

Report for Resolution

Report to Executive
25 November 2009

Report of Head of Transportation and Landscape

Subject Norwich Area Transportation Strategy Implementation Plan
Consultation Response

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to agree the city council's response to the current consultation on the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy Implementation Plan

Recommendations

Executive are recommended to support the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy Implementation Plan (NATS IP) in principle with the following specific comments on the details contained in the plan:

1. **City Centre.** The measures proposed for the city centre are welcomed but it is requested that the following issues / additions are included in the plan:
 - i. Access to disabled parking spaces
 - ii. Access for coaches, included drop off / collection facilities
 - iii. The minimization of the impact of vehicles in Tombland
 - iv. The closure of St Peters Street
 - v. The closure of Little Bethel Street
 - vi. A stated aim that all schemes will be developed with a sympathetic regard to streetscape, based on the adopted Streetscape Design Manual.
 - vii. Mitigation measures for the residential areas surrounding the city centre, as necessary.
2. **Walking and Cycling.** The standardisation of pedestrianisation times in the city centre and the provision of contra-flow cycling are fully supported but the following additions are requested:
 - i. The development of orbital cycle routes
 - ii. The inclusion of pedestrian facilities at all signalled junctions
3. **Bus Rapid Transit.** The principles of BRT are strongly supported and the opportunity to be involved in the development of the proposals is welcomed. It is requested that the following issues are considered as part of that the development:
 - i. The needs of cyclists
 - ii. The opportunity for green infrastructure improvements
4. **Bus and Rail.** The proposals for rail improvement are fully supported. Whilst recognising commercial considerations it would be desirable if possible to extend the operational times of park and ride.

5. **Northern Distributor Road (NDR).** The council reaffirms its support for the NDR but it is requested that those measures in the NATS IP that can be implemented ahead of the NDR are not delayed.
6. **Improving Traffic Flows.** While the need to do this is recognised, it should not be at the expense of other modes. The opportunity to be involved in the County wide deployment of the civil parking enforcement scheme is welcomed. It is requested that consideration be given to the following:
 - i. The streetscape impact of variable message signs

Executive are further recommended to ask Norfolk County Council to work closely with the city council to implement the measures within the city.

Financial Consequences

There are no direct financial consequences on the council. Norfolk County Council will be responsible for funding the majority of works proposed as part of the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy Implementation Plan through the Local Transport Plan and other Government funding, with contributions expected from developers as and when appropriate.

Risk Assessment

The main risk to the delivery of NATS concerns availability of funding. The strategy envisages a mixture of public and private sector funding will be necessary to allow all of the recommended measures to be delivered. Should the availability of anticipated funding be reduced or not come forward as quickly as predicted it may be necessary to review the Norwich Area Transportation Implementation Plan. Any such reviews would need to involve major stakeholders such as this council.

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 service plan priority of delivering the Local Transport Plan and sustainable transport options

Executive Member: Councillor Morrey - Sustainable City Development

Ward: All

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

Transport for Norwich A summary of our plans for the future: Consultation October 2009, Norfolk County Council

Report

Background

1. For many years, the county council has worked closely with the city council and with Broadland and South Norfolk Councils to develop and implement a Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS). The most recent version of NATS was adopted in 2004 and it is the fourth NATS strategy to cover the Greater Norwich Area. NATS is a key element of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) which enables the predicted growth in the greater Norwich area.
2. Norfolk County Council has recently been working in conjunction with the council on an Implementation Plan for the current NATS strategy (NATS IP). It is now carrying out a consultation on that plan. The following paragraphs present a suggested council response to the consultation.

In the City

3. The changes in the traffic circulation in the city are welcomed, with more road space being given over to buses, increasing their permeability through the city centre and creating direct routes where buses are given an advantage over private cars. The increase in bus and access only streets will present the opportunity to augment the number of bus stops in the centre, to the advantage of passengers.
4. Particularly welcome is the suggested closure of Westlegate, the removal of general traffic from St Stephens Street and the creation of a two-way bus and access only route along Chapelfield North. The former will provide an ideal opportunity to regenerate the St Stephens and Westlegate area, while the latter will provide Chapelfield service traffic with a direct route to and from the Inner Ring Road, removing the need for it to travel through the city centre. It will also greatly enhance the pedestrian experience in Rampant Horse Street, with only buses being allowed to use this section of the network, and will provide the opportunity for better integration between the St Stephens shopping area and The Walk and the Market. These measures form a key part of the recently published St Stephens Area masterplan. We urge the County Council to work with the council to implement a high quality scheme for the closure of Westlegate, which has the vocal support of local businesses, in financial year 2010/11.
5. The NATS IP contains the principles of the schemes that are to be developed in the future, and at this stage, it is not possible to include details of the proposals. However, the needs of specific groups should not be forgotten as part of the development of the implementation plan. The needs of disabled people in particular should be taken into account. While the removal of general traffic from the heart of the main shopping areas is to be welcomed, there will, for example, need to be consideration of the effect of this on on-street disabled parking in the city centre for example.
6. Another issue that has not been addressed as part of the NATS IP is coach access to the city centre. This is a key factor in promoting tourism in Norwich,

and the issues associated with Little Bethel Street have limited the number of drop off/collection points in the city. The proposal for two way bus and access traffic on Chapelfield North will be of major benefit for coaches, making access to the Theatre and Tourist Information Office easier.

7. There are two areas where NATS IP could be more ambitious. One of these is Tombland. This is one of the key tourist areas in the city and the historic nature of the area has been compromised by the current alignment of the road. It also suffers from having one of the highest road casualty rates in Norwich. Whilst accepting the difficulties in achieving access to car parks in the city centre, if Tombland is not available for general traffic it is strongly suggested that traffic management coupled to significant public space improvements are needed to reduce the impact of the motor vehicles, improve safety and to enhance the environment.
8. Secondly, current works to the war memorial on St Peters Street would be further enhanced by the closure of the road, to enable a civic square to be created in front of City Hall, overlooking the market and castle. Traffic in the area could be managed by making either St Giles or Bethel Street two way.
9. It is also suggested that the closure of Little Bethel Street is also taken forward as part of the NATS IP. Members may be aware of the recent ongoing issues created by unsuitable vehicles using the street, and the Highways Agency Committee has recognised that the long term solution is the closure of the street. The creation of the two way access route along Chapelfield North would enable this.
10. Changes to traffic circulation and junction layouts in the city centre will inevitably have an impact on the streetscape. When developing the detailed proposals for the suggested changes, the impact on streetscape will require careful and sensitive consideration, based on the approaches in the adopted Streetscape Design Manual (2006). This is important where changes could affect listed buildings, such as the Chapelfield North proposals.
11. Whilst the changes to the city centre are welcomed, the consultation lacks any detail about the effect (if any) the changes in the city centre would have on the residential areas between the Inner and Outer Ring Roads. It would be helpful for the County Council to share the modelling work that they have recently undertaken so that both councils can work together to mitigate any adverse effects.

Cycling and Walking

12. Walking and cycling is given prominence in both national guidance and NATS and it is therefore disappointing that few firm proposals to enhance these modes have been included in the NATS IP.
13. The radial nature of the core cycle network shown ignores the need for orbital routes around the city, connecting key destinations such as the UEA, Hospital, the Airport, Broadland Business Park and City College. Indeed, there are no links to the latter two shown in the plan. It therefore suggested that further work is required to develop the cycle network.

14. On a positive note, the desire to standardise any cycling times in the pedestrianised areas in the city centre is fully supported. To this end, as part of the council's Local Transport Plan funding bid to NHAC that is due to be considered tomorrow, (26th Nov), funding is being sought from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) to take forward such a scheme in 2010/11.
15. Another welcome element is the proposal in principle to provide contra-flow cycling on all one way streets. Until now, this has been difficult to achieve, as each location has to be individually authorised by the Department for Transport. It is understood that in the near future the need for such authorisation will be removed.
16. It is also suggested that in a bid to promote further walking that it becomes standard practice for all signalled junctions to include a pedestrian phase in the sequence. While acknowledging that signalled junctions tend to be on the busiest routes and therefore there may be capacity concerns at some locations, it is the very fact that they are so busy that is a disincentive to pedestrians to attempt to use them.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

17. The council fully supports any measures to improve the travelling experience for bus passengers in the city and the provision of high quality BRT routes is welcomed. It will be important however to ensure that the benefits of BRT are extended to all users, including those living within the built-up area rather than only to residents living outside or at the edge of the city.
18. The use of new technologies to remove the need to purchase a ticket on boarding a bus is welcomed. The reduction in dwell times that this could achieve could help reduce costs and give greater flexibility to plan stopping arrangements on BRT routes.
19. It is acknowledged that at this stage, the BRT concept is still in its infancy and it will be important for the council to be involved in its development. One key role the city will have to play is through the provision of bus shelters which the council is responsible for.
20. Until now in Norwich, it has been the norm for cyclists to share bus lanes. In some areas, notably Newmarket Road, this has proved to be an issue in terms of bus reliability, as buses are unable to overtake cyclists due to the restricted width of the bus lane. However, it is unlikely to be practical, let alone desirable, to remove cyclists from such lanes. Therefore, it is sensible that routes are designed with shared bus and cycle lanes of sufficient width to accommodate both modes effectively wherever possible.
21. The BRT corridors are the strategic routes into the city and as such are of primary importance for promoting the image of the city. Norwich is notable for being a green city, and it is suggested that these routes form a key part of the green infrastructure of the city. Such an approach is already being adopted on the Dereham Road corridor as part of GNDP emerging proposals.
22. To provide the high quality routes aspired to there is almost certainly going to be an impact on street trees and on-street parking. It will be important to avoid

such effects wherever possible and where unavoidable to implement complimentary mitigation measures such as replacement planting.

Bus and Rail

23. The council is firmly committed to supporting improved rail links to and from the city, particularly on the London and Cambridge routes, as they will be of considerable benefit to economic development of the city. Therefore, the NATS IP proposals for rail travel should be fully supported and the City Council will lobby hard for the improvements to be made.
24. Norwich has the highest number of park and ride spaces of any city in the country, and the network of sites is a valuable resource in removing traffic from the city centre. However, it is important that the pricing of park and ride is carefully planned, linking into the pricing of other off-street parking and transport costs more generally. Some work to integrate these pricing issues has recently commenced between the two councils recognising, as well, the financial pressures to meet service and wider council costs.

Northern Distributor Route (NDR)

25. The council has previously stated its support for the NDR and this support remains, as it is believed that the NDR is an important to the future prosperity of the city. The council's support is conditional and publication of NATS IP is a welcome step in meeting those conditions. A copy of the Council Motion indicating it's support is attached as appendix 1.
26. Whilst accepting that some elements of the NATS IP are not feasible until a NDR is constructed, others would be. Given the timescale for delivering the NDR, it is desirable that these latter elements are not consequently stalled, particularly the closure of Westlegate and other city centre measures that are critical for delivering the St Stephens masterplan and the regeneration benefits that it would deliver.
27. It is essential that residential areas are protected from through traffic using unsuitable roads and the NDR will play a part in delivering this.

Improving Traffic Flows

28. While the need to keep traffic moving is essential to the economic well being of the city, it must be viewed in the wider context of transport infrastructure and the desire for modal shift. This will be increasingly important in the future with the emphasis in LTP3 on carbon reduction. For this reason, there needs to be a compromise between the needs of all transport users.
29. The desire for increased use of Variable Message Signs (VMS) is supported. However, while this can be of benefit, the streetscape intrusion of the large signs needs to be judged against the benefits that they provide.
30. The enforcement of parking restrictions to ensure the free flow of traffic on strategic routes is one where the council performs a key role. The increased emphasis of such activity which could also be rolled out into other areas such as bus lane enforcement is supported. Extension of such enforcement in the

NATS area outside the council boundary is also welcome and the council is pleased to have the opportunity to work with the County Council on the wider implementation of civil parking enforcement in the rest of the county.

How and When Will it Happen

31. The NATS IP is crucial for providing sound transport infrastructure to take Norwich forward to the future. As stated previously the council is committed to the NDR and recognises the importance it plays in delivering the complete NATS IP. However many benefits of the NATS IP can be achieved ahead of the NDR and the County Council is urged to implement these in a timely fashion. In all cases, the most significant constraint is likely to be funding. Whereas the NATS IP makes realistic assumptions about future funding circumstances could change requiring further review. It is important that key stakeholders are involved in any such review work.

Conclusions

32. The future of the city is dependent on there being a robust transport infrastructure in order to deliver the growth that is expected in the area and to secure the economic well being of the city.
33. It is acknowledged that Norfolk is a rural community, and the reliance on the private car in rural areas is inevitable. However, within the city, with good walking and cycling infrastructure, a modern public transport infrastructure and the extensive network of park and ride sites the need to rely on private cars in the future is diminished.
34. The City Council welcomes the proposals in NATS IP and with the inclusion of some additions suggested in the report, believes it is it forms the sound basis for the future of transport in Norwich.
35. The City Council would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the County Council to implement the proposals contained within the NATS IP.

1. MOTION – NORTHERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

Councillor Morpew moved and Councillor Morrey seconded the motion.

RESOLVED, with 22 voting for, 1 against, and 12 abstentions, that:-

“This Council:

- notes that development of jobs and homes is crucial for the prosperity of the city and the wellbeing of those who live here now and will make their homes here in the future;
- recognises that it is important to provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure that we provide not just homes and jobs but create new and enhance existing communities to provide a high quality of life.

To that end Council resolves to:

- (1) confirm its commitment to the Norwich Area Transport Strategy (NATS) and support for the Northern Distributor Road that is a key part of the NATS strategy. The NDR is an essential part of creating access to locations suitable for sustainable expansion and providing an opportunity to deal with many of the traffic problems faced by city residents.
- (2) confirm the importance of the other NATS measures to improve and enable growth in the urban area and urban extensions, i.e:
 - Improved public transport including high quality services and priority measures;
 - Reduction of traffic speeds in residential areas
 - Walking and cycling infrastructure;
 - Improvements in the City Centre; and
 - Protection of residential areas.

and these should either be delivered where possible before the NDR is built or delivered as part of an integrated programme alongside the NDR and not left as a promise that might remain unfulfilled.

- (3) support the assurances being sought from the GNDP that projects which deliver non NDR measures in NATS will be given equal consideration for funding (e.g. through the Integrated Development Programme).
- (4) recognise the critical importance of other infrastructure investment and therefore support the policy of the Executive in pursuing priority for other infrastructure measures to ensure that the needs

of residents in new and existing communities are addressed through the Greater Norwich Development Partnership such as:

- skills education and training (including schools);
- community provision – including leisure centres, sports facilities, allotments etc
- green infrastructure including open spaces;
- cultural facilities; and
- emergency and medical services.”