanding of community needs, consult on new/revised policies, gather informed views on the budget (which will be particularly important given the greater financial challenges ahead) and reach underrepresented groups.

Both councils have adopted Environmental Strategies outlining the regulatory, planning and service specific activities and actions that can help to achieve carbon neutrality. Recognising the importance of this work, additional capacity has been created to strengthen the ambitions, support further collaborative working with the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and set out the roadmap for decarbonisation. There are innovative projects happening across the councils including the introduction of green bonds, tree planting, move to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel, community energy projects and renewable energy projects including the use of green hydrogen. Bringing together all this good practice into a single strategy detailing the opportunities and aspirations with smart targets will bring the councils in line with others across Norfolk and ensure you are not underselling yourselves.

4.2. Organisational and place leadership

There is clearly huge ambition for place across Broadland and South Norfolk. The “One Team” offers significant added value to regional, sub regional and district strategic working to further economic growth. Examples of policy development ([Greater Norwich local Plan](#) - GNLP), strategy production (Greater Norwich Economic Strategy - GNES) and aligned delivery arrangements ([New Anglia LEP](#) business support) are evident, resulting in substantial financial benefits (Collaboration on the GNLP resulted in a shared £40 million+) and unlocking housing and employment growth. Projects including the [Food Enterprise Park](#) (FEP), [Broadland Food Innovation Centre](#) (BFIC), [vertical farm](#) and [Ella May Barnes](#) demonstrate innovation and mature partner relationships. Peers strongly recommend the councils celebrate this innovation and best practice.

BDC and SNC can be considered place leaders in the economic sphere on the evidence of their achievements reviewed by the peer team. The GNES for growth is well placed to deliver additionality to what the market would deliver on its own. The

councils deliver outcomes that shape rather than follow the market. This is in a context where many interventions deliver a successful commercial return. Given the extensive evidence of commercial failure rates for innovation and enterprise this is a significant achievement across multiple sectors.

Despite the evidence of a strong track record of delivery, there is a concern that future opportunities for growth will be limited in scale if the joint working across Norfolk's officer teams is not supported by equal political collaboration in the form of effective governance for shared priorities across organisations. The Greater Norwich Partnership and New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership are at a critical juncture. Both organisations need to provide leadership for economic strategy, infrastructure planning and business growth. The current absence of agreed and effective longer term governance arrangements is an area for attention across the LEP area for all partners, as prolonged uncertainty will likely result in reduced confidence from partners and investors as well as diverted resources from BDC and SNC to provide work around solutions. Achieving long term economic goals such as the Cambridge to Norwich Tech Corridor will be more viable if the leaders of BDC and SNC are seen standing stand together at strategic partnership fora.

Peers heard "If a strategy has been approved by SNDC it is less likely to be approved by BDC." This political disconnect is impacting on both councils' reputation.

There have been examples which resulted in two separate planning applications to the different Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) where there could have been one lead authority. Having a lead LPA could reduce the investment risk to businesses. The business community were frustrated by elected members in both councils, as they were perceived as the reason for duplication of planning risk. In other areas, LPAs agree which authority will administer a planning application that spans both jurisdictions - SNDC and BDC should adopt this model going forward.

The officer team at BDC and SNC are well respected across a range of partners (including health, police, housing providers, business and voluntary services) who recognise the professional capability and positive determination of teams working to deliver economic growth outcomes across both councils - helping others realise their ambition to deliver benefits for residents and businesses.

- Planning services are credited for their leadership of the vexing issue of

nutrient neutrality, helping investment partners retain their confidence and focus collective efforts on developing and delivering solutions, demonstrating high levels of self-determination and resilience. *“They are the only councils in the region who have pro-actively responded to the nutrient neutrality issue.”*

- Housing associations trust they will receive timely and accurate services for planning applications and building control services.
- The Chamber of Commerce recognises the councils as leaders for business engagement and support services to businesses
- Business partners felt supported and listened to by the councils during the pandemic, with proactive responses to the challenges faced.
- Regulatory services have maintained the respect and confidence of businesses across the districts through the transition period to “One Team.”
- There was a feeling more progress could be made to deliver joint outcomes if there were more trust between the councils and the community and voluntary sector.

The nutrient neutrality issue is a significant risk that undermines the local plan if not appropriately addressed. Work is in hand, but this needs to be flagged as a significant risk to development, business rate and council tax income, and risk to future council company pipeline and income streams and future economic growth in the absence of a long-term solution.

The [Help Hub](#) is a best practice example of strategic working to improve operational service delivery across organisations for the benefit of residents which the councils should celebrate more. Providing a network of resources that work together to support an individual or family. Further improvements are anticipated by partners when the move to the New Horizons building is completed – it will be more efficient for the Police. Health partners were very complimentary about the work with primary care networks. Regulatory services work with a range of front-line partners to deliver the community safety hub and link with the help hub, sharing intelligence and resources to provide seamless and responsive services across a range of issues. Innovative approaches to managing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) were evidenced, particularly regarding young people and efforts to reduce the risk of harm resulting

from their behaviour. There is a view from partners that developing the Help Hub into other areas, for example, Norwich and broadening partners to include mental health would be worth exploring.

Collaboration is positively encouraged with a view to shaping services and the delivery of outcomes, as well as increasing capacity to complement the council officer resource. The Food Enterprise Park is a good example of innovation enabled by the Greater Norwich Partnership and delivered by BDC and SNC. The University of East Anglia is engaged in business growth from a strategic as well delivery perspective – providing thought leadership to the BFIC.

The Broadland Food Innovation Centre demonstrates how four levers of growth are being employed in one pioneering project.

- Delivered in collaboration by partners sharing the same vision, for smart taxation (designated Enterprise Zone).
- Building the workforce of the future with local training providers, colleges and University of East Anglia.
- Delivering huge public investment to kickstart a revolution in food production (vertical farming).
- Potentially locating a cluster of new market sector food production to outcompete the world.

Peers heard “Managed relationships, sharing information and pursuing a common goal underpins the successful partnership working.”

Whilst many services have received support for investment in staff resource to help meet existing demand pressures this is too often of a temporary nature. Given the long-term nature of the capacity requirements and the income generated, a more definite commitment would be of benefit, particularly where business cases support this investment. Ambition at pace can have negative consequences so peers urge the Corporate Management Leadership Team (CMLT) to carve out time for the top team to pause, reflect and strategically plan – building resilience and appreciation too.

Peers heard general feedback of a need to communicate better on service delivery across the directorates. The councils are underselling achievements. Requests for

innovation in communications, such as “a day in the life of ...” at the staff briefings for example, to better understand the work of colleagues and teams across the council. This was a view expressed externally too. The website and external communications provide platforms for both BDC and SNC to showcase all the excellent best practice peers saw and were told about – stand proud and promote yourselves regionally and nationally.

4.3. Governance and culture

Peers recommend the governance arrangements within each council and the joint partnership need streamlining and using best practice from other councils in shared partnerships bringing more in line with each other to enable greater transparency, challenge and timely decision making. There were many examples where reports were going through multiple meetings of cabinet, overview and scrutiny, panels, committees and council before either being approved or having to complete the loop of meetings again. This process is draining capacity and affecting resilience in both organisations and risks impacting on your ambitions and priorities if decisions are not made at the pace required.

Scrutiny at BDC is being diluted by the many cabinet groups and is unable to effect change due to it meeting the week before cabinet. Peers strongly suggest the councils consider replacing panels (BDC) and policy committees (SNC) with an enhanced scrutiny function to help improve officer capacity, resilience and accountability. This will also strengthen the role of back benchers and ensure there is a balanced approach to pre-and post-decision scrutiny and a focus on policy development.

With regard to the joint partnership, there is no one forum for discussion to take place. Peers heard of a joint BDC and SNC scrutiny committee, which had never met. In contrast there was a joint accommodation working group set up to oversee the issues, options and benefits of a shared office. This model should be elevated to create an overarching joint committee, creating space to develop, progress and monitor the joint partnerships vision and ambitions. This would also enable the joint scrutiny committee to meet and discuss issues impacting on both councils rather than the setting up of separate member working groups for example the BDC collaboration working group.

It was encouraging to hear that the constitutions of both councils are being reviewed and updated following best practice. Ensure everyone is working to the right version and consider a review of delegated powers to again support the speed of decision making. Further consideration of aligning portfolios across BDC and SNC would also support streamlined processes and create capacity whilst maintaining sovereignty.

The councils would benefit from creating a culture where challenge is more readily encouraged, trust and mutual respect is absolute and poor behaviour is called out. Peers witnessed and heard of poor behaviour between members and officers, members and members and officers and officers. They heard of examples where junior staff were being shielded from member meetings to avoid uncomfortable and sometimes upsetting scenes, officers blaming other officers and members challenging and discrediting professional officer advice. This is unacceptable and is impacting on morale and resilience. It is critical to address this, to make officers feel valued, attract and retain the best staff and maintain your reputation.

Neither council has inhouse legal expertise (this includes the roles of Monitoring Officer and Deputy). Legal support is outsourced with a different organisation for each Authority. Peers recognise that this practice is replicated in other authorities but suggest the provision of some inhouse qualified resource would strengthen the monitoring officer function. It would also help to set the tone for expected behaviour, preventing a negative culture from setting in and becoming normalised.

Both councils have set up wholly owned companies (Big Sky Group and Broadland Growth Limited) to deliver growth and housing projects. The governance arrangements are strong, with experienced directors and staff appointed to direct and oversee operations. Transparency could be further improved by communicating performance, business plans and annual reports to a broader membership group. The Councils are moving in this direction, but it needs to be fully embedded and transparent.

The CMLT and members recognised a few years ago an issue with too many outstanding audit recommendations. This was addressed through making Assistant Directors accountable for them which led to a reduction in volumes and improvements to the process.

The external auditors recognised the Audit Committee at SNC was more effective in

its oversight of financial reporting, internal controls and risk, with a good approach to support and challenge. There is an opportunity for the Audit Committee at BDC to develop and learn from that at SNC. Both councils' Audit Committees will need to progress the recruitment and appointment of lay members in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) requirement.

Peers recommend the corporate ownership of all the project, programme and portfolio management is strengthened, consistent messaging is communicated and clear performance management and reporting mechanisms are applied and owned across the organisation. This will support good governance of the approach, ensure everyone knows their roles and responsibilities and managers are empowered.

Risk management processes have evolved with corporate risk policies approved in 2020 and risk registers put in place. Operational risks to the delivery plan are managed within directorates. Strategic risks are managed through the strategic risk register with regular reporting arrangements to CMLT and members. It is impossible to predict the future but do ensure the strategic risk register is a live document and incorporates the big risks identified within your transformation programme, for example those associated with your office accommodation move, including the sale of current offices and third-party logistics.

Officers are very committed and dedicated to deliver the best services for residents, communities and businesses. At all levels, staff have insights as to how processes and integration can be improved further and use their initiative to drive improvement. The one team approach is embedded, accelerated by the cross-cutting impacts of responding to COVID-19 – it will be further consolidated by the move to one office location. However, there was a sense some staff felt undervalued, particularly in light of pay and rewards which as a result of HMRC regulations had left lower paid staff unable to meet minimum requirements for some employee benefits, for example the car lease scheme.

During the two-year pay negotiations there was a breakdown in relationship with the trade union. Given the pace and scale of change for staff, the impending move to one office and the impacts this will have across the workforce, not forgetting flexible/hybrid working arrangements, peers urge the councils to rebuild this.

A clarification of roles and responsibilities particularly at the director and assistant

director level would strengthen the empowerment of middle managers. Peers considered the current membership of CMLT to be too large, with too much operational discussion and less time for strategic leadership planning. Consideration should be given to creating a structure which enables assistant directors to meet as a collective to discuss operational and cross cutting issues, which can be reported into the managing director and directors for strategic decision making. This would empower assistant directors, create a solid peer to peer learning environment and break down the perception *“not in the room, not in the loop.”*

Staff reported there was a lot of communication in the organisation but not necessarily providing the right information or messages. Multiple emails a day, optional what's app messages from the managing director, updates on the intranet, monthly staff briefings, one to ones and team meetings were all referenced. As was mixed messaging around flexible working and the office move. Fewer but more targeted communications would be welcomed and knowing more about their colleagues is important. Suggestions such as a day in the life of... and other members of CMLT fronting the monthly briefings were made. Staff also didn't want shielding from the bad news and wanted more honesty about when things weren't going to plan, for example, perceptions around staff retention and the negotiations over the waste contract. A greater ownership of communications across all managers with CMLT reinforcing support to the communications team is required to avoid the noise in the system created through inconsistency of message.

4.4. Financial planning and management

Both councils are in a healthy financial position with reasonable levels of reserves (BNC 53 per cent of net revenue budget and SNC 49 per cent of net revenue budget) although a significant proportion (42 percent for BNC and 55 per cent for SNC) is already committed to funding future capital programmes. However, given the external financial challenges and risks, the councils may wish to keep their general fund reserves under review to ensure they maintain robust general contingency funds.

Budget gaps are manageable (BNC £0.9m by 2026/7 and SNC £1.1m by 2026/7.) Both councils largest funding source as a percentage of its resource base is council tax, which means they are reliant on council tax base growth (increased housing numbers) and setting maximum council tax increases if budget gaps are to be

avoided. Peers confirmed there is a pro-active approach to economic growth, increasing council tax and business rates tax bases but advise considering very carefully the medium/longer term impacts on tax bases of council tax freezes across the two councils.

The nutrient neutrality issue is a significant risk to growth/economic development, housing development and increases to the council tax/business rate tax base which needs evaluation in terms of its short-medium and long-term impacts on both councils' financial position. The issue could impact on the projected timeline assumptions around company loan repayments to SNC

There are substantial capital programmes in place (BDC investing £21.8m up to 2026/7 and SNC investing £85.6m up to 2026/7.) Capital planning has been volatile with both councils consistently reporting an underspend/slippage on capital and profiling of spend could be improved. Whilst it is important that the capital strategy sets out the council's ambitions, this needs to be tempered with a more realistic view on delivery. There are future capital programme impacts which will need to be evaluated including the need for a carbon management plan and specifically for SNC, options for addressing Diss leisure centre which is coming towards the end of its useful economic life and the depot.

SNC has invested significant financial sums (approximately £36m) in Big Sky Group, a wholly owned vehicle for housing development. The council is not providing for principal repayments for loans to the company. There is ongoing debate over this issue and DLUHC has consulted on this matter in the past year. There is therefore a risk that a change in the guidance could produce future liabilities. BDC has invested in Broadland Growth Limited, a joint venture company delivering sustainable and affordable housing developments and is performing reasonably well commercially although there is no current pipeline of projects. Big Sky has a high rate of developer return and is performing very well commercially, generating reasonable (although in the MFTP shown as reducing over the MFTP period) income contributions for South Norfolk with useful margins on company interest payment flows, although those margins are reducing (as Public Works Loans Board rates rise) and will need to be carefully managed.

There has been a fairly smooth transition to one finance team and the

implementation of a common IT platform will support the move to increased business intelligence. There are robust budget setting and budget monitoring procedures, with the Finance Officers supported by the two Finance Portfolio Holders have done a considerable amount of work to tighten up monitoring, and both councils have managed well during the Covid-19 pandemic, although SNC had reduced income on leisure facilities (and responded sensibly in putting in place a three-year projected recovery plan). Strategic financial planning is mature and supported by robust analysis. Just ensure there is future sufficient capacity to cope with meeting the statement of accounts and auditors' deadlines.

The Section 151 officer is highly respected by both councillors and colleagues and financially able portfolio holders and leaders are aware of the financial issues facing the councils. Officers working with portfolio holders have continued to drive a downward pressure on revenue budgets, whilst delivering an ambitious delivery programme. In-year head room has been generated through the transformation programme and not taking anticipated savings until they are realised, thus creating in year-head room for further transformation projects intended to reduce future revenue requirements.

BDC and SNC have developed a mature and beneficial use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to forward fund schemes in towns and parishes and more recently GNP projects. The majority of CIL collected from Broadland, South Norfolk and Norwich City Councils is pooled into the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Investment Fund (IIF). This fund is used to support a list of infrastructure projects, known as the Growth Programme, which have been approved annually by the Greater Norwich Growth Board. Town and parish councils receive 15% of CIL funds raised from development within their town or parish (depending upon the number of dwellings in the parish). With a further 10% given to those councils with an adopted neighbourhood plan in place at the time of the relevant planning permission being granted.

Given the increasingly challenging and uncertain economic situation - rising inflation, rising interest rates, fuel and energy costs, cost of living pressures on households, increasing pressure on pay, recruitment and retention - the 2023/24 budget process will be more challenging. There will also be significant construction related inflation pressures on the capital programme.

Peers recommend the councils stress test the underlying assumptions (interest rates, inflation, collection rates, interest repayments from companies etc) and model different scenarios across the MFTS's and associated MFTP's. Undertaking an MFTS and MFTP review and refresh around July/September at the start of the detailed budget process - will inform that budget process and enable both a one year and medium-term approach to be undertaken.

4.5. Capacity for improvement

An internal consultancy resource was created through the One Team restructure by having a "no redundancies policy" as the two council teams came together as one. This has created additional capacity which although redirected during the pandemic, is slowly being used to support services with transformational change.

The National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) and approach to apprenticeships across both councils is outstanding and well established. It provides excellent development opportunities and significant organisational capacity. Staff feel well supported within teams and through their single point of contact. There is personal help for job opportunities and they enjoy coming together as a cohort to learn from each other.

There is a high degree of trust and autonomy placed on quite junior staff and peers just questioned whether in some cases the challenges might be a little overwhelming and may need reviewing, particularly where work enters the political arena where it was noted junior officers are currently shielded from poor member behaviour.

There is a well-functioning staff consultation forum with a broad membership taken from across both councils. It meets monthly as a sounding board to discuss policy development, events, change projects and more. It creates a two-way communication channel through the organisations and feels listened too. It could benefit from a forward plan, to ensure there is time for representatives to consult with their teams and there was a feeling some issues have been tabled too late in the process for them to have much influence, for example the office move. Peers felt there could be a greater role for this forum going forward and suggest it is reviewed to see where improvements could be made.

The councils have been working hard to deliver a joint transformation programme.

The Spark transformation programme was relaunched in the autumn of 2021 and focussed on projects and programmes within the confines of organisational structures. Allocating resources across programmes was difficult to assess so a resources coordination group was established to better plan the alignment of resources and delivery. A new Portfolio approach has since superseded and is in the process of being agreed and rolled out. Peers recommend this refreshed approach needs to be rapidly finalised and owned corporately before being communicated across the one team to reduce confusion.

The corporate peer challenge took place at a time of significant change for the councils. Communications around the office move were beginning to take place but it was clear to peers there is still a lot of uncertainty around the timescales for fitting out the new building, putting in place ICT infrastructure, selling the old buildings and how best to move into the new one. Peers recommend a short pause to ensure that specialist officers working on the project are listened to, their views taken on board and aligned to a realistic timescale with key milestones and deliverables, then consistently communicated to all staff and members to dispel any myths and create certainty.

There was a similar message around the expectations for hybrid working. Peers heard multiple different views on what had been communicated, what different teams were enforcing and what the future requirements would be having moved to the one office. Peers heard an approach to reviewing job roles was in progress and was supporting the development of a flexible working policy. Peers recommend that a clearer approach is taken - engaging with staff about what the situation is, providing greater consistency of messaging and trying to be as flexible as possible given the difficulties in the current climate of recruiting and retaining staff – it is an employee market.

Extensive plans are in place for systems alignment which will support transformation when delivered. There is still a capacity issue though and ICT and corporate services requirements need to be better understood, valued and factored into all projects and programmes at an earlier stage in the process to ensure delivery within timescales. Although time consuming to implement, a more widespread IT business partner approach could support collaborative development of solutions to meet business need and allocation of resources accordingly.

The pace of change is impressive but at the same time taking a toll on staff. It is beginning to impact on staff resilience as they rush from one project to the next whilst also delivering the business as usual. Peers heard the phrase, *“we are laying the tracks whilst the train is moving.”* Even during the pandemic, BDC and SNC continued to deliver in parallel with the emergency response - take time to celebrate all that you have achieved. Recognise the stresses in the one team, take on board the results of the recent staff survey when analysed and put in place an action plan whilst continuing to encourage the take up of wellbeing support to those in need.

BDC and SNC have shown they are committed to tackling the climate agenda by adding capacity in the form of a clean growth and sustainability manager. The next step in the journey is to unite the environmental strategy with a strategy for achieving decarbonisation and net zero and setting out how the councils will make positive changes and support communities to do likewise. This work requires a corporate approach and will need embedding across all service areas with the support of CMLT and leaders.

4.6. The Joint partnership

The 2018 feasibility study outlined a number of benefits to collaborative working:

- A stronger voice for both councils regionally and nationally.
- Increased growth and delivery at pace of infrastructure to ensure benefits to residents, communities and businesses.
- Greater financial stability for the two authorities, helping to balance the councils' budgets and closing the growing funding gap.
- Opportunities to provide services and initiatives jointly, that would not otherwise be able to provide.
- Increased investment and access to new funding opportunities to benefit residents and businesses in the area.
- A joint complementary offer to businesses and key business sectors across both districts.
- Greater choice for residents in terms of housing supply in order to meet their housing needs.

- Ability to retain and attract the most talented staff.

Significant progress is being and has been made in all areas including being on track to achieve (subject to successful completion of Beyond the Horizon) £8.6m cumulative savings across both councils over five years and aligning many processes, systems, policies and procedures. Achieving a full staff restructure across the two councils within 18 months of the feasibility study, during a pandemic was nothing short of miraculous and work you should be very proud of. There was a clear recognition from all staff that the 'One Team' model has now been successfully delivered and embedded. Reinforcing this message is now unnecessary – many staff don't know what existed two years ago.

The Councils' collaboration is based on a clear understanding of two separate councils with a single one team of officers supporting them. Whilst it is clear that the one team for the officers is embedded, further work is required to deal with the relationship between the councils and in particular, some members of each council who are less supportive of the collaboration. The collaboration and partnership ethos does not extend to councillors and fractures between members at BDC and SNDC were clear for peers to see. Many members expressed their positivity at moving into one building and the opportunities this could generate. Whilst others expressed dissatisfaction with the joint partnership. There was resistance to aligning too much from some and frustration from others that more wasn't being done to realise further benefits of the partnership. There was hope from officers and members that moving into one building could improve relationships and provide more informal opportunities for members from both councils to get to know each other regardless of political differences. For the future of the partnership, peers encourage members to set aside differences and work together for the benefit of residents, businesses and partners.

Officers have developed excellent relationships with key system partners to enable collaboration and delivery of key priorities to benefit residents across both councils. The economic and growth ambition is well documented as is the work with health, police, businesses, VCS, housing and development partners and more. Peers heard that they support partners, drive change, lead the way and take others with them across the joint partnership. You are known as place and system leaders across Norfolk.


Moving forward peers recommend the councils establish a clear, outcomes-based, vision for the partnership which takes it to the next level, beyond the feasibility study. Building on the excellent progress made to date and using the move to one building as a catalyst to create the next chapter. Ensure everyone knows the direction you are travelling in and how and when you plan to get there.

Ensuring the IT roadmap is communicated and implemented is crucial to enable the One Team to function efficiently. It is leading to an internal customer reputational issue. Peers heard frustration from staff and members who are unable to work as efficiently as they would like due to non-alignment of systems across the two councils. They also heard of capacity and competing demand issues within the IT service which need addressing, prioritising and factored into realistic timeframes which can then be communicated with services.

Such issues are partly due to the ambition BDC and SNC have for the partnership, which is admirable, but this needs to be tempered by ensuring there is the capacity to deliver and that timely communications make clear the roles everyone has to play. There is a real risk the councils could lose credibility and at the current pace of change, fail to bring staff, members and partners on the journey.

There are opportunities for the BDC and SNC partnership to go further and with other partners. Peers heard from health partners that expanding the help hub to include mental health services would be welcomed, as would growing the model into other districts within Norfolk. Building on and increasing shared services with neighbouring councils was also discussed with peers. There are also further opportunities to review and expand services between BDC and SNC. Wellbeing, leisure and waste services consistently came up in conversations with peers and whilst we know work has been done to explore some of these, it may take a fundamental review of political ideology on service delivery to fully understand the costs and benefits to the partnership and residents.

Externally peers heard that political relationships may inhibit the councils' ambitions for strategic influence and limit the benefits from further collaborative working. Partners and stakeholders want to see a united front from leaders and members across BDC and SNC. Peers recommend reviewing and streamlining your governance arrangements to ensure there is space to come together to talk about



shared ambitions and define the direction of travel to give confidence to many that you are a solid partnership with whom to do business. You should be proud of what you have achieved, stand together, celebrate the successes and put residents needs at the heart of your decisions on future collaborations.

5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge. The CPC process includes a six-month progress review meeting. This will be a short, facilitated session which creates space for the council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the action plan and discuss next steps.

In the meantime, Rachel Litherland, Principal Adviser for the East of England, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Rachel is available to discuss any further support the council requires.

Rachel.Litherland@local.gov.uk, tel. 07795 076834

Appendix 2: Peer Challenge 2022 – Action Plan

Recommendation	Action	Owner	Timescales
Recommendation 1 - Better celebrate your innovation and best practice initiatives – you are underselling your achievements and role as place leaders.	1. As part of our Communications Strategy, explore mechanisms to raise the profile of the Councils and the work we are doing on a local, regional and national scale (e.g. case studies) (see C1 in Delivery Plan 22-24)	Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)	October 2022 - March 2023
	2. Explore opportunities for displaying the work we are doing and our achievements to residents (see C1 in Delivery Plan 22-24)	Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)	October 2022 - March 2023
Recommendation 2 - Clarify member and officer roles and responsibilities across both councils and create a culture of trust, mutual respect, confront poor behaviour and encourage challenge.	1. Review the work of the staff consultation forum and explore opportunities for further engagement	Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)	October 2022 – December 2022
	2. As part of the Beyond the Horizon Programme of work, refresh our values and behaviours (for both staff and members) and our ways of working by: (a) conducting a review of member/officer protocol, (b) establishing a series of training sessions for chairman and vice chairman for effective chairing of meetings, (c) organising regular member/officer events, (d) re-instigating regular group leader meetings, (e) setting up a peer-to-peer senior managers network and meetings	Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)	Currently underway, timeline to be confirmed once move arrangements are finalised
		Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)	Already underway with final end date of March 2023
		CMLT Collectively	December 2022

Peer Challenge 2022 – Action Plan

Recommendation	Action	Owner	Timescales
	3. Review and alignment of our Constitutions (see MT15 in Delivery Plan 22-24)		
	4. As part of the existing CMLT development workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the work on re-defining roles and responsibilities within the Councils with a specific focus on Directors, Assistant Directors and Senior Managers - Complete the work to implement 'theme' based strategic priorities for Directors 	Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds) Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)	March 2023 Already underway, with implementation date of May 2023
	5. Review options and opportunities with legal provision for both Councils, both in-house and external	CMLT collectively	Ongoing but expect a review in December 2022
	6. Review of members Code of Conduct – aligning the Code and process for dealing with alleged breach of Code (see A1 of Delivery Plan 22 – 24)		
	7. Implement the team action plans as a result of the latest staff survey		

Peer Challenge 2022 – Action Plan

Recommendation	Action	Owner	Timescales
Recommendation 3 - Establish a clear outcome based joint vision for the partnership – political relationships are undermining the aspiration. Members from both councils need to be on board, standing together to promote the benefits you are achieving.	1. As part of our Communications Strategy, explore opportunities for sharing outcomes of our collaboration and benefits to date	Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)	October 2022 - March 2023
Recommendation 4 - Review the office accommodation move project - listen to the specialists, agree a realistic timeline and milestones and then communicate.	<p><i>The Peer Team came at a time where the office accommodation move has only recently been agreed, therefore the project plan was still in development. This project is large scale and the timeline need to remain agile in order to respond to the changing needs as we move through the project.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to engage with both Members and Staff from across the two Councils to ensure buy-in and understanding of next steps and timelines for the office move 2. Implement the Beyond the Horizon Programme of work, remaining agile to the changing environment 	Director of Resources (Debbie Lorimer)	Currently underway – March 2023
Recommendation 5 - Streamline processes and procedures around governance to improve officer capacity, resilience and	1. Complete an internal review of our Risk Management Governance approach and processes and review of our Policies	AD ICT/Digital & Transformation (Corinne Lawrie) & Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)	October 2022 – December 2022

Peer Challenge 2022 – Action Plan

Recommendation	Action	Owner	Timescales
accountability and take the partnership forward.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Members, review options for streamlining and improving the policy/panel and scrutiny structures, utilising best practice and learning from others Working with Members, review options for introducing joint forums for the two Councils (formal and informal) to take the partnership forward 	<p>Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)</p> <p>Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds)</p>	<p>March 2023</p> <p>March 2023</p>
Recommendation 6 - Strengthen corporate oversight of project and programme management, performance management and transformation portfolios – empower managers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Programme Portfolio approach and Project Management Office (PMO) approach, including communications and engagement with the wider organisation to enable a strengthened project/programme approach and culture Deliver the Business Intelligence Programme of work (see MT17 in Delivery Plan 22-24) to enable greater oversight of performance and data 	<p>AD ICT/Digital & Transformation (Corinne Lawrie)</p>	<p>March 2023 and then ongoing</p> <p>April 2024</p>
Recommendation 7 - Review, refresh, refine and stress test the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MFTS) at the start of the budget process.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> When presenting the MFTS in the future, more scenario planning / stress testing of MTFS / budgets will be undertaken. Continue to review levels of reserves across both Councils budgets on a regular basis. 	<p>AD Finance (Rodney Fincham)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Peer Challenge 2022 – Action Plan

Recommendation	Action	Owner	Timescales
	3. Continue to consider the medium/long term impacts on tax bases of council tax freezes on both Councils.		As part of budget setting processes
Recommendation 8 - Remember the power of consistent and timely communication.	1. Implement the business partner (BP) model for Communications and Marketing Team, ensuring that service areas invite relevant BP to DMT. Thus enabling timely and consistent communication as the team are then part of the Directorate.	Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds) / All Directors and Executive Assistants	December 2022
	2. Ensure that the as part of the delivery planning process the Communications and Marketing Team are involved at key stages to ensure awareness of key deliverables and key work required.	Chief of Staff (Emma Hodds) / Directors	October 2022 – December 2022

CABINET CORE AGENDA 2022/23

Date	Key	Title of Report	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Holder	Exempt
31 Oct		Submission of Wymondham Neighbourhood Plan	Richard Squires	John Fuller/Lisa Neal	
	Key	Using Intelligence to achieve a First-Class Customer Service	Sinead Carey / Shaun Crook	Kay Mason Billig	
		First Class Customer Service – Customer Experience, Phase One	Corinne Lawrie	Richard Elliott	
	Key	Business Rates Pool Projects and Expenditure	George Denton	Lisa Neal	
		Findings of the Peer Review team	Sinead Carey/ Ella Howman	John Fuller	
5 Dec		Best in Class housing phase two development – Temp Accommodation	Richard Dunsire	Alison Thomas	
	Key	Licensing Fees and Charges	Nick Howard	Graham Minshull	Exempt
	Key	Licensing Service Review	Nick Howard	Graham Minshull	Exempt
		Support the Cost of Living	Mike Pursehouse	Alison Thomas	
	Key	Food Safety Service Review	Nick Howard	Graham Minshull	Exempt
		Performance Report Q2 2022/23	Sinead Carey / Helen Hall	Adrian Dearnley / Kay Mason Billig	
	Key	Rural England Prosperity Fund	Nina Cunningham	Lisa Neal	
	Key	South Norfolk Co-Investment Fund Application – Easton Community Centre	Emily Larter / Tanya Nelson	Lisa Neal	
	Key	South Norfolk Electric Vehicle Charging Point Extension Contract award	Dave Disney	Graham Minshull	
Council Meeting 12 December					
9 Jan		Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Mike Pursehouse	Alison Thomas	
	Key	Draft Local Development Order Browick Interchange	Nina Cunningham/ Glen Beaumont	Lisa Neal	Exempt
	Key	To establish and enter into a joint venture to deliver a programme of mitigation for nutrient neutrality	Phil Courtier	John Fuller	

Date	Key	Title of Report	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Holder	Exempt
	Key	Gypsy and Traveller Sites	Helen Mellors	Lisa Neal	
	Key	The Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund Application	Annie Sommazzi	Graham Minshull	
13 Feb	Key	Greater Norwich 5-year Infrastructure Investment Plan	Paul Harris	John Fuller	
	Key	Draft Local Development Order FEP	Nina Cunningham/ Glen Beaumont	Lisa Neal	Exempt
	Key	Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2023/24	Rodney Fincham	Adrian Dearnley	
	Key	Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28	Rodney Fincham	Adrian Dearnley	
	Key	Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2023/24	Rodney Fincham	Adrian Dearnley	
Council Meeting 22 February					
20 Mar	Key	Ratification Local Development Order FEP	Nina Cunningham/ Glen Beaumont	Lisa Neal	
	Key	Ratification of Local Development Order Browick Interchange	Nina Cunningham/ Glen Beaumont	Lisa Neal	
		Performance Report Q3 2022/23	Sinead Carey / Helen Hall	Adrian Dearnley / Kay Mason Billig	

A key decision is an executive decision which will:

- (a) result in the Council spending, or saving a **significant** amount compared with the Budget for the service or function the decision relates to; or*
- (b) to be **significant** in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area, comprising two or more wards in the area of the Council, in that it will:*
 - (i) Have a long-term, lasting impact on that community; or*
 - (ii) Restrict the ability of individual businesses or residents in that area to undertake particular activities; or*
 - (iii) Removes the provision of a service or facility for that community; or*
 - (iv) Increases the charges payable by members of the community to provide a service or facility by more than 5%; or*
 - (v) Have the potential to create significant local controversy or reputational damage to the Council; or*
 - (vi) Is a matter that the decision maker considers to be a key decision.*

When assessing whether or not a decision is a key decision the decision maker must consider all the circumstances of the case. However, a decision which results in a significant amount spent or saved will generally be considered to be a key decision if:

- (a) the amount spent is £200,000 or more of revenue expenditure; or*
- (b) savings of £75,000 or more per annum, or*
- (c) capital expenditure of £200,000 or more (where a decision makes a commitment for spending over a period of time, it is the total commitment that must be considered to see if it is a key decision).*