

Report to Sustainable development panel

Item

30 November 2016

Report of Head of planning services

4

Subject Greater Norwich Local Plan update

Purpose

To report progress made on the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

Recommendation

- (1) to note progress made on the Greater Norwich Local Plan;
- (2) taking account of GNDP member feedback on the report's contents, to note, and comment as appropriate, on the appended report to the Greater Norwich Development Partnership considered on 14 November, including:
 - (a) The proposed GNLP objectives (section 3);
 - (b) The sites submitted to date (section 4)
 - (c) The approach to assessing strategic scales of development, the sectors being assessed and the initial outputs of the assessment (section 5)
 - (d) The issues raised in relation to the settlement hierarchy (section 6)
 - (e) The GNLP issues paper in the light of outputs of the stakeholder forums (section 7); and
 - (f) The direction of travel for area wide policies (section 8).

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority to provide a prosperous and vibrant city and the service plan priority to produce a local plan.

Financial implications

The local plan is funded from existing budgets.

Ward/s: All Wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Bremner – Environment and sustainable development

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

Introduction

1. Members will be aware that progress on the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is now well underway and that the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) has recently been re-constituted to advise the Partnership's authorities on the production of the plan. The plan is being prepared by a dedicated team of professional planning staff made up of members of staff from Norwich City, Broadland, South Norfolk and Norfolk County councils, based at County Hall.
2. The latest GNDP meeting on 14 November 2016 took place in advance of this panel and its counterparts, and included a comprehensive progress report on the plan. South Norfolk members have already considered the GNDP progress report and Broadland are due to consider it on 13 December. The report and minutes of the previous meeting in September are attached as Appendix 1, together with a supplementary note submitted at the meeting.

Main issues presented in the appended progress report

3. A number of different strands of work being progressed for the Greater Norwich Local Plan are described in the report in sections 3 to 8 and were discussed in depth at the meeting. The main elements are set out below, alongside a brief summary of feedback from GNDP board members received on each. Official minutes of the meeting will be published in due course. The report also includes minor revisions to the partnership's Terms of Reference (section 9) and Next Steps for the GNLP (section 10).

General feedback

4. GNDP members were very keen to stress that **the plan should have a significant focus on both local and strategic infrastructure** and that it should **reflect any progress on a Western Link Road** (connecting the A1067 Fakenham Road with the A47 across the Wensum valley).

The proposed GNDP objectives (Section 3).

5. The plan's draft objectives will help contribute to the development of an overall vision for the plan, the formulation of policies and a framework for monitoring them. Considerable discussion ensued at the meeting. **GNDP feedback: Members felt that there was a need for the objectives to be revisited and rewritten to make them more sharply focused, including a greater emphasis on infrastructure and delivery.**

Response to the Call for Sites (Section 4).

6. This outlines the response to the GNLP "Call for Sites" exercise which ran from May to July 2016, inviting developers and landowners to put forward sites for consideration and potential inclusion in the GNLP for prospective development by 2036. The sites were published for information on the GNLP website on 4 November. To date over 500 prospective sites have been submitted totalling about 3,850 hectares of land and including land for housing, retail and commercial uses, mixed use development and open space. It is clear that significantly more land has been proposed through the

Call for Sites than will be required to meet the objectively assessed need for new homes in the Norwich area by 2036 set out in the Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

7. The great majority of the sites submitted for consideration are outside the City boundary, with only 50 hectares of land proposed in Norwich, some of which land is already allocated for development in the existing Norwich Site Allocations Plan adopted in 2014. Notwithstanding the limited number of new sites put forward for consideration in the city, it should be noted that existing planning permissions and local plan allocations already provide for over 7000 new homes to be built in Norwich by 2026. As is noted in the GNDP report, no assessment of any the prospective sites has yet been undertaken, so no conclusions can, or should, be drawn at this stage on their suitability. The assessment of suitability and deliverability is to be undertaken over the coming weeks through the mechanism of a *Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment* (HELAA). **GNDP feedback: Members made it clear that officers should not restrict their considerations to the sites that have been submitted through the Call for Sites and should seek out sites which can help to deliver strategic objectives. Members also emphasised that there is a need to ensure there is sufficient land for employment as well as housing.**
8. Member concerns on this issue are acknowledged. Officers agree that part of the HELAA exercise it will be important to assess the continued suitability for development of existing permitted and allocated sites for housing and other purposes as well as the new ones submitted through the Call for Sites. The HELAA will also need to identify additional development capacity in the Norwich urban area in order to maximise the potential of brownfield land for redevelopment, which is one of the key elements of the proposed strategy for growth. This would mean, for example, factoring in the significant additional potential for new housing from the emerging proposals being progressed in the northern city centre (which are no longer identified specifically in the now expired Northern City Centre Area Action Plan) and schemes in other locations which have not yet reached the stage of formal planning application.

An assessment of the options for strategic-scale growth in Greater Norwich (Section 5).

9. This section outlined the high-level, preliminary assessment of the potential for strategic-scale growth (1000 dwellings plus) at 22 settlements and sectors in Greater Norwich. 11 locations were assessed as likely to be suitable or potentially suitable for small scale strategic growth, five locations were assessed as being potentially suitable for larger scale strategic growth and 10 locations were assessed as unsuitable for strategic scale growth. Further work is anticipated to refine the analysis and identify potential locations for smaller scale growth in the light of ongoing evidence gathering. **GNDP feedback: Members requested that when the next stage of analysis is undertaken to take account of ongoing evidence collection, analysis should be more forward thinking. This includes taking greater account of the impact of planned and potential infrastructure, in particular the completed NDR, the Long Stratton By-pass and (as noted above) any progress on a Western Link Road.**

Review of the current Settlement Hierarchy (Section 6)

10. The existing settlement hierarchy set out in the adopted Joint Core Strategy identifies the Norwich Urban Area at the top of the hierarchy as the most accessible and sustainable location in Greater Norwich where the majority of services and facilities are concentrated, followed by Main Towns, Key Service Centres, Service Villages and Other Villages. The paper identifies a number of areas for review including the expansion of the urban area, reclassification of certain locations as main towns and reviewing the role of other villages. **GNDP feedback: A number of members expressed the view that the settlement hierarchy should be considered until draft objectives (see section 3) had been finalised.**

Stakeholder Workshops (Section 7)

11. Four topic based Stakeholder Workshops (on the themes of economy, environment, transport and housing) and two further workshops for parish councils in Broadland and South Norfolk were held in September to inform the ongoing development of the GNLP. The workshops acted as a forum for discussion, seeking to present and distil the broad issues identified for the emerging plan, bring out and elicit any further issues that might have been overlooked, explore any areas of concern and stimulate debate amongst a wide range of stakeholders. **GNDP feedback: particular debate ensued under this item in relation to the Norwich Policy Area (NPA)¹. A supplementary paper on this issue was submitted and a further report was requested on this issue at a GNDP meeting to be arranged in January. Members agreed the criteria that were proposed to be covered in the January paper, these being: economic development; infrastructure provision; meeting housing needs; the strategic role of the NPA given that the GNLP includes site allocations; land supply; housing delivery; accessing funding; assessing windfall planning applications; NPA boundaries if retained. Members emphasised that the report should be a technical evidence based report including consideration of the SHMA and Travel to Work and commuting areas.**

Progress on Area Wide Policies (Section 8)

12. This details initial work undertaken to review/amend the area-wide policies of the JCS and states that further work will be reported to councillors in March 2017. It covers elements such as climate change, energy and renewable energy, housing and access and transportation. **GNDP feedback: There was no significant member feedback on this item.**

Conclusions and Next Steps

13. These are as set out in Section 10 of the appended report.

¹ The **Norwich Policy Area** is defined in the current adopted Joint Core Strategy for planning purposes as *“Part of the county which is centred on and strongly influenced by the presence of Norwich as a centre for employment, shopping and entertainment, generally comprising the fringe and first ring of large villages around the city of Norwich, but extending to Long Stratton and Wymondham”*.

Greater Norwich Local Plan Progress Report November 14th 2016 – Correction and Supplementary Note

Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Progress Report being considered by members today state:

7.3 Members views on the issues raised in the Issues Paper, in the context of the outcome of the stakeholder workshops, are welcomed.

7.4 A particular issue raised at the September GNDP Board related to whether the Norwich Policy Area should be retained in the GNLP. It is proposed that this issue should be addressed through a specific report to be considered by the GNDP Board in January 2017 and subsequently by the relevant panels/committees at the three authorities.

Correction: Replace “addressed” in 7.4 with “investigated”.

Feedback from the Stakeholder Forums

The Issues Paper for the Stakeholder Workshops referred to in section 7 of the report covered policy approaches to managing the distribution of growth across the three districts, including consideration of whether the Norwich Policy Area (NPA) should be retained in the GNLP.

As the absence of a direct reference to the NPA in paragraph 7.2 and Appendix 8 of the November 14th 2016 GNLP Progress Report shows, there was very limited direct debate concerning the NPA itself at the forums. However, as the first bullet point of paragraph 7.2 of the report states, there was considerable discussion on the linked issue of the merits of concentration or dispersal of development. There were arguments both for more dispersal of growth and for continuing to concentrate the majority of growth around Norwich. Many felt that the plan should promote a balanced mix of both, with local employment opportunities.

Potential NPA criteria for the January report

Potential criteria for the January report to assess the NPA are:

Economic development; Infrastructure provision; Meeting housing needs; The strategic role of the NPA given that the GNLP includes site allocations; Land supply; Housing delivery; Accessing funding; Assessing windfall planning applications; NPA boundaries if retained.

Members’ views on whether these are the appropriate criteria for the report are welcomed.