

**Report to** Cabinet  
11 September, 2012  
**Report of** Head of planning service and city development services  
**Subject** Norwich northern distributor road - development consent  
order consultation

**Item**

12

## **KEY DECISION**

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### **Purpose**

To explain the planning decision-making process for the development of the Norwich northern distributor road and to agree formal comments on the proposal

### **Recommendation**

- (1) To advise Norfolk County Council that the city council has no objections to the proposal to construct the northern distributor route (NDR) subject to the delivery of a programme of measures to secure major improvements and enabling the promotion of more sustainable forms of transport as promoted within the Norwich area transportation strategy implementation plan (NATSIP),
- (2) To request that the County Council supports its application for the NDR by demonstrating its place within the overall NATS Strategy and giving a commitment to deliver the whole of the NATSIP by 2026, such that the city council can offer unequivocal support for the scheme at the pre-examination and examination stage of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) process.
- (3) To request the County Council, through detailed design, to ensure that the NDR enhances the potential for walking, cycling and public transport use between the expanding communities to the north and east of the city to ensure that any potential severance effects are fully mitigated.

### **Corporate and service priorities**

The report helps to meet the corporate priorities of “A prosperous city” and a “Safe and Clean City”

### **Financial implications**

None

**Ward/s:** All wards

**Cabinet member:** Cllr Mike Stonard

**Contact officers**

Ian Whittaker

01603 212528

Bruce Bentley

01603 212445

**Background documents**

None

## **Report**

### **Background**

1. The proposed Norwich Northern Distributor Road (NDR) is planned to link the A47 trunk road at Postwick (to the east of the city) to the A1067 Fakenham Road (to the north-west of the city). The applicant is Norfolk County Council.
2. The proposed application includes all of the road junction arrangements with the A47 (called the Postwick Hub) that has been granted planning permission and has been the subject of a “side roads order” public inquiry under transport legislation (Section 14 of the Highways Act 1980) earlier this year. Although a decision on this has not yet been made the new submission under the NSIP process will include the Postwick hub and all matters relating to it as well as the rest of the NDR to its junction with the Fakenham Road. The proposed road is a dual carriageway with two lanes in each direction with a series of roundabouts at key junctions with the main radial routes (see appendix 1 for a plan of the proposal). The NSIP process will consider all the Planning, Compulsory Purchase, Stopping Up of existing roads and highways and all the Side Road Orders for the entire scheme and should it be approved will effectively pave the way for the implementation of the NDR
3. The entirety of the road is outside the city boundary and lies in Broadland District Council. This report does not discuss matters of detailed design as it is more appropriate for these matters to be dealt with by Broadland District Council. This report considers the principle of the proposal and the direct implications for the city.
4. The council has consistently supported the NDR and a motion to council was carried in November 2008. In November 2009 the council’s Executive determined to support the NDR as part of the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy Implementation Plan (NATSIP). The report to Executive (with the Council motion appended) can be found at:  
<http://www.norwich.gov.uk/CommitteeMeetings/Executive/Document%20Library/129/Repexecutivenatsipconsultationresponse20091125.pdf>

### **The NSIP process**

5. As the site links to the A47 trunk road it qualifies to be handled under the NSIP process. This means that a development consent order rather than a normal planning permission is being applied for by the county council. The final decision is made by the secretary of state following a recommendation by the planning inspectorate.
6. The county council has chosen to incorporate all the detailed junction arrangements with the A47 at Postwick which have been the subject of a public inquiry earlier this year. No decision has yet been made on that matter but even if consent is not granted via that process, the road junction will be considered again via the NSIP process.
7. The government’s intention in bringing forward this new procedure is to speed up decision making. The procedure brings together the equivalent of a planning permission, highway consents and compulsory purchase issues into one integrated decision-making process.

8. The NSIP application process is prescribed by regulations with very strict timescales for each stage. Further details are available at:  
<http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/application-process/the-process/>.  
Currently the proposal is at pre-application stage and, alongside formal consultation with local planning authorities; a public consultation process is also taking place.
9. Council officers had the opportunity to comment on the consultation proposals and suggested that a slightly wider area of occupiers be written to directly, to include properties immediately alongside the ring road in the north east quadrant of the city, as key features of the application are the benefits to traffic arrangements on the ring road. This public consultation ends on 20 September. The government advice makes it very clear that “responding to the developer’s pre-application consultation is the best time to influence a project, whether you agree with it or believe it could be improved”. It is therefore important that the council comments at this stage in the process.
10. The next stages are “acceptance”, when the planning inspectorate confirm that the application is acceptable (max 28 days), “pre-examination” where the council’s representative may attend a preliminary meeting with the inspector (three months), “examination” where those commenting may be invited to provide details of their views in writing and at a hearing (six months), the planning inspectorate prepare a report (three months) and the Secretary of State then decides whether to grant or refuse development consent (three months).
11. The earliest that a decision would be made is late 2014 and the earliest practicable date for construction to commence would be spring 2015.

### **The need for the NDR**

12. Over the last few decades, the population of the greater Norwich area has grown significantly, with significant changes in land use, reducing the overall focus on the city centre, with significant growth taking place on the edge of the city not only with new housing, but substantial new centres of employment. The joint core strategy has identified the need for significant additional growth and substantial areas of land to the north and east of the city have been identified to allow for this strategic growth. Without the NDR, the potential to achieve these aspirations would be significantly constrained by the limiting effects of the existing radial route structure of the city, and the limitations of the existing radial routes.

### **The role of the NDR in overall transport strategy**

13. However, the NDR alone cannot deliver the transport needs of either the city or the growth areas alone and is, therefore, only part of the overall transport strategy for the Norwich Policy Area. The overall vision for the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) is ‘to provide the highest possible level of access to and within the strategy area to benefit peoples’ individual needs and enhance the economic health of the strategy area [and] to ensure that journeys minimise any adverse impact on people and the built and natural environment’. Consequently, the strategy contains a series of objectives that seek to minimise the impact of travel choices on the environment, promote sustainable travel and reduce pollution, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, noise and vibration from traffic; particularly in the city centre whilst improving the competitiveness of the Norwich area as a retail, tourist and business centre.

14. In 2009, the county council consulted on plans (Transport for Norwich) for a package of measures designed to deliver the aims of the NATS strategy. This consultation made it clear that the NDR is intended to provide an alternative route for traffic to and from the north of Norwich, widening the scope for major public transport and other improvements and enabling the promotion of more sustainable forms of transport. Within the city the measures promoted within the NATS Implementation Plan (NATSIP) include:
- i) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors on Newmarket Road, Dereham Road, Drayton Road, Aylsham Road, Gurney Road & Thorpe Road/Yarmouth Road corridors;
  - ii) Network of core bus routes;
  - iii) Implementation of a cycle network;
  - iv) Measures in the city centre including;
    - Closure of Westlegate & making Chapelfield North two-way
    - Removal of general traffic from St Stephens Street
    - Making Golden Ball Street 2-way and removing traffic from in front of John Lewis
    - Making Rose Lane two-way
    - Making Prince of Wales Road bus only
    - Public realm improvements in Tombland, with a significant reduction in traffic; and
  - v) Soft measures such as travel planning, public transport information.
15. Whilst some of these measures can be implemented prior to the construction of the NDR, traffic modelling shows that others (and particularly those to the north of the City) can only be undertaken once the NDR is complete. To do otherwise would increase congestion and lead to increased traffic on unsuitable routes. Within the city centre all schemes other than Westlegate and Chapelfield North are identified as post NDR, although since Transport for Norwich has been published the County Council has accepted that it would be possible to bring forward the St Stephens Street proposals ahead of the NDR.
16. NATS is a long-standing strategy and whilst the possibility of an NDR is also long-standing, nearly all investment in transport for Norwich has been towards sustainable modes such as public transport as well as road safety and environmental protection. Examples of this include the £10 million Public Transport Major project which saw a new bus station, major city centre bus priority, environmental/townscape improvements and major road safety improvements for pedestrians.
17. Since Transport for Norwich has been published there has been significant work to bring forward BRT including development of measures on both Dereham Road and Newmarket Road (although some identified improvements have yet to receive funding. The following schemes are under active development by the joint County/City NATSIP measures design team:

- i) Cycle network;
- ii) Chapelfield North;
- iii) Removal of general traffic from St Stephens Street;
- iv) Dereham Road BRT; and
- v) Feasibility work on bus stop strategy for Newmarket Road & Thorpe Road BRT.

18. Implementation of the cycle network has recently received a major boost with the award to the council of a significant level of funding through the cycle ambition grant. This will complete the first significant route through the city (the Pink Pedalway). The aspiration is to continue the high level of investment to progress one route every two years. This would mean that three of the routes should have been achieved prior to the opening of the NDR helping to achieve the long term aim of doubling cycling rates within the urban area.

19. The NATSIP is currently being refreshed and it is anticipated that the Norfolk County Council will be asked to agree an update to the NATSIP in October 2013. This will take account of the works already completed and changes to future programmes that have occurred in the last 3 years.

### **This council's position**

20. The council has always supported the completion of the NDR on the basis that the benefits achieved will be 'locked in' through the implementation of measures within the City to promote sustainable transport, and maintain the benefits of the reduced traffic levels.

21. Documents submitted with the current consultation (Pre-applications scheme information Document para 3.2.1.8- 3.2.1.10) state that the NDR is part of the transportation strategy for the Norwich area and the objectives of the strategy cannot be achieved without the construction of the NDR. Consequently, it is reasonable and necessary that the complementary measures that have been identified are progressed alongside the NDR and that any consent to progress the NDR should be conditional on a programme of measures being delivered prior to, during and after the construction of the NDR. The implementation of the NDR and the associated measures are critical to the delivery of the Joint Core Strategy, which runs until 2026. It must therefore be expected that, at the very least, all the measures identified in the current NATSIP have been delivered before then

22. The NDR should, therefore, continue to be supported, subject to the implementation of the complementary NATS Measures and it is recommended that, in response to the current consultation, the council confirms its continued support, with the expectation that consent for the NDR will be conditional upon:

- i) Prior to the completion of the NDR:
  - a) The completion of a significant proportion of the identified City Centre Measures;
  - b) At least three of the identified cycle routes from the approved cycle network; and
  - c) Substantial further progress on the BRT Corridors.

- ii) Following the completion of the NDR, and in any event before 2026 at least all the remaining measures currently identified in NATSIP

23. It is also important that the construction of the NDR itself does not undermine other efforts to promote sustainable transport choices for movements to and from the city by effectively severing the expanding communities to the north and east of the city from the main urban area. These issues are ones that needs to be considered as part of the detailed design of the scheme as a whole and are a matter primarily for the county council and Broadland but it is appropriate to request that the county council, in developing their proposals, ensure that opportunities for sustainable travel (and in particular walking and cycling) are not undermined by the construction of the NDR, as undermining the potential for sustainable transport would adversely impact on the city as a whole.
24. Consequently, the application for the DCO should be supported by a draft programme of complementary measures (which would be likely to contain the measures currently in the NATSIP, including the cycling network) and a request that approval for the construction of the NDR is conditional upon the county council delivering them. This is particularly important with regard to those measures in the northern part of the city, as failure to provide them would not only undermine the benefits of the NDR in the first place but would also fundamentally affect the sustainability of the strategic expansion that the NDR is supposed to serve. In addition, the county council should be asked to ensure that, through the detailed design of the scheme, opportunities for walking and cycling and the use of public transport between the city and the expanding communities are not compromised.

## Integrated impact assessment



**NORWICH**  
City Council

The IIA should assess **the impact of the recommendation** being made by the report

Detailed guidance to help with completing the assessment can be found [here](#). Delete this row after completion

### Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	11September 2013
Head of service:	Heads of planning and city development services
Report subject:	Norwich northern distributor road - development consent order consultation
Date assessed:	21 August 2013
Description:	



	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal will generate construction jobs in the wider Norwich area, future investment in the area and create opportunities for growth and jobs, particularly, in the NE side of the city. Coupled to delivery of other NATS measures the proposal will also create opportunities for growth and jobs elsewhere in Greater Norwich, including the city centre
Financial inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Potential to reduce traffic flows and associated pollution problems on parts of the city's radial routes and ring road if coupled with other transportation projects in the city
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Potential to reduce traffic flows and improve highway safety on parts of the city's radial routes and ring road if coupled with other transportation projects in the city
Natural and built environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No significant impact on the city (however there may be impact in Broadland not assessed)
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Potential to reduce traffic flows and hence pollution on parts of the city's radial routes and ring road if coupled with other transportation projects in the city
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
Energy and climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Recommendations from impact assessment

### Positive

As the site is entirely within Broadland District Council administrative area, this analysis relates to the impacts on Norwich only. Overall there are positive features in terms of employment opportunities for construction and as part of the wider growth of the Norwich area. The positive impacts on the environment, traffic and pollution and health are dependent on a programme of improvements to transport on foot, by cycle and public transport, as opportunities for removing traffic capacity on key parts of radial routes and the ring road to the NE of the city are delivered. It is essential that these take place concurrently with the development.

### Negative

### Neutral

### Issues

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