



Sustainable development panel

Date: Tuesday, 22 June 2021

Time: 16:00

Venue: Remote access and live streaming

Committee members:

Councillors:

Carlo
Davis
Everett
Giles
Grahame
Lubbock
Maxwell
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Agenda

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- 1 **Appointment of chair and vice chair**

To appoint a chair and vice chair for the ensuing civic year
- 2 **Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence
- 3 **Declarations of interest**

(Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting)
- 4 **Minutes** 5 - 10

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021
- 5 **Article 4 Direction to Remove Permitted Development Rights for the Conversion of Offices to Residential** 11 - 24

Purpose - To update members on the introduction of an article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of offices to residential within Norwich city centre.
- 6 **Submission of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP)** 25 - 28

Purpose - To update members on the progress made with the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) which is now approaching submission stage, and to enable members to provide comments on the GNLP papers to inform members attending the Greater Norwich Development Partnership on 24 June as well as informing discussion of the submission GNLP at cabinet on 7 July.
- 7 **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan** 29 - 32

Purpose - To give members an opportunity to comment on Norfolk County Council's consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Norwich

8 **East Norwich Masterplan Update**

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Purpose - To provide a progress update for members on the East Norwich masterplan, including ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, and key timescales for masterplan production.

Date of publication: **Tuesday, 15 June 2021**

Sustainable Development Panel**09:00 to 11:00****18 March 2021**

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair) Maguire (vice chair), Carlo, Giles, Grahame, Lubbock, Maxwell and Stutely

Apologies: Councillor Davis

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021.

3. East Norwich Masterplan Update

(Martyn Saunders (director of planning and regeneration, Avison Young) (the lead consultant), Tracey Coleman (project manager, Norwich City Council) and Amy Dunham (project assistant, Norwich City Council) attended the meeting for this item.)

The planning policy team leader presented the report.

The project manager and project assistant introduced themselves and explained their roles, which included working closely with the planning policy team, consultants and members of the East Norwich Partnership and the council. A site visit would be arranged for members of the panel.

Martyn Saunders said that Avison Young (the lead consultant) specialised in urban development and regeneration and had a highly skilled multi-disciplined team that would work with stakeholders to deliver the project. The masterplan would need to be deliverable and the net cost for all design options would be subject to independent consultation with the RPS Group, one of the sub-consultants. The consultants were currently working on the engagement strategy and gathering information to identify what the public's aspirations and expectations were for the development and regeneration of East Norwich.

Members of the panel then had an opportunity to ask officers and Martyn Saunders questions on the East Norwich project.

A member said that she was not a ward councillor for the area but that she considered that the aspirations for social integration, green spaces and healthy lifestyles as set out in the vision statement could be achieved by ensuring that 20mph speed limits were integral part of the shared spaces of this scheme. The chair confirmed that the aspiration of 20mph speed restrictions was a city council policy and would be built into this new development.

Councillor Grahame (Thorpe Hamlet ward councillor) asked about the calculation of 6,000 jobs on the site, and the mitigation for the risk of flood amidst rising sea levels. The planning policy team leader said that the figure of 6,000 was the potential capacity for employment on the site, which was set out in the vision statement as a starting point and would be challenged or refined as part of the masterplan development process. Flood risk was an important issue on this site and the team at Norfolk County Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) would be involved in the development of the masterplan. Martyn Saunders acknowledged that there were a number of technical challenges, or opportunities, to the development of this site and that the process would be assessment, followed by mitigation in terms of technical solutions, before any urban design. This meant that open spaces and water storage would be part of the development and make the economic growth offer on the site distinct in terms of health and well-being, and sustainability from the city centre and Broadland Business Park.

In reply to a question from a member, the chair pointed out that the concept of traffic neutrality was outside the scope of the regeneration of East Norwich, which fulfilled the council's wider objectives of provision of homes and employment for people in Norwich, whilst managing private car usage. The planning policy team leader said that the project had wider environmental implications and that it was important to include Whitlingham Charitable Trust and the Crown Point Estate as stakeholders. She said that there were concerns that river taxis were unviable and these had not been included in the project brief but could be discussed at the stakeholders' group. The panel noted that the project was still in its very early stages, with partners being brought in and work currently being undertaken on the delivery objectives of the scheme.

Martyn Saunders answered members' questions on the sustainability of the scheme and said that the masterplan would need to stand the test of time in regard to carbon reduction to net zero, biodiversity gains and flooding. This included the elements around the reuse of existing buildings, for example, Carrow House, balanced with new development, with the opportunity to build in clean power generation into the design. Sustainability was at the heart of the masterplan, which would provide a site specific plan for East Norwich and was an important part of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) that would provide plans to decarbonise this area, subject to viability on what could be achieved and delivered. In reply to a member's concern about the thoroughness of the ecological survey for the Western Link, Martyn Saunders thanked the member for the information and said that he would look at that and assured members that Hydrock would be the technical lead on environmental issues. A member pointed out that zero carbon added costs to the viability of construction and asked for a longer pay back period to be taken into consideration. Whilst it was not possible to give a fixed answer to this question on carbon zero payback, Martyn Saunders said that alternative models for delivery would be considered for the best mechanism for paying back the extra costs. This would also depend on whether the properties were rented out either privately or to a registered

social landlord, where the landlord could consider it as a long term investment, or where properties were sold and the seller was not worried about the pay back. Options could include a special energy company created and supported by the local authority.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) thank Martyn Saunders, Tracey Coleman and Amy Dunham for attending the meeting;
- (2) note the report and ask members with additional questions to contact Judith Davison, planning team leader.

4. Revised Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF)

The planner (policy) presented the report and explained the changes to the document, which needs to be kept up to date to take account of changing circumstance, changes to national policy and to ensure the Duty to Co-operate continued to be discharged.

During discussion, a member expressed her concern that this policy document could not be amended at this stage, as she was concerned about the government's endorsement of Free ports and the use of fossil fuels; and, that there was no reference in the document to the reuse of materials. The planning policy team leader explained that the NSPF was an important document for the GNLP that set out the co-operation of the local planning authorities in Norfolk as required through the Duty to Co-operate. It was acknowledged that some parts of the strategy could be strengthened but that the document presented was a compromise with the other Norfolk authorities. The panel had reviewed the NSPF in 2018 and 2019, and noted that the section on climate change had been strengthened. A member noted that there needed to be more about speed reduction in the document to ensure that it was carried out across the county, especially as walking and cycling provided health benefits to combat obesity and improve life expectancy. The chair pointed out that the city council had influenced the strategy but it was frustrating that there could not be more agreement. The government had announced its investment in buses but this was ironic as most of the district councils supported the use of private vehicles, considering that electric vehicles would reduce carbon emissions. The planning policy team leader pointed out that the joint strategy reflected the minimum level of agreement across all the authorities.

A member expressed concern the GNLP would not pass the test of soundness on climate change because of the lack of alignment of policy and strategy between the partner authorities on this issue, and that by the time the plan was produced, it would be out of date because of changes to the NPPF. The planning policy team leader said that she was not aware of what the specific soundness issues were, and noted that the GNLP team was involved in the development of the climate change report. The planner (policy) said that she would raise these concerns with the GNLP team and pointed out that there would be evidence related to addressing climate change to support the GNLP.

RESOLVED to endorse the changes to the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework, and requested that some reservations noted above about the extent to which the document addresses issues including energy efficiency, the circular economy, climate change, sustainable transport and healthy lifestyle objectives are considered further in the next iteration of the document.

5. Right to Regenerate Consultation

The senior planner (policy) presented the report. The council had submitted a response to the consultation by the original submission date of 13 March, reserving the right to make further comments. The consultation had subsequently extended to 20 March. The chair confirmed that he had signed off the consultation response.

The panel then considered and commented on the council's responses to the consultation, as set out in the report. The panel agreed to oppose the government's *Right to Regenerate* as it was ideologically driven and not evidence based, and it did not tackle the issue of private landowners not bringing forward development until land values had increased. The senior planner (policy) referred to the response to Q3 and explained that there was no clarification of the definition of "unused" or "underused" in the consultation document. Members considered that clarity on this point would be useful as it was questionable as to whether it applied to an underused park for instance.

During discussion, Councillor Stutely asked for clarification on the response to Q9. He had been present at the cabinet portfolio holder's briefing and had requested that community groups should have the right of first refusal, even if the request came from a private company. The senior planner (policy) agreed to add it.

RESOLVED to agree the contents of the Norwich City Council's response to the *Right to Regenerate* consultation, subject to the amendment to the response to Q9 to enable community groups to be given the right of first refusal to purchase land on the open market when the request has been made by the community group or a private company.

6. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Model Design Code Consultation

The senior planner (policy) presented the report.

The panel considered the draft consultation responses set out in Appendix 1.

The panel agreed to strengthen the council response to Chapter 2, to include climate change and the legal target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Another member suggested that the interim target of carbon reduction by 68 per cent by 2030 should be included. The chair suggested that officers considered this in the response.

In reply to a member's question, the senior planner (policy) explained that the council had not responded on the chapter on the Greenbelt because the council did not currently have a Greenbelt, although there were references to issues relating to green infrastructure and the natural environment within other chapters of the NPPF.

The senior planner (policy) explained that the council strongly objected to the proposed changes to Chapter 4 as the proposed wording could prevent the introduction of an Article 4 direction to prevent the uncontrolled loss of offices to residential across the city centre.

The senior planner (policy) explained that the council did not support Chapter 5 because the proposed type of affordable housing did not meet local needs for social rented housing.

Members did not have any questions of the design and conservation manager in relation to the proposed response for Q15, National Model Design Code consultation.

RESOLVED to approve the Norwich City Council response to the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Model Design Code Consultation.

7. Five Year Land Supply Statement 2019-20

The planning policy team leader said that there had been a delay in the production of the Five Year Land Supply Statement and it was not available yet on the Greater Norwich Growth Board's website. The figure was 6.16 years for 2019-20, which was good news as this meant that the Greater Norwich planning authorities would retain control over planning decision-making for new housing.

Members commented that a copy of the statement would be useful when commenting on the GNLP Regulation 19 consultation.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the report;
- (2) circulate a copy of the five year statement to members of the panel.

CHAIR

Report to	Sustainable Development Panel	Item
	22 June 2021	
Report of	Executive Director, Development and City Services	5
Subject	Article 4 Direction to Remove Permitted Development Rights for the Conversion of Offices to Residential	

Purpose

To update members on the introduction of an article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of offices to residential within Norwich city centre.

Recommendation

To recommend to cabinet that the council proceeds with the introduction of a non-immediate Article 4 direction, and that:

- 1) delegated authority be given to the executive director of development and city services, in consultation with the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth, to make an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of offices to residential within Norwich city centre;
- 2) if the government change the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to require Article 4 directions to be limited to situations where this is necessary to protect an interest of national significance, delegated authority should be given to cease its introduction without having to seek further authority from cabinet.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority “A prosperous and vibrant city” and the service plan priority to implement the local plan for the city.

Financial implications

There will be a financial cost associated with the required publicity for introducing an Article 4 direction. It is expected that this will be met from existing budgets. The Ramidus study was funded through Towns Deal funding.

Ward/s: Mancroft, Lakenham, Town Close, Thorpe Hamlet

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard - Sustainable and inclusive growth

Contact officers

Judith Davison, Planning Policy Team Leader

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Background documents

The impact of the Covid pandemic on the office market, with reference to the City of Norwich, Ramidus (May 2021)

Report

Context

1. In July 2020, a report was presented to the Sustainable Development Panel to seek views on the need and possible introduction of an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of offices to residential within Norwich city centre. Members unanimously voted in favour of recommending to Cabinet that the council proceeds with the introduction of a non-immediate Article 4 Direction. The report from that meeting (sustainable development panel, 22 July 2020) can be found [here](#) along with the minutes of that meeting which can be read [here](#).
2. Following this decision officers proceeded with drafting the direction, producing maps and writing the cabinet report. However before the item was discussed at cabinet new legislation took affect which unfortunately meant that the council had to delay making the direction. A brief summary of the relevant changes are set out below.
3. On 1 September 2020 changes were made to the Use Class Order. Three new use classes were introduced which replaced a number of previous use classes. One of the new use classes is Class E (commercial, business and service). Class E now includes shops, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes, B1(a) offices, gyms, healthcare, day nurseries/ childcare so class B1(a) offices has now fallen away.
4. Whilst changes had been made to the Use Class Order in September 2020, the relevant legislation which allowed offices to change use to residential without the need for full planning permission was still Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Class O referenced “*change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within **Class B1(a) (offices)** of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order*”. However the amendments to the Use Class Order which were introducing on 1 September 2020 effectively revoked class B1(a) which meant that the Class O right would become meaningless after the transitional period. Until the General Permitted Development Order was also amended we did not know what would replace Class O and there was nothing therefore that we could refer to in an Article 4 direction. Based on the advice from NPLaw, unless the Council was willing to pay compensation (which could potentially be huge), the earliest it would be possible to withdraw office to residential conversion Permitted Development rights with an Article 4 direction would be 12 months after the Class O replacement/amendment comes into effect.
5. A report was brought to SD panel on 1 October 2020 setting out the implications of the changes in legislation and this report can be found [here](#) and the minutes of the meeting are available [here](#). Members of the panel agreed to delay the introduction of the article 4 direction until further details of the changes to the General Permitted Development Order were known.

Recent changes to legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework

6. On 21 April 2021 an amendment to the General Permitted Development Order came into force. A new class (Class MA) has been introduced which allows uses falling within Class E (commercial, business and service) to change to residential without the need for planning permission from 1 August 2021. There are a number of conditions to this including that buildings must be vacant for a period of at least 3 months immediately prior to the date of the application for prior approval and that the floorspace of the existing building shall not exceed 1,500 square metres.
7. Whilst this new MA class now provides clarity, it also causes concern to officers as this confirms that the government still intends to allow changes of use from offices to residential but it also now allows all Class E uses (including retail, financial and professional services, food and drink, businesses, medical and health services, creches and leisure uses) to change to residential without the need for full planning permission which has the potential to significantly impact upon our city centre.
8. Furthermore it should be noted that the government has recently consulted on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and one of the proposed changes concerns Article 4 directions. The government is considering changing the wording of paragraph 53 of the NPPF. Currently article 4 directions should be limited to situations where this is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area but it is proposed to change this to only allow article 4 directions to be made where they are limited to situations where this is essential to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impact or be limited to situations where this is necessary in order to protect an interest of national significance. The government also intends to set out that they should apply to the smallest geographical area possible.
9. The government has not yet published its response to the consultation so there is no indication of when or if changes will be made to the NPPF and if changes are made which of the options they would bring forward. However this does show the government's intention to reduce the level of control Local Planning Authorities will have, and could potentially make article 4 directions much harder or near impossible to introduce in the future.
10. Whilst changes to legislation now mean that we can proceed with the introduction of a non-immediate article 4 direction, due to the uncertainty presented by possible changes to the NPPF, officers have sought legal advice on whether we can still proceed with the introduction of the article 4 direction at this time. NPLaw advised that due to the timing of making of the direction and bearing in mind proposed changes to the NPPF which may make it harder to introduce article 4 directions, it is not without risk of failure. Notwithstanding this they have set out that provided that the officer's report makes Members aware of the risk, it is worth proceeding if the evidence still supports the approach.

11. Officers also contacted Ramidus to provide an update to their study and the information base. Effectively this ensures that the evidence base is updated first to address the issue of whether the COVID pandemic is likely to affect the requirement for office space in the city and that the figures in respect to the loss of office space is up to date. The findings of this are set out in the following section.

Updated evidence base

12. Ramidus were commissioned in 2020 to produce a report looking into Norwich office accommodation and as part of this was asked to advise on the need for an article 4 direction. A copy of this report can be found [here](#) and based on their advice that an article 4 direction was urgently needed we decided to proceed with introducing one. However, since this study was undertaken in July 2020, the office economy has largely been functioning with people working from home. This has led to much speculation as to whether there is still a need for office accommodation with some commentators suggesting that this could be the end of offices as we know them.
13. We have therefore approached Ramidus to provide a supplementary note to their report, specifically looking at how things have changed in the past 14 months and to give their thoughts on the impact of COVID on the office market, particularly in Norwich.
14. This short report entitled 'The impact of the Covid pandemic on the office market, with reference to the city of Norwich' forms a background document to this report and the main findings are summarised below:
 - Covid has demonstrated that people can work from home on a scale and in ways not envisaged by the mainstream before. Post pandemic, working from home will be more prevalent than before the pandemic with many people likely to choose hybrid working i.e. three days in the office, two days at home
 - The impact on physical footprint is not clear. Whilst in the past 20 years occupancy densities have risen from c15 sq m per desk to c9 sq m per desk these trends are likely to be reversed due to the search for healthier work environments.
 - Changes in the economy and society are bringing about major changes in the demand for offices. Networks will be the defining features of the office economy, underlining the need for the central business district to offer more than office blocks.
 - City centres will need to work harder to provide places that people want to visit and enjoy as well as work. Aviva has announced that it will be moving staff back into the city from peripheral business parks. City centres provide services, lifestyle, leisure and networking opportunities that business parks simply cannot match.
 - Much has been written about office demand and there have been observations about long-term changes to behaviour around commuting, working patterns, office layout etc. The office has a key social function, not to mention areas such as training, mentoring,

leadership, corporate ethos etc. These needs have not disappeared. The pandemic is likely to have a negative impact overall; however it is difficult to foresee a structural change in the quantum of demand for offices in Norwich city as a direct result of covid, particularly due to Norwich having a diverse base of smaller occupiers who, because of their sheer size, have fewer opportunities to save space through working from home.

- The emerging role of the office is to provide a dynamic, experiential, healthy, lower density, welcoming and functional environment; one that focuses on connectivity, collaboration, socialising and learning. One benefit of working from home is the avoidance of lengthy and expensive commutes. But this is not really a feature of the Norwich market which has a more compact urban morphology.
- The pandemic is likely to be used by property owners to justify conversion of offices to residential on the grounds that office demand is in decline. But the best that can be said about this position is that it is unproven, driven by transient land values rather than well-established understanding of urban geography, and the city's valuable strategic stock of space should not be gambled on a hunch.
- The impact of the pandemic on demand for office space is likely to be less than is generally referred to in the media. This applies to cities generally, and to Norwich in particular. There will be an impact, there will be more working from home and office workplaces will evolve to suit changing preferences. But the headline quantum of demand is unlikely to fall precipitously. It is because of this generally positive outlook for offices in Norwich that there continues to be the belief that there remains a requirement for an Article 4 Direction in the city centre to protect office uses from conversion to residential use.

15. As part of the evidence base, data was collected on the number of prior approval applications and full planning applications that involved the change of use of offices to residential. Previously the data went up to December 2019. An update has been made and now includes all approved applications up to the middle of May 2021 and a summary of the findings are as follows:

- Whilst only one prior approval application was approved between April 2019 – March 2020 there has been a significant increase in applications in 20/21 with a total of 14 prior approval applications approved between April 2019 and March 2020 which if all implemented would provide 192 homes and result in a loss of 11,740 sq m of office floorspace. However, some of these have been resubmissions of previous applications and if these are discounted to avoid double counting then the total number of homes to be provided are 89 and the total loss of floorspace is 4,960 sq m.
- Since the introduction of permitted development rights for office to residential conversions in May 2013 the total number of residential units permitted through this route is 1069 and the total loss of floorspace is 72,398 sq m.
- Whilst a number of the most recent prior approval applications have been on small sites, one notable application is Vantage House, Fisher Lane. This was identified within the Ramidus report as a strong

possibility for a digital hub and identified as a building which needs article 4 direction protection as soon as possible. Whilst the Council has now focused on Townsend House for a digital hub, the study highlights that this is an important office building which should not be lost to residential.

- In terms of full planning permissions a further 5 applications have been approved since December 2019. This would provide a total of 29 homes and result in a loss of 2,503 sqm of office floorspace. This means that since May 2013 a total of 793 residential units have been permitted and this has the potential to result in the loss of 51,634 sqm of office floorspace if all built out.
- Since May 2013 the total loss of office floorspace (if all implemented) is 124,032 sq m and the total number of residential units provided is 1,862.

16. The above would suggest that there is still very much a need to introduce an article 4 direction to enable the Council to protect offices of strategic importance. An article 4 direction does not prevent offices changing to residential but instead it enables the Council to control it and to consider all material planning considerations including the impact that the loss of offices will have upon our economy.

Risks

17. Whilst officers feel that we should still proceed with the introduction of the article 4 direction there is a risk of failure. The government appears intent on reducing the level of control the Local Planning Authorities have which has not only been demonstrated through the increased use of permitted development rights but also through the recent consultation on the NPPF which if brought forward will make it much harder or near impossible to introduce article 4 directions for change of use to residential. As noted above at present we have no indication of if or when these changes will be made.
18. There has been much written about this within the planning press with some commentators believing that this is the end of the road for article 4 directions and that councils will not get them and there will not be any exemptions.
19. Notwithstanding the above, it should be noted that the government has extended the period in which existing article 4 directions can be used up until 31 July 2022. The timeframe does enable those authorities that currently have an article 4 direction in place, to go through the process of introducing a new article 4 direction which can then refer to the new use class order and general permitted development order. So long as these authorities press ahead and introduce one quite swiftly, then they should be able to confirm the new one before the old one becomes defunct.
20. In summary therefore, whilst there is a significant risk that the article 4 direction may fail, our case is supported by overwhelming evidence and is geographically limited (as shown in figure 1) and we feel that we have the

evidence base to satisfy the current wording of the NPPF and potentially the option which requires their use to be limited in order to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts. Our concern however is that if the NPPF is changed we would not be able to demonstrate that the loss of offices will affect something of national importance and therefore the recommendation to cabinet should be that we will cease work on the introduction of the article 4 direction if this is the case.

21. Furthermore given the majority of work has already been done, the further financial resource implications are relatively minimal. It should however be noted that at this current point in time we have no evidence to put in place an article 4 direction to prevent the change of use from other town centre uses (including retail) to residential and the article 4 direction should only refer to Class E (g) (i) (an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions).

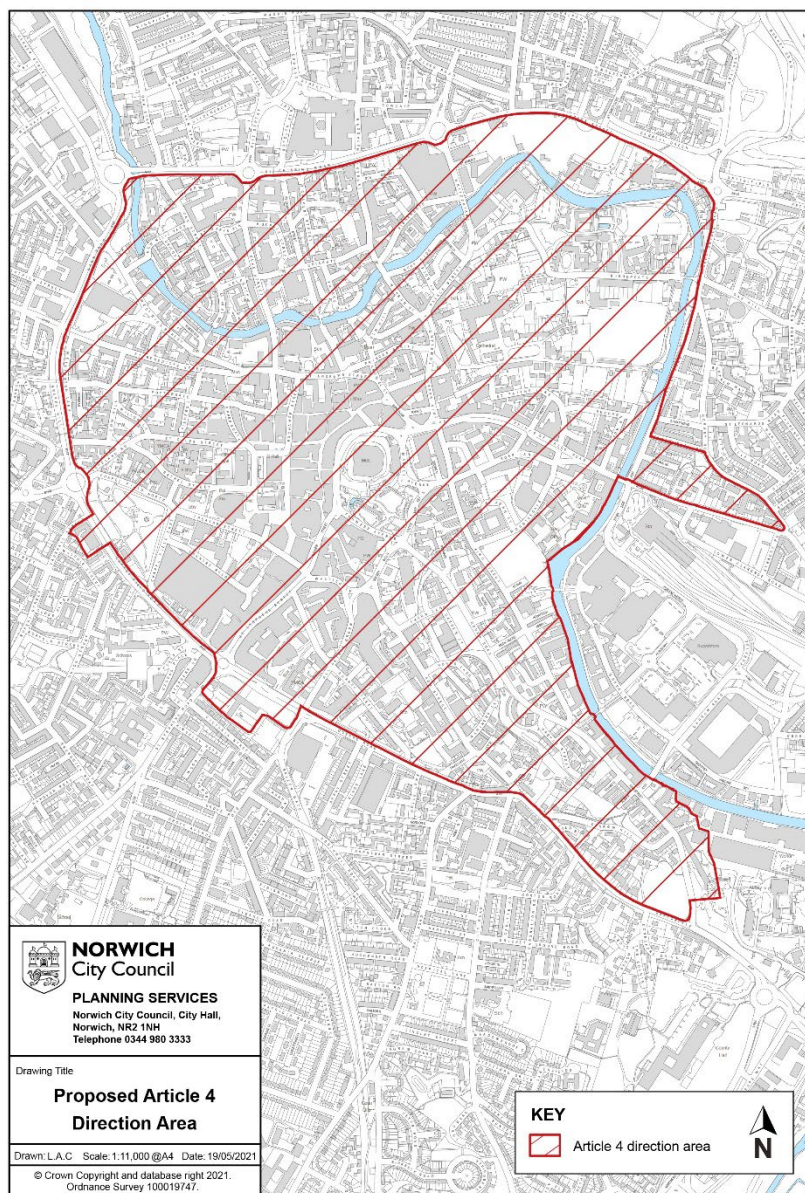


Figure 1: Proposed article 4 direction area

Timescales

22. The timescales for introducing a non-immediate directions are quite lengthy due to the need to give 12 months' notice of its introduction in order to avoid compensation claims. Below is an indication of the likely timescale for the introduction of the article 4 direction.

SD panel report	22 June 2021
Decision made by cabinet to make the direction	7 July 2021
Notice served to land owners/occupiers affected (if practicable)/ site notice/ press advertisement giving at least 21 days to make representation	July 2021
Copy of direction and notice to Secretary of State	July 2021
End of consultation period	August 2021
Consideration of representations	September 2021
SD panel report	18 November 2021
Cabinet report	8 December 2021
Direction confirmed	December 2021
Notice served to land owners/occupiers affected/ site notice/ press advertisement confirming the direction	December 2021
Copy of direction and notice to Secretary of State	December 2021
Intended date of coming into force	July 2022

PREPARED FOR NORWICH CITY COUNCIL

The impact of the Covid pandemic on the office market, with reference to the city of Norwich

Supplementary note to: *Review of Office Accommodation in Norwich* (July 2020)

It is now 14 months since the first Covid pandemic lockdown measures in March 2020. Since that time, the 'office economy' has been largely functioning with people working from home. This has been perhaps the largest ever closure of normal business in peacetime. In the early stages there was widespread speculation about the hollowing out of city centres and the collapse of office work as we know it. A year later, and there is emerging a more sober assessment and consensus around the future office market. A switch from 'revolution' to 'evolution'. This brief note summarises my thoughts on the current debate about the impact of Covid on the office market, with reference to Norwich.

Working from home

One thing that the Covid pandemic has demonstrated above all else is that people can work from home on a scale, and in ways, not envisaged by the mainstream before. There is no evidence of companies that have disappeared as a result of not being able to access their offices for normal work; and even very large finance houses, accountants, lawyers and so on have managed a form of business as usual throughout the period. Indeed, some are reporting increases in productivity.

The key questions are around the degree to which this will happen and what impact it will have on companies' physical footprints. For example, one of the mainstream predictions is that many companies will move to 'hybrid working', whereby people will spend an average of three days in the office and two days elsewhere. The logic of this suggests that companies will need only 60% of the space they previously occupied.

There seems to be little doubt that, post-pandemic, WFH (and its variant working from anywhere) will be more prevalent than before the pandemic. However, agile working and flexible working had been on the increase before the pandemic and, in some senses, it has simply acted as an accelerant to this established trend. The specific achievement of Covid has been to break, permanently, the management by presenteeism model; organisations will no longer be able to insist that everyone is in the office together, nine-to-five.

Impact on footprints

The impact on physical footprints is less clear. Many observers are suggesting a reduction in demand by anything between 20% and 40%. But it is clear that a more nuanced response is required. For example, while occupancy densities have risen from c15 sq m per desk to c9 sq m per desk over the past twenty years, and while many organisations have introduced at least an element of hot desking, these trends

will need to be reversed in the search for healthier work environments. Furthermore, there will be additional net demand for space allocated to socialising, collaborating, meeting and so on.

A report from KPMG in April 2021 showed that between August 2020 and March 2021, the number of global companies intending to cut back on office space had fallen from 69% to 17%. Indeed, announcements from major employers have been very mixed. For example, Facebook, HSBC, Microsoft, Nationwide, Société Générale, Twitter have all announced long-term and widespread WFH strategies. By contrast Amazon, Goldman Sachs, Google, JP Morgan and Morgan Stanley are all encouraging staff to return.

Evolution of the office economy

Office work and office occupation have been undergoing rapid change for the past two decades in response largely to digital technology; but also in response to wider pressures including: cost efficiency, sustainability, health and wellbeing, personal choice over workstyles and competition for skilled staff. As stated in our report for Norwich City Council (*A review of office accommodation in Norwich*, July 2020) , changes in the economy and society are bringing about major changes in the demand for offices. Economic, business, technological and social pressures are pushing on the 'knowledge economy', bringing about change in the amount of space required; the nature of buildings; workplace design and workplace management. As firms adopt more agile, networked approaches, offices will become 'less generic' and less single purpose, and will work harder to provide choice and flexibility.

Larger, hierarchical, task-driven corporate islands had begun to change and build networks of organisations, individuals and specialists, each bound together by a common sense of purpose and shared interest. Business ecosystems will involve large and small companies working together, with contingent workers and specialists across extensive and collaborative relationships. Networks will be the defining feature of the office economy, underlining the need for the CBD to offer more than office blocks.

City centres

In the post-pandemic era, city centres will need to work harder to provide places that people want to visit and enjoy, as well as work. They will need to become safer and cleaner, and provide experiential, amenity-rich and public transport oriented places.

In an era when job mobility has never been higher (nor, perhaps, job security, lower), and when small businesses, contract workers, contingent workers and specialists all rely on rapid and frictionless transfer between contracts, city centres provide broad, deep and accessible job markets. In Norwich, Aviva has announced that it will be moving its staff back into the city centre from peripheral business parks, reflecting a trend that had been evident in some cities before the pandemic. City centres provide services, lifestyle, leisure and networking opportunities that business parks simply cannot match.

Office demand

Much has been written about this, including the 'end of the office' narrative and observations suggesting long-term changes to behaviour around commuting, working patterns, office layouts and so on. In reality many of the changes being discussed have been a feature of the direction of travel in real estate over the past two decades. But the office has a key social function, not to mention areas such as training, mentoring, leadership, corporate ethos and so on. These needs have not disappeared. While the pandemic is likely to have a negative impact overall, it is difficult to foresee a structural change in the quantum of demand for offices in Norwich city as a direct result of COVID-19.

Large, corporate occupiers and SMEs procure and occupy space in subtly different ways. Norwich does not have a large base of large office employers, who are the most likely to institute footprint reductions as a result of the pandemic. Instead, Norwich has a more diverse base of smaller occupiers who, because of their sheer size, have fewer opportunities to save space through WFH; and for whom the 'business park option' is much less attractive than for larger firms.

Flexible workspace

Long-term, inflexible and capital intensive real estate has been yielding to a commodity model for several years, in the form of the flexible space market; space is turned on and off as required by customers, while receiving value adding service from a provider. This aspect of the office market is likely to be in the ascendancy post-pandemic. It is also an aspect of how property owners manage their risk in the post-pandemic market, by leasing space longer term to intermediary service providers.

The office workplace

The changes described in this paper add up to a re-definition of the role, or purpose of the workplace. Its previous role was as a relatively static backdrop to process-dominated work, with a rigid, hierarchical workforce. Undifferentiated workers were managed within a one-size-fits-all approach in which cost minimisation was paramount.

The emerging role of the office is to provide a dynamic, experiential, healthy, lower density, welcoming and functional environment; one that focuses on connectivity, collaboration, socialising and learning. It will help define and express the values of the employer. There is also likely to be more focus on how air circulation is handled. Specifically air will need to be drawn up (away from staff) and out of the building, with much less recirculation. Not all buildings will be amenable to this, but many town centre offices with natural ventilation, in a city such as Norwich, will be very attractive to smaller occupiers in particular.

Physical concentration and mass transit connections (which are increasingly sustainable) will endure as a model for urban development. One of the oft-cited

benefits of WFH is the avoidance of lengthy and expensive commutes. But this is not really a feature of the Norwich market, with a more compact urban morphology.

Overview

The pandemic is likely to be used by property owners to justify conversion of offices to residential on the grounds that office demand is in decline. But the best that can be said about this position is that it is unproven, driven by transient land values rather than well-established understanding of urban geography, and the city's valuable strategic stock of space should not be gambled on a hunch.

I believe that the impact of the pandemic on demand for office space will be less than is generally referred to in the media. This applies to cities generally, and to Norwich in particular. There will be an impact, there will be more WFH and office workplaces will evolve to suit changing preferences. But the headline quantum of demand is unlikely to fall precipitously. It is because of this generally positive outlook for offices in Norwich that I continue to believe there remains a requirement for an Article 4 Direction in the city centre to protect office uses from conversion to residential use.

Dr Rob Harris, Principal
Ramidus Consulting Limited
17th May 2021

Report to Sustainable development panel
22 June 2021
Report of Executive Director, Development and City Services
Subject Submission of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP)

Item

6

Purpose

To update members on the progress made with the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) which is now approaching submission stage, and to enable members to provide comments on the GNLP papers to inform members attending the Greater Norwich Development Partnership on 24 June as well as informing discussion of the submission GNLP at cabinet on 7 July.

Recommendation

To provide comments on the GNLP papers to inform members attending the Greater Norwich Development Partnership on 24 June; and

To recommend to cabinet that it notes the comments of sustainable development panel in its consideration of the submission of the GNLP at the meeting on 7 July.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority great neighbourhoods, housing and environment, inclusive economy, and people living well.

Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. The council's contribution towards the cost of producing the plan is expected to be met from existing budgets.

Ward/s: All Wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard - Sustainable and inclusive growth

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

Introduction

1. The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) has been in preparation since 2016 and is now nearing its final stages, with submission to the Secretary of State expected to take place on 30 July.
2. The Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) oversees the preparation of the GNLP. The GNDP is an informal, non-decision-making partnership comprising the city, South Norfolk and Broadland councils, the county council and the Broads Authority.
3. The GNDP meeting on 24 June will consider the submission of the GNLP on 30 July. These papers have not yet been published but will be available a week in advance of that meeting. Members of sustainable development panel will be sent a link to the papers as soon as they are published. Those papers will form the basis for consideration at the panel meeting.
4. This will give Panel members the opportunity to provide comments on the plan and associated documentation, which will inform Cllr Stonard when he attends the GNDP meeting on 24 June, and will also be reported to cabinet for its consideration of the GNLP report on 7 July.

Emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan

5. The submission (Regulation 22) GNLP comprises:
 - (a) a strategy document which contains the planning strategy for growth in Greater Norwich from 2019 to 2038, including thematic policies, and
 - (b) a site allocations document containing sites proposed to be allocated for development to help implement the growth strategy, containing site specific policies for all sites other than the village clusters in South Norfolk. (A separate allocations plan is being developed by South Norfolk council for these village cluster sites, which will come forward in due course.)
6. The GNLP has undergone several stages of consultation since its commencement in 2016, and reports have been provided to both Sustainable Development Panel and Cabinet throughout this period.
7. Most recently, Sustainable Development Panel considered and commented on an early version of the draft Regulation 19 Strategy document at a meeting on 3rd December 2020 and subsequently had the opportunity to comment on the draft Sites document. This informed discussion at the GNDP Board meetings in December.
8. Cabinet, at its meeting on [20th January 2021](#), approved the draft Regulation 19 GNLP for consultation on soundness and legal compliance in February – March 2021. This consultation took place as planned and over 1,300 representations were made to the plan.

9. The GNDP report for the meeting on 24 June will include an update on representations made, outline the issues being addressed ahead of submission and beyond, and identify potential issues for examination. It will also provide a summary of the main issues raised for the policies, site specific allocations, and evidence studies. Subject to approval, the GNDP report will be considered by the councils in July to decide whether to submit the plan for examination on 30 July.

Next steps

10. Assuming that the GNDP approves the GNLP for submission at its meeting on 24 June, the next steps are set out in the table below. It should be noted however that the timetable following submission is in the hands of the Planning Inspectorate so may be subject to change.

Authorisation by the councils to submit the plan	July 2021 (including, for Norwich, Cabinet on 7 July and Council on 20 July)
Submission of the GNLP to the Secretary of State	30 July 2021
Public Examination	Nov/Dec 2021
Consultation on proposed main modifications	Mar/Apr 2022
Publication of Inspector's report	July 2022
Adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan	September 2022

Report to Sustainable development panel
22 June 2021
Report of Executive Director, Development and City Services
Subject Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Item

7

Purpose

To give members an opportunity to comment on Norfolk County Council's consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Norwich.

Recommendation

To provide comments on Norfolk County Council's consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Norwich to inform the City Council's response to the consultation.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority great neighbourhoods, housing and environment, inclusive economy, and people living well.

Financial implications

Norwich City Council was awarded £65k of central government revenue funding to enable the production of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. We received this money because the city council had a highways agency agreement with the county council and we were the accountable body for the cycling ambition programme. The county council has been leading the production of the LCWIP and we will transfer the funds to the county (less the cost of the city council's time spent contributing to the document) once the Department for Transport has indicated that it is satisfied with the document.

Ward/s: All Wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard - Sustainable and inclusive growth

Contact officers

Ben Webster, Design conservation and landscape
manager

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Background documents

None

Report

Introduction

1. In 2017 the government introduced Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) as the main tool for transport and highway authorities to develop cycle networks and schemes for their improvement. The publication of “Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking” by the government in 2020 has increased the importance of LCWIPs because they are needed to justify and secure government funding for schemes that will meet the government’s vision that “Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walking by 2030.”
2. Norfolk County Council is currently consulting on the draft LCWIP for Norwich. It opened on 17 May and closes on 28 June. City council officers have contributed to the document. The documents relating to the consultation can be found [here](#) ([Chance to help shape Norwich cycling and walking route plans - Norfolk County Council - Citizen Space](#))
3. The LCWIP will cover the period 2021-31 and form an important part of the city’s transport strategy sitting alongside the new Transport for Norwich Strategy. The Transport for Norwich Strategy is currently being drafted by Norfolk County Council. The city council is contributing ideas to the production of the Strategy guided by the [response](#) to the Local Transport Plan that was agreed by the city council’s cabinet (16 December 2020). A public consultation is being planned for late summer / early autumn with the document being finalised before the end of the year. The draft document will be brought to the sustainable development panel for discussion.

Norwich Cycle Network

4. Unlike many places, the Norwich area has a well-established [cycle network](#) (https://www.norwich.gov.uk/downloads/file/3488/norwich_cycle_map) based on a set of seven strategic cycle routes called pedalways that are complemented by neighbourhood routes. This network was first presented in 2012 and has formed the basis for investment in cycling through the cycling ambition programme (2013-2019) and more recently the Transforming Cities Fund programme.
5. The LCWIP proposes an eighth pedalway (brown) connecting Drayton to Poringland via Mile Cross and the city centre. It also proposes changes to the alignment and extension of some pedalways. The projects map and summary document associated with the consultation illustrate and describe 28 improvement projects that are funded and a further 27 that are not currently funded.

Walking Zones

6. The LCWIP proposes the creation of walking zones and improvement of walking conditions in the city centre and at University of East Anglia / Norwich Research Park.

Behaviour change

7. The LCWIP also recognises that increasing levels of cycling and walking cannot be achieved by investing in hard infrastructure alone and acknowledges the importance of complementary initiatives such as cycle hire, wayfinding, cycle parking, micromobility (e.g. cargo cycles and electric scooters), mobility hubs, mobility as a service, cycle training and workplace support.

Next steps

8. Following the discussion at sustainable development panel a response to the consultation will be produced by officers for submission by the deadline of 28 June in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.

Report to Sustainable development panel
22 June 2021
Report of Executive director of development and city services
Subject East Norwich Masterplan Update

Item

8

Purpose

To provide a progress update for members on the East Norwich masterplan, including ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, and key timescales for masterplan production.

Recommendation

That members note the contents of the report.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priorities A healthy organisation, great neighbourhoods, housing and environment, and inclusive economy and people living well.

Financial implications

None directly arising from this report

Ward/s: All Wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard - Sustainable and inclusive growth

Contact officers

Judith Davison, Planning Policy Team Leader	01603 989314
Graham Nelson, Executive Director, Development and City Services	01603 989204
Sarah Ashurst, Head of Planning and Regulatory Services	01603 987856

Background documents

None

Introduction

1. An update was provided at the last meeting on [18 March](#) to inform members about the appointment of consultants Avison Young to undertake the production of a masterplan for East Norwich. This also set out the scope of the project and the project brief.
2. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress with the masterplan since March, to ensure that members are kept informed of the work of the consultants and the likely timescales for the next key stages of work. As part of this the report also sets out information about project management and governance arrangements.
3. There will also be a verbal update at the meeting about the acquisition of Carrow House by the council as part of the Towns Fund programme, which will give the council a landowner stake in the delivery of regeneration of East Norwich.

Governance

4. As noted in the previous report the East Norwich Partnership (ENP)¹ is a public-private sector partnership led by Norwich City Council, and chaired by Cllr Stonard. Its purpose is for partners to work together in developing a deliverable masterplan for the East Norwich area which will address the need for investment in substantial new social and economic infrastructure to unlock the development potential of the site. The ENP provides strategic oversight of the developing masterplan, to support regeneration of the East Norwich area and address barriers and blockages to delivery. Partners have secured approximately £600k funding for the masterplan work and project management costs. The ENP meets approximately every 2 months.
5. The Masterplan steering group comprises the funding partners only and meets on a monthly basis with representatives from the consultant team. Its role is to consider / approve outputs from the consultants as required, monitor progress, and strategic risk management. It provides regular progress reports to the ENP meetings.
6. The Project Manager, Tracey Coleman, produces highlight reports for the steering group. She works closely with the consultants and is also the key point of contact for the ENP members and the wider project stakeholders.

Progress update

7. A summary of key areas of work undertaken by the consultants on the masterplan to date is attached at appendix 1. This includes the initial desktop analysis of a range of technical information and progress with site

¹ Membership comprises: Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk Council, the Broads Authority, Homes England, Network Rail, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, and landowners of the Deal Ground / May Gurney site, Carrow Works, and the Utilities sites.

visits to date. It also provides detail about the stakeholder engagement which is underway which includes engagement with members of the East Norwich Partnership, professional stakeholders, community groups, neighbouring landowners, and the public. The summary notes that engagement is being undertaken in line with the Engagement Strategy and provides a simplified diagram of this programme of activity for information.

8. A public exhibition is due to be held in July to introduce the masterplan, and share and test the consultant team's initial thinking, and also to enable residents to share their aspirations for the area.

Communications

9. Progress has been made on communications since the last update to members.
10. The city council is committed to ensuring that we communicate effectively, and with accuracy and transparency, with elected members, stakeholders, and the public. The Council's Communications team, East Norwich Project Manager and consultants Allies and Morrison have worked together in developing a Communications Strategy and Protocol which has been endorsed by the East Norwich Partnership and Steering Group. This will ensure that the media and the public are kept effectively informed and involved with the progress on the East Norwich masterplan.
11. Norwich City Council is the lead partner and therefore our communications lead will be the primary point of contact for communications activities relating to the project as a whole. All members of the Partnership will be kept informed of any upcoming communications or engagement activities.
12. Communications objectives for the East Norwich masterplan project include sharing timely and comprehensive project news with residents, stakeholders, press and residents and raising the profile of the East Norwich development.
13. As part of this approach there is now a dedicated webpage for the East Norwich masterplan project which can be found on the City Council's [website](#). Over time consultation and other material/information will be hosted on the site.

Timescales

14. The broad stages of the production of the masterplan going forward are set out in the diagram at para 1.3 of appendix 1. These comprise:

Stage 1

- Development of masterplan options during May- August 2021, based on analysis of evidence, ongoing stakeholder and community engagement, developed through an iterative design process;
- Development of a preferred option masterplan by September 2021, based on a clear understanding of infrastructure needs, deliverability and viability ; and

Stage 2

- Development of a supplementary planning document (SPD) by end of March 2022 based on a process of masterplan testing and refinement, including more in-depth consideration of infrastructure and viability, and formal consultation. The resulting SPD, once adopted, will support the policies for East Norwich in the Greater Norwich Local Plan.
15. As specified in the masterplan brief, the Stage 1 preferred option masterplan is required to be completed, approved and signed off by the client prior to commencement of Stage 2. This will require cabinet approval by the city council in early Autumn for authorisation to proceed, plus agreement by the other steering group members.
16. Sustainable Development Panel members will be updated with progress reports at appropriate points as the masterplan moves further forward.

APPENDIX 1

East Norwich masterplan: summary of progress to date

East Norwich Masterplan

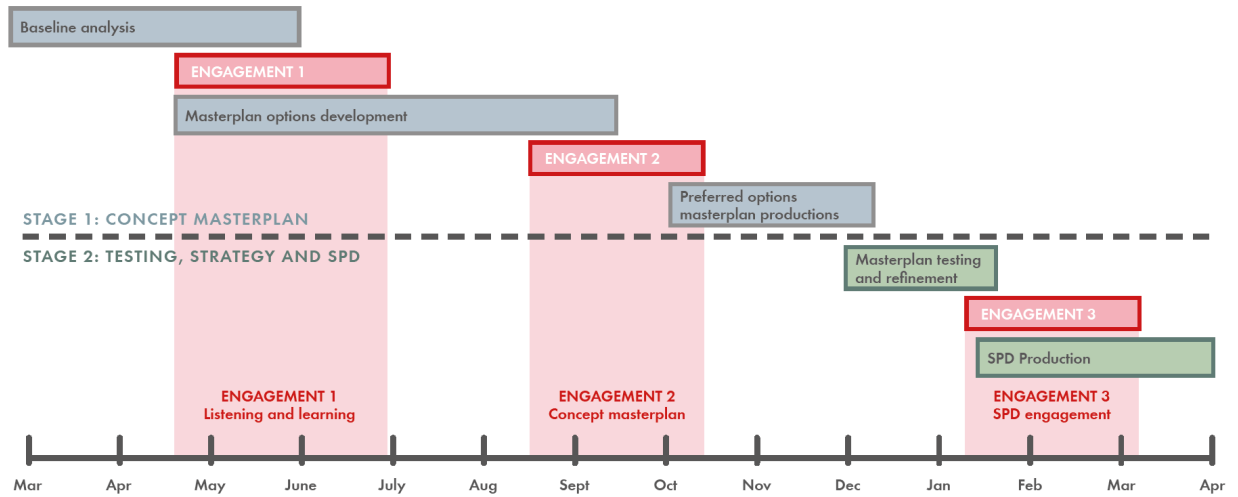
Engagement Update

Introduction

- 1.1 The East Norwich masterplan is nearing the end of its 'listen and learn' phase, this stage of work is focussed on establishing a robust and comprehensive evidence base from which the masterplan options can be developed.
- 1.2 Throughout this phase the consultant team have undertaken the following tasks:
- Desktop analysis of technical information – this has covered a full range of property market, economic, environmental, infrastructure and accessibility data as well as consideration of heritage, urban form, landscape and other place specific information.
 - Site tours – initial visits of Carrow Works, the May Gurney site and Deal Ground have been undertaken by the team, with follow up detailed inspection by the heritage specialists. These were hosted by the site owners. Further site visits to these sites and to the Utilities site are being arranged.
 - Stakeholder engagement – as set out in more detail below.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 1.3 Engagement with professional stakeholders, community groups and the public is central to the successful delivery of the East Norwich masterplan. A detailed Engagement Strategy has been prepared by the consultant team and is guiding the timing, nature and principles of the engagement process. A simplified programme that sets out the stages of engagement is included below:



1.4 Within the first Engagement stage (“Listening and Learning”) the consultant team have undertake the following activities:

- One to one (online) meetings with Partnership members and/or their representatives to understand their aspirations, challenges and objectives for the masterplan:
 - Norwich City Council – 24/03/21
 - Serruys Properties (Deal Ground/May Gurney) – 14/04/21
 - Fuel Properties (Carrow Works) – 14/04/21
 - Network Rail – 26/04/21
 - Norfolk County Council – 05/05/21
 - National Grid / RWE (Utilities Site) – 17/05/21
 - Greater Anglia – (Crown Point Depot) – 18/05/21
- Presenting to the ‘Trowse Railway Bridge Upgrade’ group (04/06/21) to introduce the masterplan and agree future engagement to align the two workstreams.
- Provided a member briefing for the five authorities (01/06/21) in advance of workshops held with community groups. A recording of the session was shared with all invitees and a separate briefing was held on 11/06/21 with Members representing Thorpe Hamlet ward who could not attend the first session.
- Led two community workshops (07/06/21 and 08/06/21) to which c.90 local groups were invited.

- Meeting with Historic England to discuss the masterplan approach to heritage (14/06/21).
- 1.5 Alongside the direct engagement a new webpage has been launched on the City Council's website which will enable residents and stakeholder groups to find out information about the masterplan and its progress. Over time consultation and other material/information will be hosted on the site. The website link is:
https://www.norwich.gov.uk/homepage/332/east_norwich_regeneration.
- 1.6 Looking ahead the next engagement milestone will be a public exhibition to introduce the masterplan, share and test the team's initial thinking and enable residents to share their priorities and aspirations for the area. This will happen in July and is likely to run over two days, timings and venue are currently being confirmed.
- 1.7 Throughout June and July further stakeholder engagement will continue, this will extend those engaged with to neighbouring land owners (Norwich City Football Club, ATB Laurence Scott), Partnership members who have yet to be fully engaged (such as the Broads Authority and South Norfolk Council) and other parties who may have a potential role to play in the future of the site (such as the UEA and Norwich University of the Arts).

