Cabinet

*Friday 21 April 2017

9.30 am, Colman and Cavell Rooms
South Norfolk House, Cygnet Court, Long Stratton, Norwich, NR15 2XE

If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting, please let us know in advance
Large print version can be made available

Contact Claire White on 01508 533669 or democracy@s-norfolk.gov.uk

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**Group Meetings**

Conservatives – 8.00 am, Cabinet Office

Liberal Democrats – 8.15 am, Blomefield Room

This meeting may be filmed, recorded or photographed by the public; however anyone who wishes to do so must inform the chairman and ensure it is done in a non-disruptive and public manner. Please review the Council’s guidance on filming and recording meetings available in the meeting room.
Agenda

1. To report apologies for absence;

2. Any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972. Urgent business may only be taken if, "by reason of special circumstances" (which will be recorded in the minutes), the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency;

3. To Receive Declarations of Interest from Members; (please see guidance – page 5)


5. Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan: 2017/18 – 2021/22; (report attached – page 36)


7. Easton Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2042 – Submission for Examination; (report attached – page 86)
8. **Cabinet Core Agenda;**

9. **Exclusion of the Public and Press**
   
   To exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

10. **Long Stratton Leisure Centre Redevelopment Options;**

    (NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

Members are asked to declare any interests they have in the meeting. Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates.

- In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote on the matter.
- If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed.
- If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting.
- Members are also requested when appropriate to make any declarations under the Code of Practice on Planning and Judicial matters.
- In any case, members have the right to remove themselves from the meeting or the voting if they consider, in the circumstances, it is appropriate to do so.

Should Members have any concerns relating to interests they have, they are encouraged to contact the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy) or another member of the Democratic Services Team in advance of the meeting.
Housing White Paper – South Norfolk Council response

Report of the Planning Policy Manager
Cabinet Member: John Fuller (External Affairs)

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Housing White Paper and various other documents have been published by the Government, with the over-arching aim of significantly increasing the delivery of new homes. Some significant changes to the planning and related systems are proposed, albeit that in most cases precise details are not proposed or known, with consultation happening now or to follow later.

2. Background

2.1 There have been many changes to the national planning regime during the Coalition Government from 2010-2015, and the current Government. A small sample includes the Localism Act, the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and Neighbourhood Planning, the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 and the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

2.2 The recession of 2007-9 still casts a shadow over housebuilding in some parts of England. Many small and medium sized (SME) housebuilders collapsed and some of the volume housebuilders suffered near-death experiences. As a result, there is a great deal more caution amongst volume housebuilders, and the SME end of the market has not improved substantially. There is a general consensus that about 250,000 new homes per year need to be built in England to match population growth and to try to meet some of the backlog. However, since the 1970s, the level of supply has averaged only about 160,000 per year, and it has only recently crept back above 150,000 in 2014/15 and 2015/16, despite significantly more units being granted permission than this.

2.3 The many changes to national planning legislation and policy over recent years have, generally, made it easier to secure planning permission for new dwellings (or the conversion of existing commercial properties to residential use). However, the Government is frustrated that these changes have not increased the delivery of new houses more quickly than it desires, with all the consequences that can bring (rocketing house prices, overcrowded accommodation, “hidden” families, and the declining ability of younger people to be able to afford to buy their own house).

2.4 Largely as a result of these concerns, the Government began to talk in early 2016 about preparing a Housing White Paper to bring forward further measures to loosen the planning market further, as well as trying to tackle some of the perceived abuses in the private rental market.
The Council (both officers and councillors) has been working hard, particularly over the last 24 months or so, to engage as fully as possible with civil servants, ministers and MPs to try to influence Government thinking in relation to housing and planning policy. The Chief Executive, Sandra Dinneen, has used her current position as Chair of the District Councils’ Network Chief Executives’ Group to help lobby and influence on behalf of South Norfolk and all district councils. In November 2016 the Chief Executive appeared before the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee to assist their enquiry into the capacity of the homebuilding industry. Various officers have also met and communicated with CLG civil servants on a number of occasions to suggest and discuss potential improvements to national policies and legislation to better ensure delivery of permitted houses, whilst recognising that many authorities (including the Council) have grasped the challenge and permitted a very significant increase in housing permissions granted in the last few years. The Council (as part of a combined Greater Norwich response on occasions) has ensured that it has made consultation responses on all key Government planning consultations. These include, for example, comments on the Housing and Planning Bill (now the 2016 Act) and proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. Council officers (particularly Hannah Ralph) also played a significant role in the Local Government Association Housing Commission work in 2016.

In their engagement with MPs and civil servants, officers and councillors have striven to be positive and pragmatic wherever possible. Weaknesses in the planning system, and unfair criticism of local government’s role in the shortfall of housing delivery in England, have been pointed out (as they have by many other councils and bodies), but rather than simply raising concerns, potential practical improvement measures have been suggested, for example on broader compulsory purchase powers.

Whilst not every change the Council (and many other councils) desires has been made (and some are proposed which are unhelpful), and so there is still much work to with Government, it is heartening that the Housing White Paper has reflected a number of the key points that the Council has been raising with Government and civil servants. Section 4 below discusses some of the “successes” that the Council feels it has achieved.

After a number of delays, the Housing White Paper, Fixing our broken housing market (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper), was finally published on 7th February 2017, alongside various other documents. Various consultation questions are asked in the White Paper (with a deadline of 2 May), with a separate consultation on built-to-rent (covered below too).
2.9 The Greater Norwich Growth Board agreed a response to the Housing White Paper at their meeting on 23rd March 2017 (see http://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/growth-board/meetings/). Most of the points made in the GNGB paper are relevant to the Council (some are reproduced below), but there some more detailed comments in this Cabinet paper in relation to South Norfolk.

3. The Housing White Paper and associated documents

3.1 The stated aim of the White Paper is to help deliver “radical, lasting reform that will get more homes built right now and for many years to come”. The Forewords and Introduction make extremely clear that the Government sees the delivery of sufficient housing in the right places and for the right prices as critical. There is criticism for many involved in the planning and delivery of housing, with Local Authorities, infrastructure providers and housebuilders the main targets, and is obvious that Government frustration with low housebuilding levels has reached a tipping point: on page 14 it is stated that:

“We’re giving councils and developers the tools they need to build more swiftly, and we expect them to use them. Local authorities should not put up with applicants who secure planning permission but don’t use it. And they will have nowhere to hide from this Government if they fail to plan and deliver the homes this country needs”.

3.2 The White Paper itself tends to follow the same structure across a range of issues: identify and describe the “problem”, then state what the “solution(s)” might look like, and finally how the “solution” could be delivered/implemented. In many cases precise detail of the “solutions” is not provided: Government may continue to reflect on existing evidence before deciding on what to do; it may propose to make future changes to national policy (in many cases without currently detailing precisely what these changes would be); or it will consult on the details of proposed changes. In other cases still, more open-ended discussions or calls for evidence are made.

Chapter 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places

3.3 Paragraph 1.8 of the White Paper confirms a previous Government intention that local plans will need to be reviewed at least every five years, but it goes on to say that an authority “will need to update their plan if their existing housing target can no longer be justified against their objectively assessed housing requirement, unless they have agreed a departure from the standard methodology with the Planning Inspectorate”. In essence, therefore, if evidence of higher housing need emerges than is being planned for (perhaps from updated population forecasts or similar), a local plan may well need to be reviewed, at least in part.
Paragraphs 1.13-1.15 of the White Paper state that the Government will consult (shortly) on a standardised approach to assessing housing requirements. This was a key recommendation of the Local Plan Expert Group (LPEG), and the reason for this is that debate and disagreement about housing need numbers in Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) is a regular feature of local plan examinations. There is an expectation that councils will use the standardised methodology (there will be a consultation on options “at the earliest opportunity”); any deviation must be agreed with the Planning Inspectorate. It is proposed that this methodology will become, by April 2018, the standard approach to assessing five-year land supply and housing delivery. Clearly this will be a significant change from the current practice, but it is not possible to know yet what impact this could have on the future five-year land supply position in Greater Norwich.

Another really important change is presaged in paragraph A18 of the White Paper (page 74, the Annex). It is proposed that, instead of the current situation where the Tests of Soundness set out in the NPPF require a local plan to set out the “most appropriate” strategy, this will be adjusted to make clear that it should be “an appropriate” strategy. The Government hopes that this will allow for a much more proportionate approach to be taken to plan-making, instead of (for example) having to undertake full assessments of sites which it is clear have such constraints that they are unlikely to be acceptable for allocation. This would also appear to allow the Greater Norwich authorities more flexibility to choose a sensible spatial distribution option (deciding, for example, the future of the Norwich Policy Area). Paragraph A20 seeks views about other changes which may allow the simplification and streamlining of consultation and examination of Local Plans, and the draft response set out in Appendix A highlights some such areas.

Paragraph 1.26 urges LAs to make better use of surplus public land for new housing, with a £45m Land Release Fund or accelerated construction attracting considerable interest. Paragraph 1.27 introduces some welcome measures to allow LAs to grant themselves planning permission (on their own land) and then sell it. Consultation is also promised on extending flexibility to enable public land to be sold at less than full market value (which can sometimes hinder the delivery of such land for affordable housing and/or other beneficial uses) and Government is inviting views on additional powers that LAs may wish for to enable more effective and quicker land assembly (for example, on better prevention of “ransom strip” situations). Should such additional powers be granted, it may well offer LAs the opportunities to assemble more coherent land offerings more quickly, and then see delivery of housing more quickly too, so these proposals should be warmly welcomed and supported. Any opportunities where LAs are in direct control of delivering housing are likely to have some advantages in terms of deliverability and certainty, and there could therefore be further opportunities for Big Sky Developments.
Paragraphs 1.29-1.34 set out a series of measures to better support small builders and rural communities. In particular, the NPPF will be changed to require local plans to support the development of small "windfall" sites on unallocated sites – presumably this means outside development boundaries, as the second bullet point of paragraph 1.30 talks about small sites within development boundaries. It is assumed that this means sites of 10 or below, but this is uncertain. The emerging GNLP will need to consider future development boundaries carefully in the light of this likely change.

Paragraph 1.33 makes very clear that “opportunities for villages to thrive” must be identified in local plans, to support services and provide housing for local people – this is a clear steer to consider higher housing numbers in villages than might have been considered previously. Larger sites are encouraged to be sub-divided to encourage competition, and at least 10% of all allocated sites should be 0.5 hectares or smaller (so for about 10-15 homes in rural areas). Greater use of Local Development Orders to encourage more rapid delivery of smaller sites is also encouraged, and this is something the GNLP will need to consider. These measures are not a great surprise, and they are in line with some of the market intelligence that the authorities have gleaned in the last year or so from local developers.

Paragraphs 1.35 and 1.36 highlight some of the advantages of new settlements and garden villages, but note the importance of them being supported by necessary infrastructure to be more locally popular. Government support for New Town Development Corporations is made clear, with promises to work with promoters “to ensure that development and infrastructure investment are as closely aligned as possible”. In the production of the GNLP, the potential advantages of using NTDCs to help capture some of the uplift of land is considered to be worthy of more thought – it could be a very useful vehicle for delivering urban extensions/new villages.

Neighbourhood Planning will be strengthened further, and it is proposed (paragraph 1.46) that neighbourhood planning groups will be able to obtain a housing requirement figure from their local planning authority (LPA) to avoid delays in getting Neighbourhood Plans in place. This would not be without complications as the GNLP progresses, and there may be tensions between GNLP aspirations and Neighbourhood Plan aspirations.

**Chapter 2 – Building Homes Faster**

It is suggested in paragraph 2.9 that an optional annual assessment of the five-year land supply position could take place, informed by developers and utility providers and be examined by an Inspector. If the conclusion is that there is a five-year land supply, this
position would be “fixed” and could not be challenged by developers for the next 12 months. However, there is an important caveat, set out in paragraph A78: that authorities wishing to take this approach will need to provide a 10% buffer on their five-year land supply. It is not clear whether this 10% buffer would be on top of the existing 5% or 20% buffer that is already required, or would only apply in situations where there was no persistent under-delivery, and so the 5% buffer is currently applied. Where this approach is not followed, the current NPPF approach to housing land supply will continue.

3.12 Paragraph 2.15 brings the welcome news that, after a number of years of freezes, LPAs will be able to increase nationally-set planning application fees by 20% from July “if they commit to invest the additional fee income in their planning departments.” A further 20% increase may be allowed for authorities “who are delivering the homes their communities need”, with further consultation on this element promised. The wider resourcing of council planning departments, including fees, will be kept under Government review.

3.13 Various Government funding pots are discussed in Chapter 2 (most of which have been announced previously). They include: a £25m fund for “ambitious authorities in areas of high housing need to plan for new homes and infrastructure” (paragraph 2.16); a £2.3bn Housing Infrastructure Fund, which will be targeted “at the areas of greatest housing need”, which will be opened later in 2017 (paragraph 2.19) – this is likely to be particularly significant and worthy of careful consideration; and a Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund (£400m) and a £740m fund to support the rollout of fibre and 5G broadband networks fund (paragraph 2.22). A number of other funding streams, including £690m for new local transport projects, were announced in the Spring Budget 2017. The Council will, with its Greater Norwich partners, doubtless want to consider making bids for some of this money.

3.14 Paragraphs 2.23 and 2.24 discuss the importance of utilities companies providing timely infrastructure to support new housing growth, with “threats” of further action if delays to housebuilding occur. Whilst the focus is welcome, there have been several experiences in Greater Norwich of utilities delays to housing sites in recent years, and so stronger measures would have been even better. For example, there have been a number of calls for the “Duty to Co-operate” to apply to privatised utilities companies as well as public bodies, but this step is not proposed in the White Paper.

3.15 One particularly significant element of the White Paper is the statement in paragraph 2.29 that the Government will “examine the options for reforming the system of developer contributions (currently S106 and CIL) will respond to the independent review and make an announcement at Autumn Budget 2017 (probably November)”. This follows the commissioning of the CIL National Review
Panel (of which Cllr John Fuller was a member) in 2015 to review the operation of the effectiveness of CIL and S106, with the Panel’s report published alongside the White Paper.

3.16 The main recommendation of the Panel’s report was to simplify the system, with CIL being replaced by a low, flat-rate Local Infrastructure Tariff (LIT), and a greater amount being sought from S106 agreements on larger sites. It is interesting that the White Paper appears neutral on the Panel’s recommendations (compared to some recommendations from, say, the Local Plan Expert Group, which are endorsed in the White Paper). It is therefore unclear to what extent the Government shares the Panel’s view of the issue, and its recommended changes. However, it is presumed that whatever view the Government reaches in the autumn, the current approach taken to CIL and S106 is unlikely to remain undisturbed.

3.17 As changes to the CIL regime are therefore considered highly likely, the GNGB will need to consider the potential implications. Greater Norwich is able to borrow against future CIL income, through its City Deal, to forward-fund infrastructure, and major commitments have been made in past Growth Programmes to support the delivery of the Norwich Northern Distributor Road and the Long Stratton Bypass. If the CIL Panel’s recommendation of a much reduced LIT level is accepted by Government, then it might lead to significantly reduced future pooled income, which could in turn affect the current payback schedule. The Greater Norwich Growth Board has instructed officers to investigate the potential implications of this change.

3.18 A further potential implication of changes to the CIL regime could be to cause some landowners and developers to delay the submission of planning applications in the hope that the future infrastructure “cost” to them may be lower than under the current CIL and S106 arrangement. Such an outcome would clearly be unfortunate, but may be an inevitable result of uncertainty created by the White Paper in general, and the developer contributions system in particular. A related issue is that the uncertainty is not helpful for the production of the GNLP, which needs to consider viability and deliverability as key elements.

3.19 Paragraphs 2.31-2.34 highlight the skills gaps that exist in the construction industry (an issue which is known to be significant in Norfolk), and whilst some measures are proposed, the White Paper is realistic enough to acknowledge that there are no easy or quick answers to this problem, particularly with the potential implications to the labouring workforce caused by Brexit. The Greater Norwich partners are already working closely with Otley and Easton College to improve the training of trade skills there, but more is likely to need to be done in this area to minimise the impact of labour shortages on the delivery of housing and economic growth.
Paragraphs 2.36-2.45 introduce a series of measures that, when fleshed out, are intended to allow: the timing and pace of delivery of new housing proposed to be considered by LPAs; to require large housebuilders to publish aggregated information on build-out rates; to consider the track-record of applicants in delivering housing; the shortening of default permission periods to two years; to speed up the “completion notice” process (to help stimulate the completion of slow sites or withdraw permission from unbuilt parts of sites); and greater use of compulsory purchase powers to support the build-out of stalled sites and allow assembly of land.

The White Paper confirms (paragraph 2.47) that a new “housing delivery test” will be applied “to ensure that local authorities and wider interests are held accountable for their role in ensuring new homes are delivered in their area”. This will be measured over a rolling three-year period, with the first period being 2014/15-2016/17. If there is under-delivery, various measures are proposed: in the first period if delivery is below 95% of the annual housing requirement, an “action plan” will need to be produced, setting out the reasons for the situation and steps to be taken to get back on target. Other measures are set out in paragraph 2.49 for future years to “encourage” greater delivery.

Finally, it is clear the “land-banking” by some housebuilders is firmly in the Government’s sights, and paragraph 2.52 states that the Government “will not hesitate to take further action if required” if the situation is judged not to have improved.

Chapter 3 – Diversifying the market

There is much support in the first part of Chapter 3 for small and medium enterprise (SME) builders, with references to the £3bn Homebuilding Fund (paragraph 3.8) and Accelerated Construction Fund to help broaden the number of smaller housebuilders. Such measures are clearly positive and the Council has made a bid for money from the Accelerated Construction Fund.

Paragraphs 3.14-3.18 emphasise the Government’s continued support for Custom-Build and Self-Build, with threats of further legislative action if LAs are not seen to be supportive enough in delivering higher numbers of such completions.

A much greater role for institutional investment in delivering housing is mentioned in paragraphs 3.19-3.23, with the build-to-rent sector seen as important to grow, and this could be of value in Greater Norwich. As mentioned above, a separate consultation on Build-to-Rent is running alongside the White Paper, with a closing date of 1st May 2017; further details are included below.
The Government states that it will support housing associations to deliver more housing through a range of measures. The 1% annual rent cut has had a significant negative effect on enabling housing associations to build more properties, and so the Government announcement of the rent policy for social housing landlords beyond 2020 (paragraph 3.26) is needed urgently (to enable them to plan future borrowings). HAs are also asked to “make every effort to improve their efficiency”, with appropriate mergers supported.

The final part of Chapter 3 seeks to support a greater role for LAs to build new houses themselves. Paragraph 3.33 is particularly noteworthy in that “bespoke housing deals” for authorities in high demand housing areas are on offer from Government “to support [housing] delivery in their local area…so long as this results in genuinely additional housing being delivered”. This could include the alignment of Government infrastructure spending with Homes and Communities Agency investment and expertise, and the greater use of planning freedom powers set out in the Housing and Planning Act. The message is clear: the measures set out in the White Paper and other legislation “will give the authorities the tools they need to get building” (paragraph 3.34). There could be real advantages in authorities seeking a bespoke deal with Government, albeit that there is uncertainty about what precisely is intended. The GNGB asked, at their meeting on 23 March 2017, that officers explore the potential for a bespoke deal in more detail.

Chapter 4 – Helping people now

Much of Chapter 4 covers issues related to affordable housing delivery and governance, including the private rental market. Measures announced (or re-announced) include: the introduction of the Lifetime ISA in April 2017 (paragraph 4.9) and £8.6bn for the Help to Buy scheme until 2021, with a promise to consider the future of the scheme beyond this date.

There has been a very welcome Government re-think of the Starter Homes regime (paragraphs 4.13-4.20). Many of the concerns previously expressed by LPAs and other bodies have been noted, and the changes will go a long way to alleviate concerns about the working of the system and the opportunities for abuse that would have been present.

It is now stated that Starter Homes will have a 15-year repayment period (instead of the 5-8 years previously floated) and a mortgage will be required (to deter cash buyers). Best of all, though, is that the previous proposal for Starter Homes to be a mandatory requirement for 20% of all housing on developments over a certain size have been significantly scaled back. This may well have had a very considerable impact on the delivery of other types of affordable housing (such as affordable rented products). Paragraph 4.17 states that the NPPF will be amended so that there will be an expectation that a minimum of 10% of housing on
qualifying sites (10+ dwellings) will be affordable, with local discretion (through consultation) as to which affordable housing products could constitute that 10% - so there could be a mix of Starter Homes, affordable rented homes and shared equity homes, for example. Again, this is an area that the GNLP will need to give some considered thought to.

3.31 A concern expressed by Greater Norwich in response to an earlier Government consultation was that it was proposed to make it much easier to “convert” unviable or under-used employment land to housing land would risk the long-term future of employment sites. As residential land values are generally higher than employment, there was a risk that key sites would be lost to housing by landowners not trying hard enough to develop them for employment uses. Paragraph 4.18 of the White Paper states that the period of vacancy or under-use will be set at five years, and they should be considered favourably for Starter-Home led development (so presumably at least a majority of Starter Homes rather than market homes). “Strategic” employment sites are excluded, however, which is very good news; the GNLP will obviously need to ensure that all larger or more significant employment sites proposed in the Plan are classed as “strategic” to guard against them being lost to residential uses.

3.32 Paragraphs 4.22-4.25 detail the Government’s manifesto commitment to extend Right-to-Buy to housing association tenants. Details of the regional pilot are awaited. Paragraphs 4.26-4.20 describe the welcome relaxation of the some of the criteria of the £7bn Affordable Homes Programme (2016-2021) to allow affordable rent properties to be included as well as shared ownership homes.

3.33 The Government's continued support for bring back empty homes into use (paragraph 4.41), requiring LAs to consider the housing needs of older and disabled people (paragraph 4.42) and a new Green Paper on Supported Housing will be published in the Spring. The Homelessness Reduction Bill is also supported (the Council is a Homelessness Trailblazer, receiving £96,000 funding from Government recently) and further measures to reduce homelessness will also be explored.

Build to rent consultation

3.34 This consultation paper (https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-and-affordable-housing-for-build-to-rent) runs until 1 April 2017. It seeks views on a number of questions relating to the greater take-up of build-to-rent, which the Government sees as an important potential source of additional housing. Basically, the aim is to make large-scale investors (such as pension funds) more interested in this type of development through reducing some of the barriers to its delivery. A key element of this is the proposed formalisation of a new tenure of affordable housing, “affordable private rent”, which would be available at a discount of at
least 20%, provided in perpetuity (this is included within the proposed definition of affordable housing set out in Box 4 on page 100 of the Housing White Paper).

3.35 The questions are not discussed individually in this report. However, it is recommended that representations be made expressing general support for measures that could help boost the build-to-rent sector, which officers believe could play a much larger role in providing housing in Greater Norwich in the future, particularly in larger settlements such as Norwich. A number of more detailed points are recommended to be made on the specifics of the proposed measures, in particular in ensuring adequate safeguards against rapid re-defining of build-to-rent as market units for sale as an attempt to “game” the system. The potential role for the build-to-rent sector in the Greater Norwich Local Plan should also be explored, in particular with Aviva Investors.

Other consultation questions
3.36 Through the publication of responses to the Call for Evidence for the Rural Planning Review, the Government is also asking two questions on how permitted development rights could or should be altered to allow farmers greater leeway to diversity (on farm shops, for example) and also whether changes to PD rights to allow the creation of new homes could create more rural workers’ homes. There are a number of significant practical difficulties in this area, which allows prior approval of dwellings to be immediately the subject of an application to extend the dwellings, without the original permitted dwelling needing to be constructed first. It is recommended that a full response be made on these matters, pointing out some of the flaws in the current system and how they could be approved.

4 Potential implications and opportunities for South Norfolk

4.1 As noted in paragraphs 2.5-2.7 above, whilst not all changes to the Council wanted to see have been made – and some new measures are unhelpful – the Council is pleased to see some areas that it suggested for change or strengthening have been included in the White Paper, which supports the . These include:

- Enhanced and simplified powers of compulsory purchase (see paragraph 3.6);
• Recognition of the key role for local authorities in the direct delivery of homes on their own land (Big Sky Developments, in the case of South Norfolk) (paragraph 3.33);
• A 20% increase in planning application fees from July 2017 (paragraph 3.12 above) after some years of no increases;
• Significant changes to the Starter Homes regime (paragraph 3.30), following the Council pointing out a number of practical shortcomings in the original proposals; and
• Greater protection for “strategic” employment land from conversion to Starter Homes (paragraph 3.31).

4.2 As set out in paragraph 1.6 above, it is very clear that the Government intends to preside over a significant boost to housing delivery, and it is Local Authorities who appear to be under the most pressure to ensure higher delivery levels. Whilst levels of housing delivery in the two Rural Areas (South Norfolk and Broadland) have been well above requirements, delivery in the Norwich Policy Area has been below requirements for some years now. A 20% buffer for persistent under-delivery is accepted and there is not currently a five-year land supply in the NPA (the figure for the end of 2015/16 is 4.70 years).

4.3 The Greater Norwich authorities have, through the agreement of the City Deal in 2013, secured the ability to borrow against future CIL income to forward-fund the delivery of infrastructure (the £20m Local Infrastructure Fund, LIF), and a number of projects are being loaned money. This will assist in the more rapid delivery of new housing, but this is limited to a relatively small number of sites/projects.

4.4 If delivery in Greater Norwich (in particular, in the NPA) does not increase further, then some of the negative implications set out in the White Paper may affect the sub-region. These may include the need to prepare an "action plan" (paragraph 3.12 above) if the three-year delivery figure is below 95% of the annual housing requirement, with further implications in future years if specified targets are not met.

4.5 In terms of actions, there are (as discussed above in this report) a considerable number of areas that will need to be reflected in the ongoing Greater Norwich Local Plan, such as the types and sizes of sites to be allocated. The number and scope of additional consultations on various measures (such as the housing supply standard methodology) brings uncertainties and will also require ongoing officer resources to respond to.
If there is one key message to take from the White Paper, it is that the Government is prepared to assist those LAs which are genuinely pro-growth, but which have had difficulties in delivering required housing levels – such as Greater Norwich. South Norfolk Council is definitely pro-growth, and any opportunities for forward-funding infrastructure to de-risk sites should be explored fully, alongside Greater Norwich partners. The GNGB has asked officers to investigate the potential to set up a Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV) and this is a very positive step. It therefore seems that there is a strong logic to approaching officials at the Department for Communities and Local Government with a view to working up the potential components of a “bespoke” deal with Government to better ensure higher housing delivery. Such a deal might perhaps include:

- a LDV;
- a share of some of the funding pots referred to in the White Paper;
- the potential initiation of New Town Development Corporations, with their enhanced powers to capture land uplift; and
- the use of planning freedom powers set out in the Housing and Planning Act.

Draft response to the White Paper and Build-to-Rent consultation

“Headline” responses to the White Paper and Build-to-Rent consultations are attached as Appendices A and in paragraphs 3.34 and 3.35 above respectively; these are similar to those agreed by the GNGB at their meeting on 23rd March. It is recommended that the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and External Affairs, is given delegated authority to agree and submit the full responses.

5 Risks and implications arising

5.1 There will be no direct financial impact on South Norfolk in responding to the Housing White Paper, but some of the changes outlined in the White Paper will obviously have very significant financial implications for the Council.

5.2 There will not be any direct impact on disadvantaged groups in preparing this response, but as outlined in the report, the White Paper could lead to a number of major implications for disadvantaged groups, such as increased access to affordable housing.
5.3 There are no direct environmental implications, but the implementation of the White Paper measures will clearly have major environmental impacts. Future legislation and policy changes will reflect these.

5.4 It is not considered that there will be any impacts on crime and disorder.

6 Other options

6.1 Cabinet could decide to make amendments to the “headline” consultation response before it is finalised and sent to the Government.

7 Recommendation

7.1 Cabinet is recommended to
i) agree the “headline” South Norfolk Council response to the Housing White Paper and Build-to Rent consultation (set out in Appendix A and paragraphs 3.34 and 3.35 above); and
ii) Delegate authority to the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for External Affairs, to agree the full responses and submit these by the closing date of the consultation.

Appendix A – Headline response to the Housing White Paper
South Norfolk Council Housing White Paper response - Appendix A

Question 1
Do you agree with the proposals to:

a) Make clear in the National Planning Policy Framework that the key strategic policies that each local planning authority should maintain are those set out currently at paragraph 156 of the Framework, with an additional requirement to plan for the allocations needed to deliver the area’s housing requirement?
Yes, albeit that it is important that there is sufficient flexibility in the policy/guidance to ensure that existing commitments and/or windfall developments can properly be allowed for.

b) Use regulations to allow Spatial Development Strategies to allocate strategic sites, where these strategies require unanimous agreement of the members of the combined authority?
Yes, this is sensible, but Spatial Development Strategies with strategic sites may also be a good idea in areas without combined authorities.

c) Revise the National Planning Policy Framework to tighten the definition of what evidence is required to support a ‘sound’ plan?
Yes. This would be a really important change if the result was to genuinely reduce the scope for disagreement between LPAs and other stakeholders.

Question 2
What changes do you think would support more proportionate consultation and examination procedures for different types of plan and to ensure that different levels of plans work together?
Environmental protections are a critical part of enabling sustainable development to take place. However, a reduction in the scope and complexity of sustainability appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment work would go a long way to reducing the work required to prepare a Local Plan, but without substantially reducing the degree of environmental protection to be afforded to key assets. One other important change would be to “freeze” the national legislative and policy situation on submission of a Local Plan; far too much work and effort is expended – and delays caused – by having to deal with new Government policy, PPG changes ministerial statements etc during the examination stage of a Local Plan, even if the changes are of little materiality to the Local Plan in question.

Question 3
Do you agree with the proposals to:

a) amend national policy so that local planning authorities are expected to have clear policies for addressing the housing requirements of groups with particular needs, such as older and disabled people?
Yes – this is sensible. This could potentially be extended to include student accommodation too.
b) from early 2018, use a standardised approach to assessing housing requirements as the baseline for five year housing supply calculations and monitoring housing delivery, in the absence of an up-to-date plan? The application of a standard methodology will be helpful. However, it would be very important that what would constitute acceptable “deviation” from the standard methodology is made explicit in the NPPF and PPG, and it would be useful if this could be tested by PINS prior to submission stage, to avoid the potential for later delays should the deviation justification not be accepted by the Inspector. There is also considered to be a strong case for potentially applying/or giving weight to the new methodology even where there is an up-to-date Local Plan, especially where the use of the methodology would suggest the housing needs have changed.

Question 4
Do you agree with the proposals to amend the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that:

a) authorities are expected to have a clear strategy for maximising the use of suitable land in their areas?
Yes. However, the definition of “suitable” land will need to be clear and precise; many rural districts will have large tracts of greenfield land which may not be found to be inappropriate through HELAA work, but which may not be appropriate to allocate due to infrastructure constraints (for example). This must also guard against the potential to inhibit the development of brownfield land and/or large strategic sites. It also should be recognised that not all brownfield land may be suitable for development.

b) it makes clear that identified development needs should be accommodated unless there are strong reasons for not doing so set out in the NPPF?
Yes.

c) the list of policies which the Government regards as providing reasons to restrict development is limited to those set out currently in footnote 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (so these are no longer presented as examples), with the addition of Ancient Woodland and aged or veteran trees?
Yes – this would bring welcome clarity.

d) its considerations are re-ordered and numbered, the opening text is simplified and specific references to local plans are removed?
Yes.

Question 5
Do you agree that regulations should be amended so that all local planning authorities are able to dispose of land with the benefit of planning consent which they have granted to themselves?
Yes – this would be a very welcome change which could enable LAs to make best use of their landholdings to deliver homes more quickly.
Question 6
How could land pooling make a more effective contribution to assembling land, and what additional powers or capacity would allow local authorities to play a more active role in land assembly (such as where ‘ransom strips’ delay or prevent development)?
Greater powers as outlined in this section would be most useful. The most important element would be to enable this to occur rapidly, and with a much-speeded up process for dealing with ransom strips. It is also vital that land held by other public sector bodies (or pseudo public sector bodies) should also come in to this category. For example, land held by Network Rail can often be a very significant barrier to assembling packages of land near or affecting railway lines. This is due to the frequent desire of Network Rail to share in the profits of any uplift (with sometimes unrealistic expectations of value, and the potential impact this can have on the overall viability of the site) and the generally lengthy period of time that it can take to engage with, discuss and (perhaps) agree schemes with Network Rail.

Question 7
Do you agree that national policy should be amended to encourage local planning authorities to consider the social and economic benefits of estate regeneration when preparing their plans and in decisions on applications, and use their planning powers to help deliver estate regeneration to a high standard?
Yes.

Question 8
Do you agree with the proposals to amend the National Planning Policy Framework to:

a) highlight the opportunities that neighbourhood plans present for identifying and allocating small sites that are suitable for housing?
Yes

b) encourage local planning authorities to identify opportunities for villages to thrive, especially where this would support services and help meet the authority’s housing needs?
Yes, in general. However, being more supporting of allowing small-scale ad-hoc greenfield releases on the edges of rural villages would militate against the plan-led approach and would have negative impacts in terms of infrastructure provision and planned service delivery (such as school planning and water and wastewater provision. It would also militate against the identification and delivery of “exception” sites, as all small windfall sites would likely be exempt from affordable housing contributions.

c) give stronger support for ‘rural exception’ sites – to make clear that these should be considered positively where they can contribute to meeting identified local housing needs, even if this relies on an element
of general market housing to ensure that homes are genuinely affordable for local people?
Yes – but see also the comment to Question 8b) above. There is a severe danger that the pool of potential “exception” sites would get much smaller if any small sites were allowed to come forward positively

d) make clear that on top of the allowance made for windfall sites, at least 10% of sites allocated for residential development in local plans should be sites of half a hectare or less?
The principle of allocating more small sites is generally sensible. However, 10% seems to be an arbitrary target without any justification and one which lacks clarity in its definition. It is suggested that a percentage target be replace with an objective to increase the supply of residential sites of half a hectare or less to stimulate the SME sector. Recognition should also be given that some urban authorities may struggle to be able to allocate many small sites. There may also be potential overlaps with the brownfield register: within towns and cities, most sensible smaller sites would also appear on the brownfield register and have ‘permission in principle’.

e) expect local planning authorities to work with developers to encourage the sub-division of large sites?
Yes – the evidence seems to be clear that many large sites would benefit from being sub-divided to better ensure timely delivery, albeit within the framework of an overall masterplan. It should work both ways, however – i.e. it is also expected that developers of strategic sites to engage with LPAs about delivery plans and how to bring sites forward quickly.

f) encourage greater use of Local Development Orders and area-wide design codes so that small sites may be brought forward for development more quickly?
LDOs and design codes seem more appropriate to bringing forward larger-scale sites. Using them on small sites seems to limit the ability of neighbours to influence development and may increase resistance to such developments, although it may be more acceptable if small sites are included within a larger parcel of land.

Question 9
How could streamlined planning procedures support innovation and high-quality development in new garden towns and villages?
The vital element here is the capture an appropriate element of the land value uplift. If this can be secured, it could enable the forward-funding of infrastructure, which would reduce risks considerably, and widen the pool of interested developers. The use of New Town Development Corporations would be strongly supported. However, more will be gained if such powers are also able to be applied in relation to large scale urban extensions rather than just new garden towns and villages. In addition, wider NPPF recognition that the long lead-in times for new settlements/urban
extensions can sometimes militate against maintaining a five-year housing land supply would be useful.

Questions 10 & 11 relate to Green Belt – it is not proposed to answer these as there is no Green Belt in South Norfolk.

Question 12
Do you agree with the proposals to amend the National Planning Policy Framework to:

a) indicate that local planning authorities should provide neighbourhood planning groups with a housing requirement figure, where this is sought?
   This is a difficult area. It is not easy to see how a standard housing requirement methodology could be applied to identify the needs of, say, a small rural village – this is best considered at the Local Plan level. The requirements of the SEA Directive for consideration of “reasonable alternative” strategies mean that it may not be easy to “fix” a neighbourhood plan housing requirement at too early a stage in the Local Plan process. However, if there was more flexibility to enable the production of “an appropriate” strategy rather than the “most appropriate strategy” (question 2 above) issue may be made somewhat easier.

b) make clear that local and neighbourhood plans (at the most appropriate level) and more detailed development plan documents (such as action area plans) are expected to set out clear design expectations; and that visual tools such as design codes can help provide a clear basis for making decisions on development proposals?
   Yes.

c) emphasise the importance of early pre-application discussions between applicants, authorities and the local community about design and the types of homes to be provided?
   Yes, provided LDOs and design codes are not being used. There is, inevitably, a tension between the greater use of LDOs and giving communities a greater say in future development.

d) makes clear that design should not be used as a valid reason to object to development where it accords with clear design expectations set out in statutory plans?
   This is unnecessary. If development accords with the development plan, there is already a presumption in favour of development. It could create legal problems; just because the NPPF suggest it is not a valid reason for refusal, it would still be a material consideration and need to be taken into account. It is a matter of the weight to be afforded, not whether it can be considered at all.

e) recognise the value of using a widely accepted design standard, such as Building for Life, in shaping and assessing basic design principles –
and make clear that this should be reflected in plans and given weight in the planning process?
Yes, Building for Life or similar would potentially be a useful framework to assess design principles against, although these should not be excessively resource-intensive to apply (which can be a problem with BfL).

Question 13
Do you agree with the proposals to amend national policy to make clear that plans and individual development proposals should:

a) make efficient use of land and avoid building homes at low densities where there is a shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs?
In general, yes, but there does need to be appropriate consideration of the surrounding character of land, so excessively high densities may sometimes be inappropriate.

b) address the particular scope for higher-density housing in urban locations that are well served by public transport, that provide opportunities to replace low-density uses in areas of high housing demand, or which offer scope to extend buildings upwards in urban areas?
Yes, but high densities in urban areas do need to be accompanied by supporting green and social infrastructure. There may also be scope for high density development in some villages and market towns – even without high-frequency public transport connections, many high quality and attractive village and town centres are traditionally high density.

c) ensure that in doing so the density and form of development reflect the character, accessibility and infrastructure capacity of an area, and the nature of local housing needs?
Yes, but see comment to b) above. It is not existing infrastructure capacity that is important; LPAs need powers to increase this capacity.

d) take a flexible approach in adopting and applying policy and guidance that could inhibit these objectives in particular circumstances, such as open space provision in areas with good access to facilities nearby?
This happens already in most authorities, so there is no objection to this.

Question 14
In what types of location would indicative minimum density standards be helpful, and what should those standards be?
With appropriate flexibility to reflect local character, town centres and locations well served by public transport connections could have minimum densities applied – but these should be expressed as a minimum range (say at least 40-45 dwellings per hectare). A high figure would also be supported in city centres.
Question 15
What are your views on the potential for delivering additional homes through more intensive use of existing public sector sites, or in urban locations more generally, and how this can best be supported through planning (using tools such as policy, local development orders, and permitted development rights)?
There doubtless considerable potential on existing public sector sites and in urban locations and the suitability for development should be judged irrespective of ownership. However, it should be recognised that excessively high densities in some urban areas can be inappropriate due to poor quality design, environmental quality, amenity outlook and/or living conditions. Any extension of permitted development rights should therefore be considered with considerable caution, as evidence suggests that some recent conversions made through PD rights do not meet sufficiently high standards. It is suggested that the use of planning freedoms and flexibilities (set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Bill 2016) could be one such way to work alongside some of the suggested elements.

Question 16
Do you agree that:
   a) where local planning authorities wish to agree their housing land supply for a one-year period, national policy should require those authorities to maintain a 10% buffer on their 5 year housing land supply?
      No – this would be arbitrary and unfair, and would likely hinder the take-up of the option somewhat, which would be a real shame, as the intention is very sensible. The existing buffer of either 5% or 20% (as appropriate) is already adequate in terms of flexibility.
   b) the Planning Inspectorate should consider and agree an authority’s assessment of its housing supply for the purpose of this policy?
      Yes – otherwise such an approach would not be effective.
   c) if so, should the Inspectorate’s consideration focus on whether the approach pursued by the authority in establishing the land supply position is robust, or should the Inspectorate make an assessment of the supply figure?
      It could be either; the former would be preferable, but it would probably end up much the same.

Question 17
In taking forward the protection for neighbourhood plans as set out in the Written Ministerial Statement of 12 December 2016 into the revised NPPF, do you agree that it should include the following amendments:
   a) a requirement for the neighbourhood plan to meet its share of local housing need?
      Yes.
   b) that it is subject to the local planning authority being able to demonstrate through the housing delivery test that, from 2020, delivery has been over 65% (25% in 2018; 45% in 2019) for the wider authority area?
c) should it remain a requirement to have site allocations in the plan or should the protection apply as long as housing supply policies will meet their share of local housing need?
The latter would be better, because it may be that some Neighbourhood Plans could demonstrate, through a mixture of commitments and windfall developments, that it was clearly meeting housing requirements.

Question 18
What are your views on the merits of introducing a fee for making a planning appeal? We would welcome views on:

a) how the fee could be designed in such a way that it did not discourage developers, particularly smaller and medium sized firms, from bringing forward legitimate appeals;
   It could be made proportionate to the application fee.

b) the level of the fee and whether it could be refunded in certain circumstances, such as when an appeal is successful;
   A fee should only be refundable if costs are awarded against the LPA.

c) whether there could be lower fees for less complex cases.
   Yes.

Question 19
Do you agree with the proposal to amend national policy so that local planning authorities are expected to have planning policies setting out how high quality digital infrastructure will be delivered in their area, and accessible from a range of providers?
It is clearly important to provide high-quality digital infrastructure, but it is also necessary for other actors’ roles to be made clearer in this regard (broadband companies etc). Much digital infrastructure is now either permitted development that does not require any planning permission at all, or development which needs prior approval only. It is not clear how such a policy requirement could be met in circumstances where all but the most significant digital infrastructure installations might fall outside planning control. It is also unclear how planning powers could have any meaningful influence on the range or choice of providers.

Question 20
Do you agree with the proposals to amend national policy so that: the status of endorsed recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission is made clear?
Yes.

authorities are expected to identify the additional development opportunities which strategic infrastructure improvements offer for making additional land available for housing?
Yes.
Question 21
Do you agree that:

a) the planning application form should be amended to include a request for the estimated start date and build out rate for proposals for housing?
   Yes, although if there are not adequate sanctions (such as “use-it-or-lose-it”) for developers departing from the supplied rates (without good reason), this information could end up just as a largely irrelevant paper-chase.

b) that developers should be required to provide local authorities with basic information (in terms of actual and projected build out) on progress in delivering the permitted number of homes, after planning permission has been granted?
   Yes, although if there are not adequate sanctions (such as “use-it-or-lose-it”) for developers departing from the supplied rates (without good reason), this information could end up just as a largely irrelevant paper-chase.

c) the basic information (above) should be published as part of Authority Monitoring Reports?
   Yes, although if there are not adequate sanctions (such as “use-it-or-lose-it”) for developers departing from the supplied rates (without good reason), this information could end up just as a largely irrelevant paper-chase.

d) that large housebuilders should be required to provide aggregate information on build out rates?
   Yes, albeit that it would need to be made clear that this would apply to the LA area only (to avoid duplication of effort and double-counting).

Question 22
Do you agree that the realistic prospect that housing will be built on a site should be taken into account in the determination of planning applications for housing on sites where there is evidence of non-implementation of earlier permissions for housing development?
This already can be taken into account irrespective of whether there is evidence of non-implementation. It probably is not needed if the intention is to ease compulsory purchase procedures for sites not coming forward in a timely way.

Question 23
We would welcome views on whether an applicant’s track record of delivering previous, similar housing schemes should be taken into account by local authorities when determining planning applications for housing development.
Yes, it could. This should be reflected more in appropriate timescales for implementation and required delivery rates rather than in considering refusal of planning permission (which would probably be exceptional). Shorter timescales for “five-year land supply” applications on unallocated sites should be the norm. However, as planning permissions can obviously be sold on later to a different
developer (and many outline permissions are secured by landowners and land promoters rather than developers), this measure may be of questionable value.

**Question 24**
If this proposal were taken forward, do you agree that the track record of an applicant should only be taken into account when considering proposals for large scale sites, so as not to deter new entrants to the market?
No. Appropriate consideration should be given to all applicants’ track records, whilst accepting that circumstances of SME builders and new entrants may change/have changed over time, with each application to be considered on its own merits.

**Question 25**
What are your views on whether local authorities should be encouraged to shorten the timescales for developers to implement a permission for housing development from three years to two years, except where a shorter timescale could hinder the viability or deliverability of a scheme? We would particularly welcome views on what such a change would mean for SME developers.
This approach would be supported, particularly for “five-year land supply” applications on unallocated land.

**Question 26**
Do you agree with the proposals to amend legislation to simplify and speed up the process of serving a completion notice by removing the requirement for the Secretary of State to confirm a completion notice before it can take effect?
This would be very a welcome step.

**Question 27**
What are your views on whether we should allow local authorities to serve a completion notice on a site before the commencement deadline has elapsed, but only where works have begun? What impact do you think this will have on lenders’ willingness to lend to developers?
This would be supported. The Council cannot give an informed view on the lending point.

**Question 28**
Do you agree that for the purposes of introducing a housing delivery test, national guidance should make clear that:
   a) The baseline for assessing housing delivery should be a local planning authority’s annual housing requirement where this is set out in an up-to-date plan?
      A new SHMA should not automatically supersede an adopted and up-to-date Local Plan – it is reasonable to test delivery against adopted plans. However, where evidence changes (such as a SHMA update), this should be taken into account in considering five-year housing land supply applications and
significant weight should be afforded to it if it has been examined through the 
annual land supply “test” referred to in Question 16.

b) The baseline where no local plan is in place should be the published 
household projections until 2018/19, with the new standard 
methodology for assessing housing requirements providing the 
baseline thereafter?
As above – there may well be an up-to-date SHMA, even if there is no Local 
Plan in place, so if so these are the figures that should be used.

c) Net annual housing additions should be used to measure housing 
delivery?
This is likely to be acceptable.

d) Delivery will be assessed over a rolling three year period, starting with 
2014/15 – 2016/17
A rolling three-year period probably strikes the right balance.

Question 29
Do you agree that the consequences for under-delivery should be:

a) From November 2017, an expectation that local planning authorities 
prepare an action plan where delivery falls below 95% of the authority’s 
annual housing requirement?
There will be little merit in an Action Plan unless authorities are given 
additional clear and robust tools to intervene in the housing market to ensure 
delivery. It is considered unlikely that many proposed measures set out in the 
White Paper will be available in final form to influence activity from November 
2017. Where a Local Plan covers more than one LPA area, it would be logical 
for delivery to be assessed over the whole of the joint plan area, and so only 
one action plan would need to be produced.

b) From November 2017, a 20% buffer on top of the requirement to maintain 
a five year housing land supply where delivery falls below 85%?
It is considered likely that most authorities falling below 85% are already likely 
to be persistent under-deliverers. However, some authorities may have 
considerably over-delivered in earlier years, and so a lower figure should be 
used instead – 75% would be fairer.

c) From November 2018, application of the presumption in favour of 
sustainable development where delivery falls below 25%?
There is no objection to this.

d) From November 2019, application of the presumption in favour of 
sustainable development where delivery falls below 45%?
There is little objection to this.

e) From November 2020, application of the presumption in favour of 
sustainable development where delivery falls below 65%?
Whilst this figure appears reasonable, should the next recession occur in the next 2-3 years, it may be very difficult for many authorities to ensure a delivery rate as high as this; during the recession of 2008-2012 or so, many delivery rates across the country dropped by more than 50% and stayed low for a number of years, rising only slowly since then.

Question 30
What support would be most helpful to local planning authorities in increasing housing delivery in their areas?

- By far the most helpful kind of support for LAs to form Local Delivery Vehicles with access to very significant loan funding (at low PSBR rates) to forward-fund infrastructure, influence delivery rates and take landowner willingness to work with such an LDV into account in making allocations and planning decisions. This would de-risk many sites and enable them to be parcelled out to a range of builders, small medium and large for more rapid development.
- Other support – perhaps tax breaks – could be explored to incentivise new developers to move into areas they do not currently build in, to increase competition. More investment in training to increase the supply of skilled labour into the construction sector would also be welcome.
- A more balanced approach should be taken to housing land supply, recognising that releasing an ever-increasing volume of sites does not (of itself) necessarily aid delivery (given the infrastructure and financial barriers that can exist) and may be delaying the delivery of larger, more complex sites, which (once underway) can boost overall delivery figures.

Question 31
Do you agree with our proposals to:

a) amend national policy to revise the definition of affordable housing as set out in Box 4?
   Yes, in principle (but there is doubt about the secondary legislation, as it is not in place yet).

b) introduce an income cap for starter homes?
   Yes, but there should be greater variation in the cap in different areas to reflect local property markets. Households with an income of £80k pa in South Norfolk, for example, should be able to meet their own housing needs without subsidy.

c) incorporate a definition of affordable private rent housing?
   Yes.

d) allow for a transitional period that aligns with other proposals in the White Paper (April 2018)?
   Whilst this could be sensible, it may also risk a hiatus if the secondary legislation fleshing out the details for Starter Homes is not put in place fairly quickly.
Question 32
Do you agree that:
   a) national planning policy should expect local planning authorities to seek a minimum of 10% of all homes on individual sites for affordable home ownership products?
      Yes, and the flexibility of different types of affordable housing types within the minimum 10% is welcomed.

   b) that this policy should only apply to developments of over 10 units or 0.5ha?
      No – in some rural and urban areas a significant number of sites can be small, and so their contribution to affordable housing could be very important.

Question 33
Should any particular types of residential development be excluded from this policy?
Build-to-Rent (so long as they include a sufficiency of “affordable private rent” units) and “exception” sites should be excluded, but not custom build or most types of dedicated support housing (there is no reason why retirement bungalows, for example, should not be required to provide affordable housing).

Question 34
Do you agree with the proposals to amend national policy to make clear that the reference to the three dimensions of sustainable development, together with the core planning principles and policies at paragraphs 18-219 of the National Planning Policy Framework, together constitute the Government’s view of what sustainable development means for the planning system in England?
Yes.

Question 35
Do you agree with the proposals to amend national policy to:
   a) Amend the list of climate change factors to be considered during plan-making, to include reference to rising temperatures?
      Yes.

   b) Make clear that local planning policies should support measures for the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change?
      Yes – these are important considerations for a Local Plan to take into account.

Question 36
Do you agree with these proposals to clarify flood risk policy in the National Planning Policy Framework?
Whilst these proposed changes are well-intentioned, it may be difficult (and subjective) to know where to draw the line as to which developments to assess in a cumulative assessment. It is suggested that this should only be applied to where there are significant areas of land in Flood Zone 3 which are already developed, or are proposed to be allocated (in a Local Plan) and/or developed (through a planning application).

Question 37
Do you agree with the proposal to amend national policy to emphasise that planning policies and decisions should take account of existing businesses when locating new development nearby and, where necessary, to mitigate the impact of noise and other potential nuisances arising from existing development?
Yes, this is a very important issue and is not infrequently the cause of concerns. In particular, the creeping “residentialisation” of largely business-dominated areas needs to be handled with considerable care, with LPAs needing to be able to refuse residential allocations and applications where there is a genuine concern that existing business (especially) and community organisations might be adversely affected in the future. Such issues also need to be able to be taken into account in the prior approval process.

Question 38
Do you agree that in incorporating the Written Ministerial Statement on wind energy development into paragraph 98 of the National Planning Policy Framework, no transition period should be included?
Yes, there are no objections to this proposed change.

Question 39
Should the thresholds set out in Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) be amended, and if so:
• What would be appropriate thresholds including size and height;
• What prior approvals or further conditions would be required; and,
• Are there other changes in relation to the thresholds that should be considered?
It is considered that the current PD thresholds already strike the right balance and so don’t need to be changed.

Question 40
Do you consider that this proposal would be effective in creating more homes for rural workers, and if so:
• How should the right be framed to best ensure homes are available to meet local need; and,
• Should the new right have similar conditions to the existing Class Q right?
It is not considered that this proposal would actually assist in creating more homes for rural workers, because the current regulations do not allow such new homes
(which would be market homes) to be restricted to agricultural workers or affordable housing. In addition, dwellings of 150m² are on the small side, and so the market for people keen to live in the countryside who would be prepared to live in such small properties is thought likely to be low.

Some more careful thought also needs to be given as to how the mechanism can work so as to actually ensure that the properties are built out as per the prior approval; the system currently allows immediate applications to be made to vary conditions to significantly expand the home and a fuller response, and this needs to be tightened up, to close loopholes. A fuller response on this point will be made.
Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan: 2017/18-2021/22

Cabinet Member: Cllr John Fuller, Economy and External Affairs

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1. Introduction

1.1 Key pieces of infrastructure are required to support the planned level and distribution of growth set out in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), such as new or expanded schools, road junction improvements and green infrastructure improvements, with some of the funding coming from the pooled Community Infrastructure Levy CIL pot. The pooling of CIL is something that the Greater Norwich authorities agreed as part of the Greater Norwich City Deal. The Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan (GNIP), which is updated regularly, sets out and describes the infrastructure listed in the JCS.

1.2 In previous years, each Greater Norwich district has prepared an Annual (Infrastructure) Business Plan, or Annual Growth Programme (AGP), and the annual Growth Programme combined the contents of the three Business Plans. For the 2017/18 period onwards, however, it is been resolved to prepare a single Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) covering the whole of the three districts, for which pooled funding support from the Infrastructure Investment Fund (IIF) will be sought. The IIP includes infrastructure funding priorities for the subsequent four years to 2021/22 (i.e. it will be a five-year investment plan).

1.3 The (Greater Norwich) Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan (April 2017, Appendix 1) therefore sets out the priorities for infrastructure spending for 2017/18 and the subsequent four years. Projects of particular relevance in the IIP to South Norfolk include the Norwich Northern Distributor Road, the Long Stratton bypass, the Long Stratton Sports Hub (all of which were agreed in last year’s Infrastructure Investment Plan and so which do no need specific re-agreement) and various community and green infrastructure projects in South Norfolk.

1.4 The pooling of South Norfolk’s 2016/17 CIL payments to the shared pot; the agreement in principle to use pooled CIL in future years to help ensure the delivery of Norwich Area Transportation Strategy projects, particularly the Norwich Northern Distributor Road and the Long Stratton bypass; and agreement for seeking £500,000 from the pooled CIL pot to contribute to the Long Stratton Sports Hub project were all agreed in principle by Cabinet and Council in 2015 (in relation to the 2016/17 Infrastructure Investment Plan) and so therefore do not need to be agreed specifically again this year. However, for the avoidance of any doubt, Cabinet and Council are being recommended to confirm the principle of pooling CIL payments with the other Greater Norwich partners for future years.
2. Background

2.1 The adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS) identifies key infrastructure required to support the planned level and distribution of growth. The JCS has been developed with infrastructure delivery in mind and has an accompanying Implementation/Infrastructure Framework. The three local planning authorities have subsequently prepared a delivery plan, the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan (GNIP), which sets out and describes the infrastructure listed in the JCS and which is regularly updated (the most recent iteration was published in July 2016; see Appendix 2 for the weblink). The Annual Business Plans for each district and the combined annual Growth Programme are key parts of the GNIP process.

2.2 In previous years, the individual district Infrastructure Business Plans set out annually a programme for infrastructure which would help deliver the growth set out in the JCS and the Greater Norwich City Deal. In July 2015, Cabinet and Council agreed the 2016/17 South Norfolk Business Plan (see Appendix 3 for the weblink); this was subsequently incorporated into the Greater Norwich Growth Programme for 2016/17, which was agreed by the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) in October 2015.

2.3 Delivery of the strategic programme of infrastructure is vital to keep the planned housing and jobs growth on track and Broadland District, Norwich City and South Norfolk Councils have agreed to pool CIL contributions to assist in delivery of the programme as part of the GNGB Joint Working Agreement. The programme supports the key aims of the Greater Norwich City Deal, which has Infrastructure as one of its three strands.

2.4 CIL was introduced from 1 May 2014 in South Norfolk. Whilst a number of major planning permissions granted pre-CIL are still being delivered (with infrastructure being delivered through Section 106 agreements), every CIL-triggering development since 1 May 2014 has contributed to the pooled CIL pot, and so more CIL-funded infrastructure projects for South Norfolk are being sought for 2017/18 (and beyond) than in previous years.

2.5 Three projects – the Norwich Northern Distributor Road, the Long Stratton bypass, and agreement for seeking £500,000 from the pooled CIL pot to contribute to the Long Stratton Sports Hub project – were all agreed in principle by the GNGB in 2015 (in relation to the 2016/17 Infrastructure Investment Plan) and so therefore do not need to be agreed specifically again this year.
2.6 At their meeting on 24 March 2016, the GNGB sought a longer-term strategic partnership for infrastructure funding priorities, and so this (and future) Infrastructure Investment Plans (IIPs) will include projected infrastructure funding priorities for the next five-year period (so to 2021/22 in the case of this IIP, which is attached as Appendix 1).

2.7 After considerable discussion over recent months, at their meeting on 23rd March 2017, the GNGB agreed to recommend to the Greater Norwich authorities that the IIP for 2017/18 should be adopted without provision for maintenance funding but for the authorities to recognise that a sufficient future maintenance pot (2018/19 onwards) will be necessary as part of future investment programmes in the Greater Norwich area (see Appendix 4 for the draft minute of the agenda item at this meeting).

2.8 At their meeting in September 2016, when they rejected the IIP due to the (then) proposed maintenance fund of £300,000, Cabinet asked for further details of the prioritisation of smaller-scale projects seeking CIL contributions.

Update on projects with an element of CIL funding/borrowing in the 2016/17 Annual Growth Programme for South Norfolk

2.9 Councillors will be well aware that construction work on the Norwich Northern Distributor Road is well underway. It is hoped that the road will be fully open in late 2017/early 2018. Councillors will recall the previous commitments made by all the Greater Norwich authorities to support this project with up to £40m of local investment.

2.10 Pre-application discussions with the potential developers of the allocated 1800 dwellings and Long Stratton bypass and Hempnall Crossroads improvements and the Highway Authority have continued, with some useful progress made. It is hoped that pre-application public consultation will take place later in 2017.

2.11 Good progress has been made on the development of the Long Stratton Sports Hub. Consent was granted in May 2016 for the creation of a new Artificial Grass Pitch at Long Stratton Leisure Centre on land that will be leased to the Council from Norfolk County Council, and this project attracted a funding grant of £216,000 from the Premier League and Football Association Facilities Fund. The facility opened for use by Long Stratton High School and by the local community in November 2016. Long Stratton Parish Council has also gained consent for the construction of a new pavilion at their Manor Road Playing Fields and project professionals are in the process of being appointed and funding options are being explored. Options for the redevelopment of Long Stratton Leisure Centre are being developed and it is expected that these will be discussed with councillors later in 2017.
Discussions with Long Stratton High School regarding additional improvements to the facilities, including the swimming pool, are ongoing.

2.12 The Colney to Bowthorpe river crossing project is largely in Norwich City (and is being led by the City Council) but also includes land in South Norfolk, and aims to deliver a crossing of the River Yare and footpath improvements. This will enable improved access from Bowthorpe and Threescore to the Norwich Research Park and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. In relation to the main element in South Norfolk – a bridge crossing the River Yare – planning permission was granted earlier in 2017, with construction to commence shortly. Work has also been progressing on the elements of the project in Norwich City.

3. Proposals

3.1 The Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan (Appendix 1) describes the background and development of the IIP, updates on some major infrastructure projects previously approved for delivery, the proposed 2017/18 Annual Growth Programme (AGP), and (in Table 1) the Proposed Five-Year IIP. This information is therefore not repeated in this covering report, except to mention that a cash reserve of roughly £3m is proposed to be built up over the next three years, equal to one annual (part) repayment of the £50m which has been agreed to be borrowed to support the delivery of the Northern Distributor Road and the Long Stratton bypass.

3.2 At their meetings in June and July 2015, Cabinet and Council agreed to the principle of pooling CIL payments for 2016/17 to help ensure delivery of the Greater Norwich Growth Programme, and (as stated in paragraph 2.3 above) the principle of pooling CIL has also been agreed as part of the GNGB Joint Working Agreement. However, for the avoidance of doubt, Cabinet and Council are asked to confirm that CIL payments received in 2017-18 and in future years will be pooled with those from other Greater Norwich authorities to help the delivery of key infrastructure across Greater Norwich.

3.3 Appendix A of the Five-Year IIP includes details of the projects proposed as the 2017/18 AGP.

3.4 As mentioned above in paragraph 2.7, the IIP proposes no maintenance funding for 2017/18, but that longer-term maintenance arrangements will need to be agreed for the 2018/19 period onwards.

3.5 In response to Cabinet’s request for a paper explaining the prioritisation process for CIL funding for smaller sites, a paper has been produced (see Appendix 5). It details how the various project streams which feed into the Delivery Officers’ Group (Green
Infrastructure, Sports Strategy, Education and Community projects) are considered, assessed and prioritised. Whilst such a process of prioritisation can never be a precise scientific exercise, it is believed to be the most appropriate method of assessing and shortlisting the large number of potential projects to identify the most appropriate schemes to be allocated money from the pooled CIL pot.

4. Risks and implications arising

4.1 For some of the South Norfolk projects proposed in the 2017/18 AGP, further work to refine the precise details and costs of the projects (including any maintenance costs, and to whom those maintenance costs will fall) will be required. In general, although it is allowable under the legislation, there is a principle to consider about whether CIL money should be spent on maintenance of new infrastructure (as discussed in paragraphs 2.7 and 3.4). Any such costs should be kept to an absolute minimum (i.e. the design of new infrastructure should be planned to incur maintenance costs which are as a low as possible). It is also worth noting that the Council has reviewed its approach to the future adoption and maintenance of open spaces and infrastructure, due in part to the need to reduce the ongoing legacy costs of such maintenance. The Community Assets Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in January 2017 and the Open Space Supplementary Planning Document will be considered by Cabinet in summer 2017.

4.2 In 2015, the Government commissioned a national review of the operation of CIL by the Community Infrastructure Levy Review Panel (of which Cllr John Fuller is a member). The Panel submitted its report to Government in May 2016. This report was published alongside the Housing White Paper in February 2017. In paragraph 2.29 of the White Paper, the Government states that options for reforming the developer contributions system will be examined, with an announcement in the Autumn Budget (probably November 2017). It is considered highly likely that there will be a significant reform of the CIL regime, and there is a risk that some changes might have the effect of reducing future CIL income to the Council. The implications of any CIL regime changes will obviously be kept under review, and the GNGB agreed, at their meeting on 23rd March 2017 to ask officers to monitor the situation closely.

4.3 Whilst delivery of some of the projects proposed in the 2017/18 AGP will have environmental impacts, these will be more positive than negative (such as new tree-planting, and protection of wildlife sites). Most of the schemes are likely to require (or already have, or be related to a scheme that already has) planning permission, the achievement of which will require/or have required the environmental effects to be considered.
4.4 The Five-Year IIP and 2017/18 AGP will not have any negative impact on disadvantaged groups, and some of the proposals will have positive impacts (e.g. new/improved footpaths may open up areas for greater accessibility).

4.5 It is not considered that the Five-Year IIP will have any impact on crime and disorder.

5. Other options

5.1 Cabinet and Council could choose not to agree the list of South Norfolk projects proposed for inclusion in the 2017/18 AGP. However, these have been selected after considerable thought and discussion by officers (on a competitive basis) and are believed to offer the best balance of projects for South Norfolk.

5.2 It is not considered appropriate for Cabinet and Council to pass opinions on the projects proposed in Broadland and Norwich in the 2017/18 AGP (in previous years only South Norfolk projects were considered by Cabinet and Council), although projects in all areas will need to be considered by the GNGB at their next meeting in May 2017.

6. Recommendation

6.1 Cabinet is asked to recommend that Council resolves to:

- Agree the Joint Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan (Appendix 1) in general, and the 2017/18 projects proposed for South Norfolk in particular, for consideration by the May 2017 meeting of the Greater Norwich Growth Board, with the first year of the Infrastructure Investment Plan to be considered as the Annual Growth Programme for 2017/18;

- Note and agree with the resolution of the Greater Norwich Growth Board on 23rd March 2017 (see Appendix 4 for the draft minute) to not include any allowance for maintenance costs in the 2017/18 Annual Growth Programme, but that a sum for maintenance for future years will be necessary; and

- Agree to pool CIL payments for 2017/18 and future years beyond this to help ensure the delivery of the Greater Norwich Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan.
Appendices

1. Greater Norwich Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan (2017/18-2021/22) - attached


4. Part of the Draft Minutes of the Greater Norwich Growth Board meeting of 23rd March 2017

   Item 11 – The Future of Greater Norwich

   Following extensive discussion, it was resolved to:

   iv) agree to the partners’ adoption of the Annual Growth Programme for 2017/18 without any provision for maintenance funding but recognise that a sufficient future maintenance pot (18/19 onwards) will be necessary as part of the future investment programmes in the Greater Norwich area
5 Prioritisation of smaller projects for CIL spending – a paper by Greater Norwich officers (December 2016)

The Greater Norwich Delivery Officers Group’s (DOG) aim is to facilitate joint working to ensure the timely delivery of growth related infrastructure across the areas of Broadland District, Norwich City, and South Norfolk Councils. The DOG is the lead Officer Group for developing the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan (GNIP), the Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan and the Annual Growth Programme.

The DOG has a number of supporting thematic sub-groups which feed into the process of identifying and prioritising growth related infrastructure projects, some of which are supported by the Infrastructure Investment Fund.

The Green Infrastructure Programme Team (GIPT) prioritises green infrastructure projects (at the request and agreement of the Greater Norwich Growth Board through endorsement of their terms of reference) from across the Greater Norwich area and the working groups for the Marriott’s Way, the North East Growth Triangle, River Wensum, Wymondham and Yare Valley. Green infrastructure projects have all been developed to support the green infrastructure network adopted in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS).


Other community projects were identified through the following evidence bases:
- Norfolk County Council’s Library Service capital programme;
- JCS Infrastructure Framework;
- Adopted Neighbourhood Plans
- Additional projects that support the wider economic growth of the area i.e. Castle Gardens

All projects are highlighted in the GNIP, the evidence base for identifying schemes for delivery in 2017/18 and projecting future infrastructure priorities over the subsequent period to 2021/22.

Each project (green infrastructure and community) were assessed against the following criteria to determine which projects should be put forward into the proposed Annual Growth Programme:
- Positive impact on the wider economy
- benefit to the growing community
- ability to deliver homes and jobs
- link to the GNIP and strategic policies
- deliverability and the need to deliver ‘now’
- exhaustion of all other funding sources including match funding opportunities

The GIPT prioritised ten projects for delivery against these criteria. The DOG agreed with the GIPT’s assessment in the context of the wider infrastructure priorities of the GNIP more generally. As part of this assessment process community projects were assessed by the DOG. Overall a range of projects from across the various infrastructure themes have been prioritised to ensure that some local infrastructure projects are granted CIL funding and that not all CIL money goes to the largest projects (such as the NDR).

Work will continue to determine the order, timing and detail of education priorities. This work will be overseen by Norfolk County Council’s Children’s Services’ Capital Priorities Group. The Group will also keep under review funding availability. The current view of the Group is that Government allocations of Basic Need for school projects will be insufficient to cover delivery costs of Norfolk’s schools capital growth programme over the next ten years and that all options for covering this affordability gap will need to be examined. The Group’s view is that an annual allocation of funding from the IIF would reduce uncertainty and allow the affordability gap in the Greater Norwich area to be better understood. Based on the current projected CIL income figures the Infrastructure Investment Plan gives a commitment to an annual £2m allocation to support the delivery of the Children’s Services’ capital programme. As part of the annual review of the Infrastructure Investment Plan, these forecasts will be updated and if CIL income varies significantly from projected figures, the allocation will need to be reviewed by all parties concerned.

The Infrastructure Delivery Board is the lead Officer group responsible for signing off Plans and Programmes for recommendation to Councils and the GNGB.
Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan

April 2017
Introduction

This Infrastructure Investment Plan sets out the projects for which pooled funding support from the Infrastructure Investment Fund (IIF) is sought through the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) during 2017/18 to support the delivery of planned growth. It also projects the infrastructure funding priorities for the subsequent four years to 2021/22. The schemes it identifies are those considered to be a priority for delivery to assist in achieving our economic and growth targets as set out in the Joint Core Strategy and the Greater Norwich City Deal. One of the key strands of our City Deal was the delivery of a programme of infrastructure facilitated by a pooled funding arrangement between the Authorities.

This Infrastructure Investment Plan incorporates the updated position on infrastructure delivery since the preparation of the 2016/17 Annual Growth Programme (AGP) which was agreed by District Councils in November and December 2015 and by Norfolk County Council, as the Accountable Body, in February 2016. Also included are revised Community Infrastructure Levy income projections, updates on infrastructure development and programming from previous AGPs and planned preparatory work for infrastructure schemes in future years.

Development of the Infrastructure Investment Plan

As part of developing the 2017/18 AGP the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan (GNIP) has been updated1. The GNIP identifies infrastructure projects to 2026 and is used as the basis for identifying schemes for delivery in 2017/18 and projecting future infrastructure priorities over the subsequent period to 2021/22. The updated GNIP reflects progress made on infrastructure delivery and current knowledge of the timing of planned development schemes.

By including projected infrastructure funding priorities to 2021/22, this Infrastructure Investment Plan provides the longer term strategic partnership context that the GNGB sought at its 24 March 2016 meeting.

The first year of this Infrastructure Investment Plan should be considered as the proposed AGP for 2017/18. Thus approval of this plan will commit IIF funding to those projects identified for delivery in 2017/18. Projects in subsequent years will be confirmed through annual updates to the Infrastructure Investment Plan.

District Councils will consider the Infrastructure Investment Plan in April/May 2017. The GNGB will consider the Infrastructure Investment Plan at its meeting in May 2017.

As the Accountable Body for the GNGB, Norfolk County Council’s Policy and Resources Committee will receive a report on the 2017/18 AGP at its June 2017 as in previous years.

1 http://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/delivery/greater-norwich-infrastructure-plan/
The Infrastructure Investment Plan process is illustrated in Figure 1, below.

**Fig. 1 – Infrastructure Investment Plan Development Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATS</th>
<th>Green Infrastructure</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Education</th>
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</table>

The Delivery Officers Group use the GNIP to prepare a robust 5 year Investment Plan.

The councils approve the 5 year investment plan. Projects can be re-programmed at this stage.

If substantially changed from previously reported the Greater Norwich Growth Programme is taken back to Councils for endorsement.

The Greater Norwich Growth Board uses the 5 year investment plan to determine the Annual Greater Norwich Growth Programme. Members can consider the re-programming of projects at this stage.

Project Updates

Updates for projects already approved for delivery are included at Appendix B.

**Proposed 2017/18 Annual Growth Programme (AGP)**

For the year 2017/18 Greater Norwich partners have identified 17 schemes totalling £1.639m as priorities to receive IIF support. In addition to this the proposal includes an allocation of £2m to be held in the IIF for the purposes of delivering the Children’s Services’ capital programme and £844,667 as a cash reserve to be built up over the next three years equalling one year’s loan repayment.
NATS including the NDR and Long Stratton Bypass

The Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) programme identifies future investment in the six BRT corridors to link major growth locations, measures in the city centre and measures to aid public transport, walking and cycling, as well as the NDR and the Long Stratton Bypass.

The NDR has received a significant funding contribution from Central Government and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and the Long Stratton bypass will have significant developer contributions but both schemes needed additional funding. It is likely that the other NATS projects will be primarily funded from other sources (for instance £11m Local Growth Funding has already been secured for NATS through the Growth Deal and in excess of £12m secured for cycle improvements to 2020) although funding sources for longer term projects are yet to be secured.

The 2015/16 AGP agreed to the use of IIF funding to top up other funding to help deliver the NATS programme over the period 2015/16 to 2019/20. It has not been necessary to draw down IIF funding in 2015/16 and as such the Infrastructure Delivery Board have agreed to re-profile the previously agreed allocation to 2016/17.

The 2016/17 AGP agreed to use IIF funding in future years to ensure the delivery of NATS measures, including particularly the NDR and Long Stratton bypass, in order to provide delivery certainty. Construction of the NDR has now begun and £40m of borrowing to support its delivery has taken place during the 2016/17 financial year.

Work continues to determine the order, timing and detail of other NATS priorities and in securing funding from mainstream sources and other bidding opportunities as they arise. Projects currently being considered as part of the updated and refresh the NATS Implementation Plan include:

- A1067 corridor BRT
- A140 corridor BRT
- B1172/B1008 cycle link
- Inner Ring Road Junctions
- St Stephens/Red Lion Street Public Realm
- Castle Meadow Public Realm
- Tombland
- Longwater link

Local Growth Deal funding will be sought to help fund the refreshed and updated NATS Implementation Plan. It is likely that there will be further requests for funding from the IIF after the currently agreed programme ends in 2019/20.
Education

The education capital programme is significant over the Plan period with 16 new primary schools planned across the Greater Norwich area and 1 new high school planned in the North East Growth Triangle. In addition 12 schools require extending to support planned growth. Details of the requirements of growth on education provision can be found in the GNIP.

Schools prioritised to receive funding from the IIF include:

- Extensions at Blofield, Little Plumstead and Easton Primary Schools;
- Extension at Hethersett High School;
- New primary schools at Hellesdon, two at Beeston Park, Central Norwich, Cringleford, Long Stratton; and
- New High School in the North East Growth Triangle.

Work will continue to determine the order, timing and detail of education priorities. This work will be overseen by Norfolk County Council’s Children’s Services’ Capital Priorities Group. The Group will also keep under review funding availability. The current view of the Group is that Government allocations of Basic Need for school projects will be insufficient to cover delivery costs of Norfolk’s schools capital growth programme over the next ten years and that all options for covering this affordability gap will need to be examined. The Group’s view is that an annual allocation of funding from the IIF would reduce uncertainty and allow the affordability gap in the Greater Norwich area to be better understood. Based on the current projected CIL income figures the Infrastructure Investment Plan gives a commitment to an annual £2m allocation to support the delivery of the Children’s Services’ capital programme. As part of the annual review of the Infrastructure Investment Plan, these forecasts will be updated and if CIL income varies significantly from projected figures, the allocation will need to be reviewed by all parties concerned.

A major mitigation of financial risk/uncertainty for the largest scheme within the education infrastructure programme, the new high school in the North East Growth Triangle, would be for a borrowing arrangement to be put in place to ensure delivery certainty when required to support growth.

Green infrastructure

A programme of strategic projects is proposed by the Green Infrastructure Programme Team over the next five years. The total value of project proposed can be found in Table 1. Details of projects seeking IIF support in 2017/18 can be found in Appendix A.

Community

A number of strategic community projects are proposed through the Infrastructure Investment Plan. These include library improvements, open space, community facilities, play space and sports facilities identified through the strategic review of sports facilities and playing pitches which reported in 2015. The total value of projects proposed can be

\(^2\) Projects in the early development stages are not yet included.
found in Table 1. Details of projects seeking IIF support in 2017/18 can be found in Appendix A.

The Diamond Centre in Sprowston was awarded a loan of £1m in the 2016/17 AGP subject to exploration and finalisation of borrowing terms. Since the GNGB agreed the loan in principle Sprowston Town Council has agreed not to take up the loan.

**Maintenance**

It is important that the future ongoing maintenance of projects funded through the IIF is considered at the outset and forms an integral part of the project appraisal process. It is vital that investment in infrastructure by the IIF is only made where there is adequate provision for maintenance so the infrastructure does not deteriorate. The expectation will be that every effort will be made to minimise the future maintenance requirements through detailed design and to find alternative means of dealing with the maintenance element but it is recognised that sufficient funding for maintenance will be a necessary part of all future investment programmes in Greater Norwich from 2018/19 onwards.

**Cash Reserve**

The 2016/17 AGP agreed to borrow £50m at PWLB project rate to support the delivery of both the Northern Distributor Road and the Long Stratton Bypass. The Infrastructure Investment Plan proposes that a cash reserve equal to one annual repayment be built up over 3 years from 2017/18. This equates to £844,667 per annum.
### Table 1 – Proposed Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan

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Full details of projects included in the Infrastructure Investment Plan can be found at Appendix C.

³ A number of transport projects are included in the previously agreed AGPs
APPENDIX A – 2017/18 AGP Project Details

Broadland

Broadland Way - Green Lane North to Plumstead Road - £150,000
This section extends from Green Lane North and will tie in to the Brook Farm development and extend east of Thorpe End up to Plumstead Road, a distance of just over 1km. The route will predominantly follow the western edge of the Bittern Railway Line. At the southern point, the route will link to the existing cycleway at the north end of Dussindale. From Plumstead Road, the section heading north will be delivered through the NDR construction.

Strumpshaw Pit Circular Walk - £35,000
There is potential to expand the dog walking capabilities of Strumpshaw Pit, which is owned by Norfolk County Council. This could be achieved through additional parking, which would increase the distance that dog walkers travel. In addition, cycle rack provision will provide for other users. The existing site includes a circular walk around a closed landfill site with various wildflowers growing and it is commonly used by dog walkers, but is not fully accessible.

Wroxham Library self-access improvements - £43,000 (£120,000 sought across the Greater Norwich area towards 3 library projects)
This project will introduce both public customer toilets and self-service technology that enables people to use the library outside the current opening times. The technology allows the library service to automatically control and monitor building access, self-service kiosks, public access computers, lighting, alarms, public announcements and customer safety. Each library will be able to have increased opening hours, making access to the library more convenient for current and new customers without an increase in staff costs. This is a great opportunity for libraries to be accessible and relevant to more people.

Norwich4

Riverside walk: Fye Bridge to Whitefriars - £160,000
This project aims to complete a key stretch of the riverside walk in the city centre, between Fye Bridge and Whitefriars Bridge on the north side of the river. This requires acquisition of a strip of land to the rear of 40 Fishergate and creation of a short stretch of riverside walk here, linking with existing riverside walk on either side, and the creation of a stretch of riverside walk on land safeguarded for this purpose to the rear of the Bridge’s Court development. Completion of these short stretches of walkway will complete a continuous link between the two bridges, part of which has already been delivered through new development.

4 The 2016/17 AGP agreed in principle to fund the River Wensum Parkway project in 2017/18. Since this decision was made the River Wensum Strategy Partnership have received the outcome of the strategy work and re-prioritised the project for future delivery.
Barn Road Gateway - £40,000
This is part of a programme of projects being developed through the Marriott’s Way Implementation & Delivery plan, which have been informed by the public and stakeholder consultation that took place in 2015. The aims of the project are to improve the gateway to Marriott’s Way with signage, paving and removal of vegetation to improve legibility and raise the quality of this important entrance.

Sloughbottom Park - Andersons Meadow section improvements - £250,000
Also part of the Marriott’s Way Implementation and Delivery plan, this project involves enhancing a particularly poor section of the route to encourage greater use. Works would include path widening, providing street lighting, improving an adjacent storm drain (in partnership with Anglian Water, Natural England, and the Environment Agency), vegetation management, tree planting, and drainage improvements.

Riverside walk accessibility improvements - £200,000
A package of accessibility improvements to the Riverside Walk, to enable its use by all, including access measures on and adjacent to the walk, and improved signage linking the river with the city centre and other key attractors. It is proposed that the project is implemented in phases, with the development of a branding and identity for the whole Riverside Walk in the first phase, followed by physical improvements to the Riverside Walk in the city centre (i.e. downstream of New Mills) in phase 2. Funding for further accessibility improvements to the Riverside Walk upstream of New Mills will be sought in future CIL bidding rounds.

Castle Gardens - £150,000 (approved in principle last year)
Comprehensive restoration of Castle Gardens and improvements to Castle Green to complement the planned revamp of the interior exhibition spaces within the Castle. Rather than press ahead with an independent HLF bid, NCC are partnering the Museums service and their multimillion pound HLF bid with a view to incorporating the external enhancements as part of the project. Improving connectivity to the castle (signage/interpretation) from the city centre and the quality of the external environment to encourage use of the adjacent public realm will help the bid fulfil one of its aims to increase visitor numbers.

Football Pitch Improvements - £100,000
Football pitch improvement works at Eaton Park, Sloughbottom Park, Britannia Barracks and Fountain Ground including drainage improvements, improved grass species and improved goal facilities through the provision of new posts, nets and additional ground sockets. This will permit moving the pitches annually to prevent excessive wear, improving the playability of the pitches and increasing capacity.

Plumstead Road Library self-access improvements and car parking - £85,000 (£120,000 sought across the Greater Norwich area towards 3 library projects)
This project will introduce self-service technology that enables people to use the library outside the current opening times. The technology allows the library service to

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5 Marriotts Way Phase 3 was approved in principle for delivery in 2017/18. The Marriotts Way Strategy Group have re-prioritised delivery and have put forward projects as laid out here.
automatically control and monitor building access, self-service kiosks, public access computers, lighting, alarms, public announcements and customer safety. Each library will be able to have increased opening hours, making access to the library more convenient for current and new customers without an increase in staff costs. This is a great opportunity for libraries to be accessible and relevant to more people. The proposal is to also provide car and bike parking (including disabled parking) for customers using Plumstead Road Library although this is a secondary priority.

South Norfolk

**Protection/enhancement of the Lizard and Silfield Nature Reserve, Wymondham - £40,000**
To protect and enhance the Lizard and Silfield Nature Reserve by the creation of alternative green infrastructure routes (such as new permissive footpaths) for recreational access. The project will identify and agree new routes, which will be developed as appropriate. Necessary infrastructure such as stiles, fencing, signage/way marking, hedgerow planting/restoration and interpretation/localised publicity will be provided to encourage and manage use of the network.

**Improved Connectivity - Costessey Circular Walks - £6,000**
The project is part of the Marriotts Way Improvement and Delivery Plan, specifically aimed at improving public access to Marriott’s Way from surrounding residential areas in Costessey, through one or two additional (permissive) footpath/s, which would allow new signage and promotion of circular walks in Costessey based on Marriott’s Way. There is no requirement for surface improvement on the additional permissive paths, which measure approximately 200m and 180m (and are approximately 3m wide). In order to bring forward the permissive path/s, the landowner would require stock-proof fencing along approximately 180m of his land which borders Marriotts Way. A new gate would be needed at each end of the permissive path/s, and signage to promote their use.

**Crimpleford N & N Strategic Connections - £58,000**
Green infrastructure projects of various types to link N&N Hospital, Yare Valley Walk in Cringleford, and possibly along A47 corridor: A) a footpath between N&N hospital walk and application to the west of Newfound Farm (around 365m); B) habitat connections between N&N hospital tree belt and boundary treatment for application to the west of Newfound Farm; C) a footpath through Cringleford Wood (around 600m); D) improvement to CWS in Cringleford (details to be confirmed). This would supplement GI to be delivered by permission 2013/1494 and likely to be delivered by application 2013/1793, shown as a green dashed line on the map.

**Long Stratton Sports Hub – £500,000 (approved in principle last year)**
The project aims to bring together a number of facility-providing partners (South Norfolk Council, Long Stratton High School and Long Stratton Parish Council) to improve the sport and leisure facility stock in the village to support significant housing growth. It will create a new sport and leisure ‘Hub’ across three adjacent sites and provide new and enhanced facilities that are fit for purpose and better suited to the current and future facility needs of local residents. Management will be shared across the three sites, resulting in economies of scale and efficiencies in
service delivery. On completion, the following new or improved facilities would be available for school and community use.

Planning permission was granted in April 2016 for the creation of a new Artificial Grass Pitch at Long Stratton Leisure Centre. This project has attracted a grant of £216k of funding from the Premier League and Football Association Facilities Fund. The 12-week construction period is due to start on site in August 2016, with the facility ready for use by Long Stratton High School and by the local community in November 2016. Long Stratton Parish Council have also gained consent for the construction of a new pavilion at their Manor Road Playing Fields and project professionals are in the process of being appointed and funding options are being explored. Options for the redevelopment of Long Stratton Leisure Centre are being developed and it is expected that these will come before Members in late 2016. Discussions with Long Stratton High School regarding additional improvements to the facilities, including the swimming pool, are on-going.

Hales cricket and bowls clubhouse improvements - £30,000
There is a need for a replacement pavilion to serve Loddon and Hales Cricket Club and Hales Bowls Club on their shared site on Green Road, just of the A146, to the south-east of Loddon. The latter had been forced to relocate to the current venue as a result of housing development on their previous site off the Yarmouth Road in Hales. The proposed new pavilion will give both clubs a permanent home in spaces that meet their respective needs, allowing to develop and grow participation across a range of ages.

Wymondham: New sports improvements (artificial grass pitch for football/rugby) - £250,000
Ketts Park in Wymondham has been identified as being a location that would be suitable for a sports hub, the provision of which can ensure that there are economies of scale in outdoor sports delivery and that clubs can benefit from shared and jointly managed facilities, so it is proposed to provide a new full-size, floodlit artificial grass pitch (AGP) on the site which would take advantage of existing infrastructure. With tennis also being available on the Ketts Park site the argument for creating one of these hubs is strengthened and significant gains in sporting participation could be achieved. With the expected growth in demand for pitches in Wymondham due to the forthcoming housing, the carrying capacity of a full-size AGP will help to ensure that the quality of existing natural turf pitches (whose drainage will be improved as part of this project) is not compromised in future.

Diss Library self-access improvements - £25,000 (£120,000 sought across the Greater Norwich area towards 3 library projects)
This project will introduce self-service technology that enables people to use the library outside the current opening times. The technology allows the library service to automatically control and monitor building access, self-service kiosks, public access computers, lighting, alarms, public announcements and customer safety. Each library will be able to have increased opening hours, making access to the library more convenient for current and new customers without an increase in staff costs. This is a great opportunity for libraries to be accessible and relevant to more people.
APPENDIX B – Project Updates

Broadland

Early Delivery of Public Access to Harrison’s Plantation, The Breck and Boar Plantation – Norfolk County Council’s Natural Environment Team delivered a completed Woodland Management Plan in June 2015. This woodland management plan focused on Harrison’s Plantation and the Breck. Further work relating to Boar Plantation has been deferred. Initial works to ensure that Harrison’s Plantation and the Breck were suitable for public access were undertaken between August 2015 and January 2016. With the agreement of the current landowner, Persimmon Homes, the woods, now referred to as Harrison’s Wood, were opened to the public in May 2016. At the time of writing, work to complete the formal transfer of land into public ownership is ongoing.

BRT Rackheath to City Centre (Salhouse Road / Gurney Road) including Cycling – A project brief for scheme development has been agreed with Norfolk County Council, initial feasibility design work is being undertaken during 2016/17.

Total scheme costs are currently forecast to be in the region of £5M. An initial £400k of LGF funding for scheme delivery in 2016/17 was identified within the 2015/16 GNGB Growth Programme. This funding is now expected to be redirected to support the delivery of a junction and link road spur on Broadland owned land adjacent Plumstead Road to enable the completion of a road link between Salhouse Road and Plumstead Road, thereby reducing potential levels of traffic on Salhouse Road resulting from localised development which will support BRT on Salhouse Road / Gurney Road).

Whilst additional contributions for transport schemes along the Salhouse Road corridor may be secured as site specific mitigation from emerging nearby development proposals, it is likely that additional funds will be needed to fully implement bus and cycling proposals along this route. The need for additional CIL funding will be considered in subsequent investment plans.

Salhouse Road Walk / Cycle Route (including connections to Norwich City Centre via Mousehold Heath) – Project formed part of the larger programme of cycling improvements between the N&N Hospital and Salhouse Road, via Norwich City Centre and Mousehold Heath. The project itself comprised improved crossing facilities of Woodside Road and Salhouse Road for cyclists and pedestrians and a cycle path through Harrison’s Plantation providing links to the Racecourse PH and Eastgate Place Development.

The programme has now been re-prioritised with Harrisons Plantation Woodland Park now forming the termination of the cycling improvements. These improvements were completed during 2015/16.

The cycle path scheme through Harrison’s Plantation has now been deferred to be delivered through the S106 related to the White House Farm development. The current expectations are that this could be delivered as early as 2017/18.
North-East Norwich Link Road – The north-east Norwich link road between Broadland Business Park and Norwich Airport Industrial Estate will be predominately delivered through the development of permitted or proposed allocation sites in north-east Norwich.

Phase I of the Wroxham Road to Salhouse Road section of the route is now complete and work is expected to commence on Phase II during 2017/18. A detailed scheme for the Broadland Business Park to Plumstead Road section is currently under consideration by Broadland District Council and Norfolk County Council. It is currently forecast that construction of this element will be begun in 2017/18.

Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF) bids have been accepted in principle by the GNGB to support delivery of further elements of the link road between Buxton Road and North Walsham Road and phase I of the link road east of North Walsham Road.

Further detailed proposals for the link road will be considered as part of future planning applications. In order to ensure the timely and well-ordered delivery of the link road it may be necessary to support the delivery of some elements of the road through other funding sources.

St Faiths Rd to Airport Transport Link – Feasibility and scheme development has been begun with initial traffic surveys completed by Mouchel in June 2016.

The link is expected to be partially delivery through the development of the permitted development site north of Repton Avenue. However, in order to complete the link additional funds will be required. In total £1m of IIF funding has been allocated to this project split equally between 2016/17 and 2017/18 to enable the construction of the link. The delivery of some element of the link will be subject to construction being begun on related highway infrastructure through the permitted development site in a timely fashion.

North Walsham Road Core Bus Route and Blue Pedalway Cycling – Scheme development work was deferred from 2014/15 and is now programmed to take place in 2016/17.

The scheme development work will identify a scheme for the enhanced cycling facilities along Spixworth Road and North Walsham Road, for which £500k of funding was secured through the second round of DfT City Cycle Ambition Grant funding. The cycle improvement works are programmed to be delivered during 2017/18.

Blue Pedalway - Chartwell Road – St Clements Hill – Spixworth Road Improved Cycle Crossing Facilities and associated works - £120k of CIL funding was transferred to this scheme in the 2016/17 AGP from a previous commitment for a toucan crossing and associated work at School Lane / Chartwell Road / Denton Road. This transferred funding forms part of the match funding associated with the second round of DfT City Cycle Ambition Grant funding for improvements along the Blue Pedalway between Sprowston and Cringleford via Norwich City Centre. The overall cost of this scheme is forecast to be £400k.

The details of the scheme are currently being developed by the Transport for Norwich Team and on-site works are planned to be begun, and completed, in 2017/18.
Neighbourhood Cycle Enhancements Along Former Route of Blue Pedalway – School Lane / Chartwell Road / Denton Road – Toucan Crossing and associated works – £120k of funding for the implementation of this scheme in 2015/16 was identified in the 2015/16 GNGB Growth Programme. This was reallocated to improve crossing facilities of the outer ring road at St Clements Hill / Chartwell Road / Spixworth Road as part of the delivery of cycling improvements enabled by the second round of DfT City Cycle Ambition Grant funding, see above.

Notwithstanding the above a further grant of £120 was made in the 2016/17 AGP for the School Lane / Chartwell Road / Denton Road scheme on the basis that, enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists in this location remain an important local infrastructure priority. Subsequent scheme development work has however identified that an appropriate improvement cannot be delivered within this budget. The Infrastructure Delivery Board has agreed that this grant be reallocated to the North Walsham Road corridor to bolster the enhancements to be delivered through the DfT City Cycle Ambition Grant funding.

Improved Cycle Crossing of Cannerby Lane / Wroxham Road / Cozens Hardy Road – Scheme development deferred and its rescheduled commencement date is pending.

Broadland Way (Thorpe St Andrew to Wroxham Cycle and Pedestrian facilities) – Feasibility / scheme development was undertaken during 2015/16. A bid is included in the 2017/18 AGP for £150k to deliver a section of the scheme between Plumstead Road and Green Lane.

Broadland Business Park Rail Halt – The potential for a station at the Business Park has been investigated as part of a larger study for the Bittern Line. The Study has now completed and has concluded that the business case for improving the Bittern Line is sufficiently strong as to justify further work and research. Now that an evidence base has been gathered on the needs and feasibility, discussions are beginning with partner organisations, including the rail industry, on the merits of a Bittern Line Improvements Project Board. If agreed, the likely first task of the Project Board would be to commission a further study, for ‘Option Selection’ in accordance with stage 3 of Network Rail’s Governance for Railway Investment Process (GRIP).

North East Norwich Growth Triangle Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan – Norfolk County Council’s Natural Environment Team delivered the feasibility study as proposed during 2015/16. This study will be used to inform future priorities for green infrastructure investment and as the basis of future negotiations with developers on planning applications.

East Broadland Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan – Norfolk County Council’s Natural Environment Team delivered the feasibility study as proposed during 2015/16. This study will be used to inform future priorities for green infrastructure investment and as the basis of future negotiations with developers on planning applications.

North-West Forest and Heath Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan – Norfolk County Council’s Natural Environment Team were formerly engaged to produce a feasibility study during 2015/16. This work has, however, now been deferred and a new contract is expected to be let to complete the work 2017/18.
Thorpe Ridge: Protection and Enhancement of Woodlands and Provision of Public Access
– Norfolk County Council’s Natural Environment Team were formerly engaged to produce a feasibility study during 2015/16. This work has, however, now been deferred and a new contract is expected to be let to complete the work 2017/18.

Norwich

Wensum Riverside Walk – The development of a revised layout and design for the Oasis site adjacent to Fye Bridge on the River Wensum. In partnership with key stakeholders to enhance the site to maximize its use, linkages and potential for access to the river. Project completed.

Earlham Millennium Green – Complete refurbishment of pedestrian routes through Millennium Green. Project completed.

Mariotts Way – Improvements to Marriott’s Way within the urban area to encourage commuting by bicycle and on-foot. Phases 1 and 2 completed.

Heathgate – Pink Pedalway – The construction of a 3m wide lit cycling and walking path between Heathgate and Gurney Road at the junction with Britannia Road. The project provides a missing link between Heathgate and Gurney Road in order to provide a more direct and strategic route on the Pink Pedalway (NE Growth Triangle / Heartsease to Norwich Research Park). Project complete.

Golden Ball Street/Westlegate
- Phase 1 works completed
- Phase 2 works including those on Westlegate are continuing. Temporary access from Westlegate has now switch to from the St Stephens Plain direction so that work on the upper part of Westlegate can continue
- Work is currently underway at St Stephens Plain, the security CCTV has been relocated and this has allowed the traffic lane to be moved over to the other side of the new refuge islands
- The temporary pedestrian crossing has been relocated from Golden Ball Street to All Saints Street; it will remain in operation until early 2017

Eaton Interchange – Draft brief issued to create a bus rapid transit interchange in Eaton with the following features:
- Printed and electronic travel information;
- Size and layout that adequately accommodates the numbers of expected bus passengers and provides sufficient cover from the elements;
- Good accessibility for all users;
- Cycle parking;
- Reduce delays and difficulties turning left in the centre of Eaton for inbound buses;
- Reduce the visual blight of highway clutter in the centre of Eaton in line with the conservation area appraisal; and
- Provide space for comfortable and safe two way cycling on the cycle track adjacent to slip road between the centre of Eaton and Newmarket Road to the south of the A11.
Carrow Bridge to Deal Ground riverside path – Delivery of a short section of cycle / footway on north bank of the River Wensum will provide a key ‘missing link’ in the route between Norwich city centre / rail station and Whitlingham Country Park. The project is part of overarching vision to improve links between Norwich City centre and Whitlingham Country Park, alongside a new bridge across the River Wensum, to be delivered through development of Deal / Utilities site. It forms part of the vital connection to allow the development of the Deal Ground and utilities site. Funding will supplement £250K of existing Sustrans money.

Colney River Crossing (NRP to Threescore) – see below

South Norfolk

The following projects were identified in the 2015/16 and/or 2016/17 South Norfolk Annual Infrastructure Business Plan for commencement and/or delivery to 2020/21:

Norfolk & Norwich Hospital Health Wood Walks – a footpath through the tree-belt surrounding the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital – was completed in autumn 2015, and ended up coming in under budget due to good contract management by the appointed site contractor.

Long Stratton Bypass & Hempnall Crossroads – the Long Stratton Area Action Plan was adopted in May 2016, confirming the allocation of at least 1,800 homes and a corridor for the bypass. Further pre-application discussions work with the landowners/developers promoting the delivery of the bypass and the allocation of 1,800 homes in Long Stratton has taken place and a planning application(s) is expected to be lodged by the end of 2016.

A47 improvements (particularly Thickthorn junction improvements and Easton-North Tuddenham dualling) – funded and delivered by Highways England – Highways England feasibility work has been completed and the options development phase has commenced (it is expected to last until December 2016). Preferred improvement solutions will be announced in mid-2017, with the start of the statutory process in mid-2018 and construction predicted to start in 2020.

Longwater junction and Easton strategy improvements (including walking and cycling) – Improvements are required in the Longwater and Easton area of Norwich to resolve existing issues on the transport network and accommodate additional traffic arising from planned growth as set out in the adopted Joint Core Strategy for the Norwich area. After carrying various feasibility studies to address these pressures the following a number of smaller scale measures have been identified. Several have now been completed and were funded by the new retail store and housing development. Detailed design work continues for several other measures. Assessments carried out in October 2015 concluded that both the A1074 to Longwater link Road and a second A47 bridge are effective in enabling the Longwater junction to operate satisfactorily in the future.

The assessment looked at the possibility of constructing a new link across or adjacent to the closed landfill site and concluded that it would be possible to construct an A1074 to
Longwater area link road adjacent to the Costessey landfill site by removing small amounts of the landfill material. This option is likely to cost around £10m and would be cheaper and easier to deliver than a new bridge over the A47, making it the preferred solution.

As yet no funding source for this work has been identified.

**Marriott's Way improvements** – various improvements to Marriott’s Way (which passes through all three districts) were agreed in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 AGPs. In South Norfolk, improvements (to the value of approximately £100,000) to the cycle and footpath section between Gunton Lane and Red Bridge Lane were funded by CIL (including surface dressing improvements, surface water drainage improvements and improved directional signs). Preparatory works have been completed and re-surfacing is hoped to be carried out soon.

**Colney River Crossing (NRP to Threescore)** – a new footbridge and cycle path improvements to link Bowthorpe (Threescore) with the Norwich Research Park was awarded £401,000 in the 2016/17 Infrastructure Investment Plan mostly in Norwich, with £150,000 of this money earmarked for the South Norfolk section (principally the new bridge over the River Yare). Feasibility and design work has taken place, there has been consultation of local residents, and a planning application for the South Norfolk section is expected to be submitted in autumn 2016.

**Other Norwich Area Transportation Scheme Projects** – various A11 and A140 Corridor South Norfolk NATS projects (as part of a four-year programme running from 2015-19) were agreed as part of the 2015/16 Growth Programme, with LGF money secured. Scheme design of the Roundhouse Way Bus Interchange and the Cycle Link Extension Hethersett-Wymondham has taken place and is ongoing. Little work has taken place on the B1172 bus/cycle enhancements and Bus Priority Harford A47 junction to date, but it is expected that work will commence in 2016/17.
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<td>Area-wide</td>
<td>MW: Biodiversity Management with Community Engagement</td>
<td>160</td>
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<td>Wherryman’s Way : Yare Valley Cycle Route</td>
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<td>170</td>
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<td>Boudicca Way cycle route</td>
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<td>MW: Inner Ring Road crossing</td>
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<td>Broadland</td>
<td>Local walking circulars with links to pubs, restaurants and cafes</td>
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<td>CIL/S106/Nbhd CIL</td>
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<td>1,472 - S106, CIL, HLF</td>
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<td>35 11 S106/CIL</td>
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A47 Route Improvements – Highways England Consultation
South Norfolk Council Response

Report of the Planning Policy Manager
Cabinet Member: John Fuller (The Economy and External Affairs)

CONTACT
Adam Nicholls 01508 533809
anicholls@s-norfolk.gov.uk
1. Introduction

1.1 Highways England is consulting on proposed options for seven A47 Improvement schemes, including upgrading the Thickthorn junction and dualling the stretch between Easton and North Tuddenham (http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a47-corridor-improvement-programme/). The purpose of this report is to present the proposed South Norfolk Council response to this consultation for Cabinet’s agreement.

2. Background

2.1 There have long been demands for improvements to various parts of the A47 trunk road, which now runs (following a recent change) from Lowestoft through Yarmouth and Norwich to the A1 at Peterborough, with the A47 Alliance (of local authorities, MPs and business groups) set up some years ago to lobby for improvements. Key “hotspots” include the Vauxhall roundabout in Yarmouth, the Acle Straight, various other single-carriageway stretches, and the Thickthorn A11/A47 junction.

2.2 The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in November 2014, that a £15bn programme of road improvements would be made across the country, with the east of England benefiting from 15 new schemes worth around £1.5bn, as the “Road Investment Strategy”. These improvement schemes are all on trunk roads or motorways, and so will be funded by Highways England, rather than developers, local authorities or the New Anglia LEP.

2.3 Seven A47 improvement schemes were announced:

- A47 North Tuddenham-Easton dualling;
- A47/A11 Thickthorn junction improvements;
- A47 junction improvements in Great Yarmouth, including reconstruction of the Vauxhall roundabout;
- A47 Acle Straight safety improvements and joint working with Natural England to consider mitigation measures for potential longer-term improvements and safety measures;
- A47 Blofield-North Burlingham dualling;
- A47/A141 Guyhirn junction improvements; and
• A47 Wansford-Sutton dualling.

2.4 Since the Government announcement in 2015, Highways England has undertaken significant early work to develop potential schemes to deliver the improvements. According to Highways England, the improvements are needed to relieve congestion hotspots and increase accessibility to Norwich, Peterborough and Great Yarmouth and to support the significant growth proposed in the area. The schemes have also been designed to improve safety performance and reduce accidents.

2.5 Even with these improvement measures made, a series of single-carriageway stretches will still exist, including the Acle Straight, and most of the section running from Dereham to King’s Lynn. The A47 Alliance wishes to see the entire length of the A47 dualled and will continue to lobby for this to occur as soon as is practicable.

2.6 Highways England’s objectives for all the proposed A47 improvement schemes (see the weblink above for more details) are:

• Supporting economic growth;
• A safe and serviceable network;
• A more free-flowing network;
• Improved environment;
• An accessible and integrated network; and
• Value for money.

3. Proposals

3.1 Of the seven proposed Improvement schemes, there are two of direct relevance to South Norfolk. It is worth noting that full details of the improvement options and mitigation measures are not included in the consultation material; further detail will be worked up following consideration of the consultation comments (see section 5 for more details).
3.2 **Thickthorn junction (see plan at Appendix 1)**
The A47/A11 Thickthorn junction provide access to the A47 via the A11 and B1172 Norwich Road for Eaton, Cringleford, Hethersett and Wymondham. Studies by Highways England have identified the unsuitability of the current junction layout to accommodate the dominant movements through the junction between the A11 and A47 during peak hours (especially northbound traffic on the A11 seeking to join the eastwards A47 towards Great Yarmouth). This is predicted to worsen in future years due to growth in long distance traffic and large residential developments taking place in Hethersett, Cringleford, Wymondham and Attleborough in particular.

3.3 It is proposed to upgrade the existing junction to a high-quality interchange, making journeys safer and more reliable. The proposed option would re-route traffic away from the existing Thickthorn junction which would release capacity for other traffic movements. Improvements are proposed to:
- Create new free-flow links, in both directions, between the A11 and the A47 heading east (a new road will come off left from the northbound A11, tunnel underneath the A11 and the A47, and then join the A47 eastbound), and a new lane will connect the westbound A47 with the A11 southbound at-grade, avoiding the Thickthorn roundabout completely);
- Improve the existing A11 signalised junction;
- Improve the existing A11 Roundhouse Road roundabout;
- Reconnect Cantley Lane with Cantley Lane South.

3.4 The only option being consulted on is the one described above. Other options were assessed at an earlier stage by Highways England, but ruled out (fuller details of these options can be seen on the Highways England website).

3.5 Other smaller-scale improvements to the Thickthorn junction will be carried out using S106 monies from various developments.

**Easton to Tuddenham dualling (see maps of the options at Appendix 2)**

3.6 Although approximately half of the A47 is already of dual carriageway standard, the section between North Tuddenham and Easton is still single carriageway. This results in congestion at peak times (particularly on weekday mornings) and it has a poor safety record. Highways England has highlighted the following key issues:
- Road layout;
- Difficulty of accessing and crossing the A47 from side accesses and roads;
• Standard of the road and junction;
• Traffic levels outgrowing the capacity of the road, causing tailbacks and delays;
• Limited opportunities for overtaking slower moving vehicles; and
• Development in the local area (such as the 900-dwelling permission at Easton).

3.7 It is proposed to upgrade this section of the A47 to a high-quality dual carriageway and four potential route options are presented in the consultation:
  • Option 1 - Building a new dual carriageway to the north of the existing A47;
  • Option 2 - Dualling the existing A47, largely on-route;
  • Option 3 - Building a new dual carriageway to the north and then south of the existing A47 (crossing in the vicinity of Church Lane and Sandy Lane area); and
  • Option 4 - Building a new dual carriageway to the south of the existing A47.

3.8 No details of the proposed revised junction arrangements for the “start” (Easton) and “finish” (Tuddenham) of the new dual carriageway section are given, although Highways England has stated verbally that they are highly likely to be at-grade junctions. In response to questions at the launch event, Highways England stated that they are well aware of the both the Easton Food Hub proposal and the desire of the Greater Norwich authorities to deliver the so-called Western Link Road (connecting the end of the NDR at Drayton to the A47 in the vicinity of Easton), and will continue discussions with Norfolk County Council and other relevant bodies to ensure that they are fully informed of the latest developments in these areas.

Other details

3.9 There are several other schemes which form part of the consultation which, although outside South Norfolk, are key in terms of economic prosperity and the encouragement of growth, particularly for Greater Norwich. These include Blofield to North Burlingham dualling and Great Yarmouth Vauxhall junction improvements. Further details about these proposed schemes can be viewed on the Highways England website at http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a47-corridor-improvement-programme/.

3.10 The consultation period runs for slightly less than six weeks from Monday 13th March until Friday 21st April 2017. Although the consultation closes on 21st April (the date of this Cabinet meeting), Highways England has indicated that they will accept comments submitted shortly after the closing date of the consultation, should this be necessary.
3.11 Several stakeholder workshops have taken place, run by Highways England; those of relevance to South Norfolk were held at Cringleford on 25th and 27th March, Hethersett on 28th March and Easton on 8th April (with Honingham and Hockering on 6th and 7th April respectively). The workshops gave local residents and others the opportunity to discuss the potential schemes in more detail with Highways England.

4 Proposed response

4.1 The proposed A47 improvements are to be warmly welcomed. The A47 has a number of shortcomings given its importance as a trunk road connecting the ports of Lowestoft and Yarmouth with Norwich, King’s Lynn and the A1 at Peterborough, and planned and future growth will place further pressure on the road. All seven improvement plans are considered vitally important, but the Council is also supportive of the A47 Alliance’s desire for the whole length of the route to be dualled eventually.

4.2 The details of the proposed South Norfolk Council response to the consultation is attached as Appendix 3. Construction impacts will be particularly significant, and comments are recommended to be made to emphasise the importance of a detailed assessment of impacts (and mitigation measures) both during the construction phase and for the completed schemes, for noise, air quality and artificial light in particular. For example, were much of the work proposed to be undertaken during night-times and weekends (to minimise traffic disruption), it would inevitably impact more significantly on some local residents, so an appropriate balance would need to be found. No references are made in the consultation material to construction impacts, so it is expected that later phases of consultation would consider this in more detail.

4.3 As noted above, there is often a tension in major road schemes between completing improvement works at the earliest practicable opportunity (to secure the long-term benefits to road-users and the economy and environment) and the short-term disruption to traffic flows; the quicker the construction period, the more severe the local impacts often are. For this reason, schemes which are largely delivered off-route are likely to lead to significantly less disruption and delays than on-route schemes, and this is factored in to the assessment of route options by Highways England. As noted in paragraph 5.3 below, there is the added complication of seven separate sets of improvement works planned along the A47; the impact of all seven schemes being undertaken at the same
time would be likely to lead to unacceptable cumulative traffic (and thus also economic and environmental) impacts, so some prioritisation will be important.

4.4 As stated above in paragraph 3.1, there is already significant committed growth in the area (set out in the Joint Core Strategy and other Local Plan documents), and although future growth plans have not been finalised in the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan, it is inevitable that there will be additional housing and employment growth (both within and outside Greater Norwich), which will put further pressure on the A11 and A47. It is therefore very important that the junction improvements and dual carriageways are as “future-proofed” as is practicable (recognising that Highways England has to demonstrate value for money for schemes and has a finite pot of money to carry out all schemes).

4.5 The Council does not have the technical expertise or knowledge to comment on the engineering feasibility of the options proposed, nor whether there are any other options that should be assessed in more detail by Highways England.

**Thickthorn junction**

4.6 The Council is very supportive of the proposed option as suggested, recognising the impacts of traffic congestion on the efficient current working of the junction. A solution which removes some traffic movements from the junction completely (as is proposed) is also far preferable to other solutions that seek to better “manage” traffic on the junction through at-grade measures, and it is welcomed that Highways England recognises that such solutions would not perform well against the objectives. It is inevitable that there would be some impacts on some receptors, such as committed growth areas in Cringleford, some historic buildings and landscapes (particularly connected to Intwood Hall) and there would be some environmental impacts too; appropriate mitigation measures and the refinement of the precise details of the scheme will need to be undertaken as the scheme progresses (see paragraph 5.2 below for the future scheme timetable).

4.7 Whilst some of the improvement works will take place off-route, tunnelling underneath the A11 and A47 will clearly have some operational impacts on the junction during the construction phase. It will be important that these impacts are minimised as far as is practicable, to avoid excessive traffic congestion and driver frustration.
4.8 **Easton to Tuddenham Dualling**
Most of this section falls within Breckland district, with only the first part within South Norfolk (and a small part in Broadland district). It is not considered that there are many significant differences between the four options as they relate to South Norfolk. However, there are three key points to make in the response.

4.9 Firstly, it is slightly disappointing that there is no details of the proposed junction arrangements, as this is an important matter. It is considered there would be benefits from moving the Easton junction a little distance to the west, as firstly this could minimise the impact on the Grade I-listed Easton Church, and secondly it could allow more direct access to the Food Enterprise Zone and the proposed Food Hub site. In any case, it is especially important that the revised junction would enable an appropriate connection to the Western Link Road, should this scheme progress further. This would mean that the roundabout should be design and aligned to allow this link to be connected in without significant further engineering of the roundabout being necessary.

4.10 It is considered that Option 2 is probably least preferable, due to the potential for on-line improvements causing the greatest disruption during the construction periods, but other than that, the Council does not have a preference for options 1, 3 or 4.

4.11 **Other schemes**
The Council is recommended to be supportive of the Blofield to North Burlingham dualling schemes and the Great Yarmouth junction improvements in particular, but also the Acle Straight proposals, the Guyhirn junction improvements and Wansford-Sutton dualling, all of which will boost the safety and reliability of the A47. It is not proposed that detailed comments be made on the merits and drawbacks of these scheme options, as they fall outside South Norfolk.

**Prioritisation of A47 improvement schemes**
4.12 As noted in paragraph 5.3 below, it is unlikely to be practicable (availability of labour) or desirable (disruption to the road network) to undertake all the A47 improvements at the same time (in the event that they are all granted approval). Whilst it is not necessary for Highways England to reach a decision now, it is recommended that the Council states in its response that the dualling of the Easton-Tuddenham section should be the highest priority of the A47 improvements, to be followed by Thickthorn improvements. This is due to the daily congestion that occurs on the current section, as well as the poor safety record, and the impact this has on the economy of Greater Norwich and Norfolk. It would also give the earliest opportunity for the Easton Food Hub (should it go ahead) to connect directly to the A47 (through the new junction) and provide some greater certainty for the Western Link scheme to progress.
5 **Next steps in the process**

5.1 As the A47 proposals are of national importance (because they relate to a trunk road), the intention is that they will be taken through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) regime of Development Consent Orders (DCOs). DCO applications follow a defined course separate from normal planning applications (see [https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/) for more details), and one of the key elements is that, from the date the application is submitted, the Examiner (or panel of Examiners) **must** issue their recommendation on the application to the relevant Secretary of State no later than 12 months later. The Secretary of State then has a further three months to make a final decision on whether to grant the DCO or not.

5.2 The proposed timetable (suggested in the public consultation documents on the Highways England website address given above) is:

- **Summer 2017**: analyse consultation responses and undertake additional technical work;
- **Autumn 2017**: should a compelling case be made, a suitable option and route will be chosen. Further consultation will then follow with landowners and stakeholders on the preferred route and design;
- **Winter 2017/18**: statutory public consultation on the preferred route;
- **Summer 2018**: submit a DCO application;
- **Winter 2019/20**: decision on the DCO from the Secretary of State;
- **Construction starts**: spring 2020.

5.3 The consultation documents note that it may not be possible to undertake all the improvement works at the same time. The need to minimise disruption to the road network (and thence economy) is one (entirely sensible) reason given, but it is also considered unlikely that there will be sufficient pool of skilled labour to deliver these improvement projects contemporaneously, given the pull of other major infrastructure projects (such as other Highways England improvement schemes elsewhere in the country, Sizewell C, HS2 and increased levels of housebuilding).
6 Risks and implications arising

6.1 There will be no direct financial impact on South Norfolk Council as the works will be funded either by Highways England. However, improvements to the A47 are likely to have a very positive financial outcome in terms of supporting economic growth and enabling housing growth in Greater Norwich and Norfolk.

6.2 There is unlikely to be any impact on disadvantaged groups and as this is a Highways England consultation, it is presumed that they will have considered whether there is a need to undertake an equalities assessment.

6.3 There will be environmental impacts, with the particular impacts depending on which options are chosen and any necessary mitigation measures. The South Norfolk Council responses raises a number of environmental concerns (particularly noise and air quality) and through the DCO process it will be for Highways England to demonstrate that all practicable mitigation measures have been considered to reduce the environmental impacts of chosen options.

6.4 It is not considered that there will be any negative impacts on crime and disorder.

7 Other options

7.1 Cabinet could decide to make amendments to the consultation response before it is sent to Highways England. Alternatively, Cabinet could decide not to make a South Norfolk Council response to the consultation but this is not considered beneficial in terms of encouraging economic growth and supporting the building of houses.
8 Recommendation

8.1 Cabinet is recommended to
   i) agree the South Norfolk Council response to the A47 Route Options – Highways England consultation, with the Council being strongly supportive of all seven A47 improvement schemes proposed;
   ii) Delegate authority to the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for External Affairs, to agree any minor changes to the response prior to it being sent to Highways England.
Appendix 1 – Thickthorn junction improvements option (image from Highways England)
Appendix 2 – East Tuddenham to Easton dualling options

Option 1:
Option 3:
Option 4:
Our ref: A47 improvements
Date: 21 April 2017
Dear Sir/Madam,

A47 Improvements: South Norfolk Council comments on consultation documents

I am writing to submit South Norfolk Council’s responses to the current consultation on various scheme options to improve the A47. This response was agreed by Cabinet at their meeting on 21st April.

Firstly, the Council is very supportive in principle of improvement measures to the A47. As Highways England recognises, there are various clear justifications for the improvement measures (due to, amongst other issues, road safety concerns, traffic congestion and the need to take into account future housing and economic growth). Whilst the Council shares the ambition of the A47 Alliance for complete dualling of the A47, the proposed improvement measures are very welcome.

The Council believes that it is important that all seven of the proposed measures across Norfolk and Cambridgeshire should take place, to improve the overall performance of the A47 and boost economic growth. That being said, the Council is restricting more detailed comments to the two improvement schemes that lie within (entirely or partly) the district, the North Tuddenham-Easton dualling and the Thickthorn junction improvements.

**General comments**

There is already significant committed housing growth in Greater Norwich and beyond, with large allocations and/or permitted sites at, amongst other locations, Easton, Costessey, Cringleford, Wymondham, Hethersett, Bowthorpe, NE Norwich and Attleborough. Local authorities are also preparing the next generation of Local Plan documents, and although these are at an early stage, with no certainty of future housing need numbers or locations, it is inevitable that there will be further housing
and employment land growth in the future, at least some of which will put further pressure on the A47 (and possibly also the A11) through additional traffic movements. Whilst it is recognised that value-for-money is an important consideration for all Highways England schemes, it is extremely important that the improvement schemes are as “future-proofed” as is practicable. A base date of at least 2040 is suggested for the improvements.

The Council acknowledges that the schemes are still at a relatively early stage of development, and that fine details may not yet fully be known. The Council will engage in later stages of the improvement scheme process, potentially jointly with Greater Norwich partner authorities and asks to be kept fully informed of the latest developments.

Whilst the Council obviously desires for the improvements to be completed at the earliest opportunity, it is recognised that it will not be practicable or desirable, for reasons of either impact on the road network (and so the Norfolk economy), or the availability of labour, for all the schemes to be under construction at the same time. It is the Council’s opinion that the North Tuddenham-Easton dualling scheme should be the highest priority of all seven schemes, due to the daily congestion on this single-carriageway stretch, as well as the poor safety record. Thickthorn junction improvements should be the second priority, given the significant growth pressures (current and future) in the A11 corridor and the impact on the safe and efficient operation of the junction.

**Detailed comments**

A noted above, whilst supportive of the improvement proposals, there is the potential to have a very significant negative impact on a number of South Norfolk residents.

- **Construction Phase** – The construction phase will have the potential to have an impact on residents in relation to noise, vibration, artificial light and dust, particularly the works at the A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction. We would anticipate that much of the work will take place at night and weekends, when the potential for an adverse impact on residents would be greater. The public consultation documents for both the Easton - Tuddenham and the A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction schemes do not make reference to the construction phase and how the impact will be mitigated. A detailed assessment would be expected to be undertaken of the impact on residents in relation to noise, vibration, artificial light and dust for these schemes and mitigation schemes produced prior to commencement.

- **Noise** – The documents for both the Easton - Tuddenham and the A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction schemes states that the initial noise assessments show there will be no significant changes in noise in the built-up areas along the route. It is unclear if this is after mitigation measures (e.g. low noise road surfacing, barriers) and what will be the impact on other properties not in the built-up areas. The Council would expect a detailed noise assessment to be included with any application(s) for a Development Consent Order for these
schemes. It is not stated if noise will be assessed only on the basis of existing/approved developments or also include any land the Council may have identified for future development in the Local Plan. If it is the former, the proposed scheme may impact on the viability of any land the Council has identified for development.

- **Air Quality** - The documents for both the Easton - Tuddenham and the A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction schemes states that the initial air quality assessment has identified that there may be some worsening in air quality for some of the properties by the Thickthorn Junction. We would expect a detailed air quality assessment to be included with any application for a Development Consent Order for these schemes. It is not stated if air quality will be assessed on the basis of existing/approved developments or also include any land the Council may have identified for future development. If it is the former the proposed scheme may impact on the viability of any land the Council has identified for future development.

- **Artificial light** – There is the potential for any lights provided for the proposed A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction scheme to have an adverse impact on residents of Cantley Lane South and possibly any land the Council has identified for future development in this area. We would expect a lighting assessment to be included with any application for a Development Consent Order for the proposed A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction scheme.

**Thickthorn junction**

It is important that careful consideration is given to the potential for impacts of land allocated (and permitted) for housing in Cringleford, as well as some existing housing there and elsewhere. This is noted on the consultation map, but a more detailed appraisal will need to be carried out to refine the assessments; the impacts noted above could be considerable.

It is also vital that a scheme of working is developed which minimises the impacts on the functioning of the junction during the construction period. Clearly a balance will need to be found between implementing the improvements as quickly as possible (to gain the benefits as soon as possible) and minimising the effects on local residents and other receptors and the Council will express fuller views later in the process on this point.

The Council does not believe that there are any other sensible options for improving the Thickthorn junction, and so supports the one option consulted on.

**North Tuddenham-Easton dualling**

The Council does not have a clear preference for one of the four options proposed, although it is noted that Option 2, which is largely on-line, may lead to the potential for greatest disruption to traffic flows during the construction period, and so would be the least favoured.
Two key points are made by the Council. Firstly, Highways England is well aware of the advancing Easton Food Hub proposals, part of the Easton Food Enterprise Zone area. In order to best ensure its economic success (should it eventually be agreed), and minimise traffic impacts on the residents of Easton and other parishes nearby, it is **vital** that it should be able to be accessed directly from the remodelled Easton roundabout. A larger area of land there has also been proposed for a very large (4-6,000 or so) residential-led development through the Greater Norwich Local Plan “call for sites” process. Whilst the Greater Norwich authorities have not made any decisions yet on the potential location and scale of new allocations anywhere, and no inferences on the appropriateness of the Honingham Thorpe proposal should be drawn, it would similarly be important in the re-design of the Easton junction to ensure that a direct access to this land from the roundabout was not made impossible.

Secondly, the Greater Norwich councils have expressed considerable support for the principle of “completing” the Norwich Northern Distributor Road back to the A47 from Taverham through a “Western Link” road, and Norfolk County Council officers have been asked to undertake more detailed investigations into this proposal. Whilst there is no certain route (and it is possible there may never be), it is also very important that the design of the Easton roundabout is undertaken in such a way that it could allow a future connection to the “Western Link” to be made without the need for significant re-engineering of the junction. Highways England already knows of this issue, but is asked to ensure that it remains key in future design work for the dualling.

In the interests of reducing the impact on Easton residents and the Grade I-listed St Peter’s Church in Easton, as well as providing potential connections to the Food Hub and “Western Link”, the Council is of the view that the Easton roundabout perhaps should be moved somewhat further to the west than is indicated in the consultation documents.

If you have any queries or comments in relation to this response, please contact me.

Yours faithfully,

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**Tim Horspole**  
**Director of Growth and Localism**
Easton Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2042
- Submission for Examination

Report of the Senior Planning Officer
Cabinet Member: John Fuller, The Economy & External Affairs

CONTACT
Simon Marjoram, 01508 533810
smarjoram@s-norfolk.gov.uk
1. Introduction

1.1 In February 2017 Easton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, on behalf of Easton Parish Council, submitted the ‘Examination Version’ of the Neighbourhood Plan, which can be viewed here. South Norfolk Council has followed the regulations made provision for the Neighbourhood Plan to be made available for comment between Monday 27 March and Monday 8 May 2017. Any comments received, along with the Neighbourhood Plan itself and the supporting documents, will then be forwarded to an independent Examiner.

2. Background

2.1 Easton Parish Council has developed the Neighbourhood Plan in the context of South Norfolk Council’s Local Plan policies. Easton is defined as part of the Easton/Costessey major growth location under Joint Core Strategy Policies 9 and 10, and is therefore considered potentially suitable for significant growth during the lifetime of the JCS (2008-2026). As part of the process of developing the South Norfolk SSAPD an allocation for approximately 900 new homes plus a new village centre was proposed, consulted on and ultimately adopted in October 2015. The process of preparing and adopting the SSAPD was paralleled by a planning application for 890 dwellings and the new village centre, covering the majority of the allocation site, for which outline permission was issued in November 2016. Policy EAS1 in the SSAPD includes a number of criteria which will continue to help shape the development of the site. A number of other South Norfolk Local Plan policies also affect Easton, including parts of the Royal Norfolk Showground (SSAPD COS5), River Valley (DM 4.5) and Undeveloped Approaches to Norwich (DM 4.6).

2.2 Between 20 October and 2 December 2016, Easton Parish Council consulted on a Pre-Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan. South Norfolk Council sent a response which was endorsed by the 5 December 2016 Cabinet. Our response highlighted its support for the aims and objectives of the Plan and also suggested a series of modifications to specific policies and their supporting text, many of them relatively minor, which we considered would make the Neighbourhood Plan both more appropriate in terms its implementation trough the Development Management process and also more effective in terms of achieving the Parish Council’s aims and objectives.
3. Current Position

3.1 South Norfolk Council’s response was one of 43 received on the Pre-Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan. Comments were received from Norfolk County Council, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England, Norfolk Constabulary, neighbouring Town and Parish Councils, and a number of local residents. The Parish Council has summarised the main issues raised in the Consultation Statement as:

- Scale of development coming to Easton and the negative impact it may have;
- Maintaining Easton as a separate village and its character;
- Mix of housing, especially bungalows, and improving house design;
- Road safety, adequate off-road parking, and improving pedestrian and cycle links;
- Flooding and the increased risk of
- Protecting the Church of St Peter and its setting; and
- Maximising the new village centre and facilities within the new Village Hall.

In response to the comments received, a series of amendments have been made to the Neighbourhood Plan for the current Examination Version, which are detailed in Appendix 17 of the accompanying Consultation Statement.

3.2 Many of the comments made by South Norfolk Council have been accepted and appropriate modifications made. A small number of issues remain to be resolved and the Council would wish these to be dealt with by the appointed Examiner, these are set out in Section 4 below. The changes that have been made in response to comments by other parties do not raise any concerns for South Norfolk Council. The Council will work with Easton Parish Council to appoint an Examiner to conduct an Examination into the plan later this year and an application has been made to the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiners’ Referral Service (NPIERS).

4. Proposals

4.1 South Norfolk Council supports many of the changes made to the Examination version of the Neighbourhood Plan; however, a handful of issues remain to be resolved. The Council will forward the following comments to the appointed Examiner to be considered during the Examination into the Neighbourhood Plan.
South Norfolk Council supports the overall aims and objectives of Easton Neighbourhood Plan and welcomes the refinements to the plan that have been made since the October 2016 Pre-Submission version. The Council has a small number of remaining comments on the Examination version of the plan, which it considers can be suitably addressed through the examination process, in order for the plan to achieve sustainable development:

- **ENP Policy 3** – South Norfolk Council remains concerned that it would be outside the remit of the planning process to assess the ‘business case and operating model’ of that third party organisation which takes on the management of future open space; consequently it would not be possible to effectively implement that part of the policy and it is therefore recommended that it be removed. Failure to maintain the open space would instead be dealt with as a breach of the Section 106 agreement or condition for the development.

  *Suggested change: ‘c) an appropriate legally binding agreement for management by an established suitable management company with a viable and sustainable business case and operating model.’*

  The Council also considers it would be helpful if the text preceding the list of options for delivering open space emphasised that there was not an implied hierarchy of approaches.

  *Suggested change: ‘… the Developer will be required to demonstrate an effective and sustainable management programme for them by having any one of the following:’*

  To fulfil Joint Core Strategy Policy 1 (Addressing Climate Change and Protecting Environmental Assets) and Development Management Policy DM3.15 (Outdoor Play Facilities and Recreational Space). The Council’s Open Space SPG (available [here](#)) is also of some relevance.

- **ENP Policy 7** – South Norfolk Council is concerned that both the number of parking spaces per dwelling required (a minimum of two per dwelling and up to four spaces) and the requirements for their location will not necessarily lead to the best form of development. 2007 Norfolk County Council parking standards, referenced in the supporting text to South Norfolk Development Management Policy DM 3.12, sets a *maximum* of 1 space for a 1 bed property up to 3 spaces for a 4+ bed dwelling. The Neighbourhood Plan policy needs to balance the recognised high level of car ownership in Easton (Neighbourhood Plan, Table 1, page 37), with the need to encourage more sustainable transport patterns in the future. Experience has shown that
increased numbers of parking spaces, coupled with a requirement for them to be in front of or adjacent to the dwelling, can lead to layouts with a significant amount of tandem parking (i.e. cars parked in a line so that one car needs to be moved to enable the second to leave a parking space), which is not necessarily used effectively (i.e. still leading to on-street parking), and is a further cost on development (through land take and layout) with potential knock-on effects for other elements of infrastructure;

Suggested change: 3) Provide ‘off road’ parking (adjacent to or in front of new dwelling(s), where this provides a practical layout and is consistent with high quality design) with a minimum of two one spaces per dwelling based on the following standards:

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<th>Number of Bedrooms</th>
<th>Minimum number of car parking spaces to be provided</th>
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| 1                  | 2
| 2                  | 2
| 3                  | 2 - 3
| 4 or more          | 3


- **ENP Policy 9** – South Norfolk Council remains concerned that the requirement for a ‘buffer to screen (new development) from existing dwelling(s)’ is too prescriptive, and that the privacy of existing residents can be maintained through the scale and layout of, and distance between, properties, as well as through a screening. Planted screening can undoubtedly have biodiversity and landscape/townscape benefits, but consideration also needs to be given to the practicality of long term maintenance;

  Suggested change: ‘Where new development adjoins existing dwelling(s), the proposed new dwelling(s) should be of a similar scale and proportion to existing dwellings with the layout, distance between properties and/or the provision of a buffer used to screen from the existing dwelling(s) and retain the privacy of existing residents.’
To fulfil Joint Core Strategy Policy 2 Promoting Good Design and Development Management Policy DM3.8 Design Principles Applying to All Development.

- ENP Policy 13 – South Norfolk Council supports the added reference to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the supporting text; however, it would also be useful to include a reference to public transport enhancements in Policy 13 itself as part of ensuring a sustainable transport package (and consequently help reduce the necessity for multiple cars per household).

_Suggested change: ‘Where appropriate all new development should create opportunities to enhance and encourage the use of sustainable transport modes through the provision of footpaths, and cycleways and public transport improvements.’_

To fulfil Joint Core Strategy Policy 1 Addressing Climate Change and Protecting Environmental Assets, Policy 6 Access and Transportation and Development Management Policy Policy DM 3.10 Promotion of Sustainable Transport

4.3 In addition to the Policies themselves, the supporting Consultation Statement (page 133) and Implementation Plan (page 4) indicate that there is a commitment in the Section 106 Agreement for planning permission ref. 2014/2611 for South Norfolk Council to fund the new Village Hall; it should be clarified that the Section 106 Agreement is referring to the use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to fund the Village Hall, which is subject to a process of pooling with Norwich City and Broadland Councils to fund priority projects and should also note that, if and when the Easton Neighbourhood Plan is ‘made’, 25% of the CIL receipts will be administered by Easton Parish Council.

5. Next Steps

5.1 As noted above, following the end of the consultation period on 8 May, the Neighbourhood Plan, the supporting documents and responses to the current consultation will be forwarded to the Examiner appointed to undertake the examine the Plan. In order to “pass” the examination, the Examiner will need to be satisfied that the Plan meets the Basic Conditions tests of:

- Having appropriate regard to national policy;
- contributing to the achievement of sustainable development;
- being in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area; and
• being compatible with EU obligations (including not have a significant adverse effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site).

A Basic Conditions assessment has already been prepared and is available here, and the Council does not foresee too many difficulties with these tests being met, so long as appropriate amendments to address the points made above can be made. As well as assessing whether the Plan meets the basic conditions, the Examiner will address any outstanding issues raised by objectors in response to the Plan, including those set out in 4.2 above.

5.2 The Examiner will produce a non-binding report which may require modifications to be made to the Neighbourhood Plan to pass the Basic Conditions tests. The Parish Council could at this point choose to withdraw the Plan; however, it is more likely the Plan (modified if necessary) will proceed to a referendum, in order that it can formally be ‘made’ and subsequently used as part of the Development Plan for South Norfolk. South Norfolk Council also needs to satisfy itself that the Plan passes the Basic Conditions tests; subject to the Examiner’s assessment of the Council’s concerns (set out in paragraph 4.2 above), officers are not raising any fundamental objections to the Plan.

6. Risks and implications arising

6.1 A Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening has been undertaken for the plan and agreed with the relevant bodies and the environmental impacts of the draft Easton Neighbourhood Plan have been assessed through a Sustainability Appraisal.

6.2 The Plan is not likely to have any impacts on crime and disorder (the comments of Norfolk Constabulary on this issue have been incorporated into the Plan) nor is it likely to have any impacts on disadvantaged groups.

6.3 As with all Neighbourhood Plans, South Norfolk Council will be able to claim additional funding from the Government should the Easton Neighbourhood receive a positive recommendation from the Examiner that the Plan is appropriate to proceed to a referendum. However, SNC would also need to pay the Examiner’s fees and also pay for and administer the holding of the referendum. The costs are allowed for in the existing budget. Were the Plan to be later ‘made’ (adopted), Easton Parish Council would be entitled to receive 25% of CIL income from new development in the parish, rather than the standard 15%.
6.4 No other particular risks associated with the Neighbourhood Plan are identified.

7. Other options

7.1 The Council could choose not to comment on the Easton Neighbourhood Plan; however, this would not be considered to be fulfilling the Council’s duties to support the Neighbourhood Planning process, particularly if it was considered that the resulting plan could not be implemented through the Development Management process and/or led to a plan that was not effective in terms of delivering the Vision and Objectives of the community.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That Cabinet resolves to:

- forward the comments set out in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 of this report to the Examiner appointed to examine the Easton Neighbourhood Plan as the representation of South Norfolk Council; and
- authorise the Director of Growth and Localism to undertake any further work necessary to pursue the Council’s representations through the Examination process.
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<td>8 May</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2017-18 to 2021-22</td>
<td>A Nicholls</td>
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<td>E Goddard, A Mewes, M Fernandez -Graham</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>Charges to Developers</td>
<td>S Pontin/H Mellors/B Wade</td>
<td>L Hornby / K Mason Billig</td>
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<td>15 May</td>
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<td>De-investment of Community Assets</td>
<td>Bob Wade</td>
<td>C Hudson</td>
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<td>10 July</td>
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<td>Adam Nicholls</td>
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<td>O Draft Norfolk Strategic Framework</td>
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<td>17 July</td>
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<td>T Cooke</td>
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<td>C Treasury Management Half Yearly report</td>
<td>M Fernandez-Graham</td>
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<td>30 Oct</td>
<td>30 Oct</td>
<td>C Conservation Area Appraisals Review – Bawburgh, Dickleburgh, Hempnall, Mulbarton, Scole and Tacolneston</td>
<td>C Bennett</td>
<td>L Hornby</td>
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Key decisions are those which result in income, expenditure or savings with a gross full year effect of £100,000 or 10% of the Council’s net portfolio budget whichever is the greater which has not been included in the relevant portfolio budget, or are significant (e.g. in environmental, physical, social or economic) in terms of its effect on the communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.