

Report for Resolution

Report to Local Development Framework Working Party –
12 January 2009
Executive – 21 January 2009

Report of Director – Regeneration and Development

Subject Greater Norwich Development Partnership – Joint Core
Strategy

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Purpose

To endorse the decisions of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership policy group about the next steps to progress the strategy, including the planning inspectorate review of the emerging joint core strategy and the need for public consultation on the Joint Core Strategy.

Recommendations

That the favoured option of the Local Development Framework Working Party for the Joint Core Strategy endorsed for full public consultation, subject to a review of the evidence and soundness by the Planning Inspectorate.

Financial Consequences

There are no financial consequences of this report.

Risk Assessment

An assessment of risks is set out in paper 5C for the Greater Norwich Development Partnership's Policy Group on 18 December 2009.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority "Strong and prosperous city – working to improve quality of life for residents, visitors and those who work in the city now and in the future" and the short term corporate priority and action to complete the joint core strategy and start its implementation.

Executive Member: Councillor Morrey - Sustainable City Development

Ward: All

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

None

Report

Background

1. Executive has previously considered reports on the Joint Core Strategy since work on the new spatial planning framework for Greater Norwich began in 2007. The Joint Core Strategy work is being managed through the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP), made up of Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk, with the Norfolk County Councils, and supported by the Broads Authority.
2. The GNDP is an informal partnership and does not have decision-making powers of its own. For the Joint Core Strategy, decisions must be approved by each of the constituent cabinets or executive of the local planning authorities.

Greater Norwich Development Partnership meeting on 18 December 2008

3. The GNDP policy group met on 18 December 2008 to consider the responses to a technical consultation held over the summer as well as an analysis of detailed technical work and further detailed analysis. The meeting considered 4 separate reports:
 - Paper 5A set out the process followed since July 2008 and is attached as Appendix A;
 - Paper 5B set out an analysis of the evidence gained as part of the regulation 25 consultation and is attached as Appendix B;
 - Paper 5C analysed the potential risks associated with failure to agree a favoured option and is attached at Appendix C; and
 - Paper 5D explained the support offered by the Planning Inspectorate and is attached as Appendix D.

The meeting also considered an update on late representations submitted since the close of the consultation period. This is attached as Appendix E.

4. Members of the Policy Group were informed that as part of the annual cycle of district council annual monitoring reports, the most recent housing completion information was reported since the technical consultation document was published. This showed that the city delivered historically high rates of housing completions and a significant increase in the city's housing commitment (made up of planning permissions and allocated housing sites). Also there had been a relatively high level of windfall developments in the rural area. Taken together, this means that the number of new additional homes required by allocation across the three districts could be reduced from 24,000 to 21,000 in the Norwich Policy Area. The housing requirement for the city would reduce to 3,000, while in Broadland the housing requirement would increase to 9,000 largely through an increase rate of housing delivery before 2026 in the Rackheath and Sprowston areas. The spatial distribution for the city and Broadland is consistent with the evidence in detailed studies and is in line with the clear preference from technical consultees for option 1.

5. Alternatives for the distribution of housing growth published in the technical consultation document were set out in options 1, 2 and 3. As outlined above, there is little difference between them for the areas of Norwich and Broadland. The main differences are in the South Norfolk area and South Norfolk Council proposed an option 2A as an alternative spatial distribution for their area. The combination of places for major growth would provide 21,000 additional dwellings in the Norwich Policy Area to 2026.
6. Although both Norwich and Broadland members expressed some reservations the GNDP Policy Group agreed to support this new alternative as the favoured option for housing distribution in the Norwich Policy Area to go forward for consultation:

Location	Number of dwellings to 2026
Norwich	3,000
Broadland smaller sites	2,000
South Norfolk smaller sites	1,800
North East (Sprowston/Rackheath area)	7,000
South West:	
Hethersett	1,000
Cringleford)	1,200
Wymondham	2,200
West (Costessey/Easton area)	1,000
Long Stratton	1,800
TOTAL	21,000

7. In addition, 2,000 dwellings were identified for the Mangreen, Swainsthorpe, Mulbarton and Swardeston area as an allocation from 2018. This would be in addition to the 21,000 housing requirement. There are significant challenges in bringing this proposal forward and this additional allocation is subject to further work on feasibility, and ensuring potential environmental, community and transportation impacts in Norwich are fully addressed.
8. All three options put forward for technical consultation have clear advantages and disadvantages and these are set out in the GNDP report. The proposed favoured option (option 2A) also has advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages are summarised as:

- The level of proposed growth at Long Stratton has the potential to deliver the bypass, which would be of benefit to the local community;
- A limited level of growth at Wymondham and Hethersett would have limited local impact, better respecting the existing character of these two settlements, and minimising the prospect of the settlements coalescing

along the A11 corridor;

- By avoiding concentration of development in the south-west, and reliance therefore upon the A11, the dependency upon major improvements to Thickthorn junction is reduced;
- Including Mangreen as an additional allocation adds robustness and flexibility to the strategy, once challenges to delivery are overcome.

Disadvantages are summarised as:

- This offers a more dispersed pattern of growth than that preferred to Broadland, which makes the delivery of infrastructure more challenging and arguably less efficient;
- Splitting growth between the A11 and A140 corridors is likely to require significant improvements to both junctions with the A47, potentially doubling the cost and although a new railway station at Mangreen is feasible, it is not yet known whether it would be viable, so it cannot be relied upon at this stage in the process;
- The full environmental and traffic impacts of public transport improvements to the A140 corridor have yet to be fully identified and are likely to be challenging. Initial work examining a high quality bus rapid transit from the Mangreen area into the city centre that has continuous and reliable bus priority measures on Ipswich Road suggests the potential for significant environmental, townscape and community impacts if two-way general traffic is to be maintained on this major regional route. These impacts must be investigated further;
- Delivery of a rapid bus transit service along the A11 corridor is less likely due to lower levels of growth;
- Education solutions were not readily identifiable - the low level of growth at Wymondham was insufficient to support a new high school, the existing high school is already at capacity with no scope to expand on its current site; Hethersett, Colney, Cringleford, Mulbarton/Swardeston sit within the Hethersett catchment and Hethersett High School was close to capacity;
- In option 2A if Mangreen does not grow above 2,000 dwellings it would not support a new high school there, putting pressure on existing schools, which would also not be improved due to the dispersed nature of growth in South Norfolk.

9. The GNDP report sets out a high level implementation plan for options 1, 2 and 3. A similar exercise has been carried out for the favoured option 2A and this suggests its costs would be higher than the previous three published options.

Option	Infrastructure cost (£M)	Final Dwelling Numbers (post 2026)	Cost per dwelling (£)
1	605.6	32,000	18,900
2	621.6	31,000	20,000
3	623.8	28,000	22,200
Favoured option	706m	30,700	23,000

10. The GNDP welcomed the offer from the Planning Inspectorate to carry out a review of evidence and soundness. Taking account of the benefits of such a review at a critical time, and having regard to the advice of the government office on this, the GNDP decided first to take account of feedback from the Inspectorate before proceeding to public consultation. The review would identify any potential weaknesses in the strategy that could undermine its 'soundness'. Following the review and the endorsement of the local planning authorities there will be a further meeting of the GNDP in February.
11. Members attention is drawn to a small number of late representations to the technical consultation. These are not included in the main GNDP report, but are attached to this report as appendix E.

GNDP decision

12. The GNDP Policy Group's resolution in respect of the Joint Core Strategy is noted here for the City Council's Executive to endorse formally. The meeting resolved to:
- (1) note the late representations submitted on the Joint Core Strategy following the close of the consultation period;
 - (2) note the risks identified in paper 5C;
 - (3) agree Option 2A (as circulated at the meeting and attached to this paper as Appendix F) as the single favoured option to go forward, noting the reservations and concerns expressed at the meeting. This is subject to:
 - (a) the endorsement of constituent planning authorities;
 - (b) the results of the Planning Inspectorate review giving confidence about the evidence base; and
 - (c) a further meeting of the GNDP policy group following the review to endorse. [The meeting was subsequently provisionally agreed to be held on Thursday 19 February 2009 at 1.00 p.m.]

Conclusion

13. The GNDP agreed a proposal for a way forward to progress the Joint Core Strategy. While there are a number of advantages, there are significant challenges to be overcome. These include the feasibility of high quality bus priority measures on the A140 between Mangreen and the city centre, which could impact significantly on environmental, townscape and community interests the city of Norwich.
14. As the Joint Core Strategy is being progressed by the GNDP on behalf of each local planning authority, the City Council has an interest in making sure the strategy is sound and deliverable. There are risks outlined in the GNDP report of failing to agree a single favoured strategy, or submitting a potentially unsound strategy. The Planning Inspectorate review will be one way to give continued confidence to the plan-making process.
15. The City Council is asked to endorse the GNDP's decision as set out above and, subject to the outcome of the Planning Inspectorate review of evidence and soundness, to agree the favoured option as the basis for full public consultation.
16. This will provide the basis for taking forward work on the Joint Core Strategy. The impact of approving the GNDP Policy Group resolution will be allow to preparation to proceed in accordance with the timetable set out in para 6.5 of paper 5A to the GNDP policy group albeit with an approximate 2 month delay.