

# Greater Norwich Development Partnership

**Date:** 30 September 2020

**Time:** 9.30am

**Venue:** Virtual Meeting

## **Board Members:**

### **Broadland District Council:**

Cllr Lana Hempsall

Cllr Sue Lawn

Cllr Shaun Vincent (Chairman)

### **South Norfolk Council:**

Cllr Florence Ellis

Cllr John Fuller

Cllr Lisa Neal

### **Norwich City Council:**

Cllr Kevin Maguire

Cllr Mike Stonard

Cllr Alan Waters (Vice-Chairman)

### **Norfolk County Council:**

Cllr Stuart Clancy

Cllr Barry Stone

Cllr Martin Wilby

## **Broads Authority:**

Cllr Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro

## **Officers:**

Phil Courtier

Helen Mellors

Jenny Mitchell (Comms)

Graham Nelson

Phil Morris

Matt Tracey

Marie-Pierre Tighe

## **AGENDA**

	<b>Page No</b>
<b>1. To receive Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>2. Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>3. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2020</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Matters arising therefrom (if any)</b>	
<b>5. Questions</b>	
To consider any questions received from members of the public in accordance with the Board's Terms of Reference.	
<b>6. Options for progressing plan-making in Greater Norwich</b>	<b>9</b>

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

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If you would like this agenda in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please call Mike Burrell, Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager on 01603 222761 or email [mike.burrell@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:mike.burrell@norfolk.gov.uk)



Please call Mike Burrell, Greater Norwich Planning Policy Manager on 01603 222761 or email [mike.burrell@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:mike.burrell@norfolk.gov.uk) in advance of the meeting if you have any queries regarding access requirements.

# Greater Norwich Development Partnership Board Meeting Minutes

**Date:** 10 July 2020

**Time:** 11.00 am

**Venue:** hosted by video link

## **Board Members:**

### **Broadland District Council:**

Cllr Sue Lawn, Cllr Shaun Vincent (Chairman)

### **Norwich City Council:**

Cllr Kevin Maguire, Cllr Alan Waters

### **South Norfolk Council:**

Cllr Florence Ellis, Cllr John Fuller, Cllr Lisa Neal

### **Norfolk County Council:**

Cllr Andrew Proctor, Cllr Barry Stone, Cllr Martin Wilby

### **Broads Authority**

Cllr Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro

**Officers in attendance:** Mike Burrell, Trevor Holden, Phil Morris, Graham Nelson, Matt Tracey, Marie-Pierre Tighe.

## **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman advised the meeting that through his consultancy Abzag, he was promoting, on behalf of the landowner, a site for residential development in Colney through the Greater Norwich Local Plan. When this site was under consideration he would declare a disclosable pecuniary interest and shall vacate the Chair and leave the room.

In the interests of transparency, he also brought to the Board's attention, that his father, Malcolm Vincent, through his company Vincent Howes, was promoting, on behalf of the landowners, a site for residential development in Costessey / Bawburgh through the Greater Norwich Local Plan. In this case under the provisions of the Code of Conduct, there was no interest to declare which would prevent him from participating in the debate and chairing the meeting.

He added that he would be declaring the same interests when chairing Broadland District Council's Cabinet and at Council when GNLP matters were considered.

Cllr John Fuller advised the meeting that he owned some employment land in Seething. He also confirmed that he no longer owned land in Lingwood.

Cllr Wilby informed the Board that he was chairman of a charity that was putting forward a site for development, he also had a family interest in a site in Greater Norwich.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received on behalf of Cllr Lana Hemsall, Cllr Mike Stonard and Cllr Stuart Clancy.

## **3. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

*Minute 4: Questions from the Public*

It was confirmed that the questions from Easton Parish Council had now been responded to in the Minutes.

## **4. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from the public.

## **5. DRAFT GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN (REGULATION 18) CONSULTATION: HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY**

This report provided a high-level a summary of representations received through the Regulation 18 consultation on the draft Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) held in early 2020. It also covered the main issues raised on the Strategy and the next stages for plan-making.

The consultation had received a very good level of responses with a broad range of views being expressed from a wide section of community bodies as well as a large number of individuals.

The Chairman noted that it was fortunate that the the consultation had not been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Member of the Board noted that some scepticism had been expressed over whether the GNLP would achieve its stated aims in respect of climate change and he suggested that it must be emphasised that mitigating climate change must be a key driver of the Strategy.

A Member observed that there was a preference for a greater urban concentration of development in Norwich, rather than a rural dispersal of development and also the recognition of the City as the key economic driver in

Greater Norwich.

He continued that there were some strong aspirational statements made in response to issues raised in the consultation and it should be ensured that these were delivered. In particular, he suggested that an extensive model of rural dispersal would be inimical to addressing the problems of climate change.

A Member suggested that the report was not easily accessible and requested that in future it should contain a narrative commentary on site locations rather than just reference numbers. He also noted that a suggestion from a respondent that the GNLP was unsound should be balanced by officer comments to make it clear that this assertion was incorrect and that the Plan was sound.

The Chairman added that it was important to record consultation comments as opinion, rather than fact.

It was confirmed that the site names would be included in future summary reports and that the soundness of the GNLP would be robustly asserted.

## **RESOLVED**

to note:

1. the consultation attendance and feedback; and
2. the proposed actions to be taken in the light of the issues raised in the consultation responses.

## **6. DRAFT GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN REVISED TIMETABLE**

This report presented a proposed revised timetable for the remaining stages of the GNLP in the light of the new circumstances arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the significant number of consultation responses received.

It was suggested, therefore, that additional time was required for proper consideration to be given to the comments received during the consultation to ensure that a robust evidence base for the GNLP was drafted.

Therefore, it was recommended that further work be carried out in three key areas; housing needs and delivery issues, a viability study and CIL evidence and economic evidence.

This work would be undertaken by consultants as well as through a six week focused consultation that could include progress made with the Norwich Western Link scheme.

The revised timetable would mean that there would be a three month delay to final adoption of the Plan in November/December 2022.

Concerns were expressed that the GNLP was being further delayed and it was noted that there could be other unforeseen obstacles ahead, but that they must

not allow the Plan to be delayed any more than was absolutely necessary and the resources must be put in place to ensure the delivery of the Plan.

It was also suggested that the work on economic evidence be brought forward as soon as possible to reflect the efforts towards the economic recovery both locally and nationally.

It was confirmed that bringing forward the commissioning of the economic study would be looked at.

A Member noted that additional data from the Office for National Statistics had recently been published that would be useful in assessing housing demand, so there was some benefit to revising the timetable.

It was also noted that the significant changes to planning legislation that were proposed to be introduced by the Government, would need to be factored in to the GNLP as well.

## **RESOLVED**

To endorse the timetable for progressing the GNLP and recommend that districts update their Local Development Schemes accordingly.

## **7. EMERGING GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN (GNLP)**

The report looked at two key elements of emerging Government policy; Planning for the Future and the Environment Bill, along with a potentially significant Department for Transport (DfT) document, Decarbonising Transport. All three were likely to have some impacts on the GNLP.

The report contained an analysis of how the proposals in the Planning for the Future document would affect the GNLP. Overall it was thought that the draft GNLP provided a good basis to respond to the proposed changes, as it was a flexible Plan. Similarly the GNLP already had a significant focus on developing green infrastructure, which should go towards meeting the requirements of the Environmental Bill.

A Member noted that whilst some of the proposals in the document were welcomed, such as prioritising brownfield sites, others could cut across some of the ambitions of the GNLP, such as Permitted Development rights that were detrimental to the retail sector and jobs, damaged the core City Centre and could lead to some poor quality housing. He also noted that was Permitted Development was not subject to the Community Infrastructure Levy so there was the potential of a loss of income for the partnership as well. The Board was also advised that the self build was unlikely to bring along much housing as the financial framework to support it was not sufficiently mature at this stage.

Another Member endorsed this view and recommended that, as the Regulation 18 consultation required revisiting retail policies should be re-looked at to ensure that they were fit for purpose.

The Chairman noted that these issues would be looked at and incorporated into the GNLP, as Government policy emerged.

**RESOLVED**

to note:

1. the emerging Government policy for local plans; and
2. the intention to incorporate new national policy, where possible, into the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan.

The meeting closed at 11.40am.



<b>Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP)</b>	
<b>Report title</b>	<b>Options for progressing plan-making in Greater Norwich</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> September 2020</b>
<p><b><u>Recommendation</u></b></p> <p><b>That the Board:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agrees the revised timetable for plan preparation set out in paragraph 48 of this paper and recommends member councils to update the LDSs to reflect this;</b></li> <li>• <b>Instructs officers to prepare a Regulation 19 pre-submission version of the Plan for consideration by the GNDP Board in December 2020;</b></li> <li>• <b>Agrees to the budget position summarised in paragraphs 49 to 51;</b></li> <li>• <b>Agrees to cease all work on the previously agreed CIL review;</b></li> <li>• <b>Keeps the position under close review. Further information is likely to be available in the new year on the level of housing need resulting from the standard methodology, the timing of the introduction of the new legislation and the detail of the transitional arrangements.</b></li> </ul>	

## **Introduction**

1. The current Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) timetable was agreed at the last [Greater Norwich Development Partnership](#) meeting on July 10<sup>th</sup> . It was subsequently endorsed by the three district council cabinets.
2. This revised and extended timetable reflected the intention of producing a well-evidenced, comprehensive local plan covering a broad range of issues to be produced with the minimum of risk. It established in paragraphs 1.2 to 1.5 of the timetable report that in the light of the large number of representations made on the draft plan (Regulation 18C) consultation, to have regard to new government planning policy on housing need (the publication of which had been delayed) and the revised circumstances arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, that the potential for producing a sound plan would be maximised by:
  - a. undertaking additional Reg. 18D consultation on key issues including: Gypsy and sites; small sites/settlement boundaries and potential changes in housing numbers;
  - b. updating delivery/supply figures, to engage with the industry over delivery prospects in the light of market circumstances and funding decisions, and to update the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and
  - c. updating the Viability Study, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and economic evidence to reflect the likely impacts of both Brexit and the Covid-19 crisis.
3. This in turn allowed for consultation on the possible allocation of the preferred route of the Norwich Western Link road to be included within the scope of the forthcoming consultation. It was considered this would assist its delivery and allow people to have a say on this issue, aiding transparency.
4. Since then, the production of "[Planning for the Future](#)" (White Paper, August 2020) and the associated [consultation document](#) on the proposed interim changes to the standard methodology for assessing housing need in local plans have dramatically changed the situation for plan-making nationally and locally. Such are the scale and significance of the changes proposed in these documents, the recently agreed timetable for the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) needs to be reconsidered.
5. The changes are considered further in turn below. The report then looks at the implications for the GNLP and recommends an approach to plan-making which reflects the dramatically changed circumstances the proposed changes to the planning system have created. It also sets out in paragraphs 28 to 31 below how the risks which caused changes to the GNLP timetable in July 2020 can be mitigated in these changed circumstances.

## **Planning for the Future**

6. The white paper contains a wide-ranging set of proposals for changing the planning system. It addresses planning for development (the forward planning processes), planning for beautiful and sustainable places (the development management process) and planning for infrastructure and connected places. The proposals are subject to consultation until the end of October. If taken forward, full implementation will require new primary legislation and

significant repeal of the existing legislative framework. The timetable for this remains uncertain, but aspects of emerging proposals may make use of new regulations and guidance produced in advance of the legislation.

7. The white paper points to an ideal of simpler rules-based planning and aspires to creating local plans which are far shorter in length and focused on site specifics and the allocation of sufficient land for development. Key aspects of the proposals in the white paper are:
  - Simplified local plans will be rules-based, with zoning of all land into one of three zones as follows:
    - o Growth areas – areas for substantial development in which outline approval for development will be given automatically;
    - o Renewal areas – these will be areas suitable for some development and densification, supported by a presumption in favour of development;
    - o Protected areas in which development will be restricted.
  - Having a plan is to be a statutory requirement. A plan must be adopted within 30 or 42 months of the introduction of the new system, depending on the date of adoption of the previous plan. Planning authorities which fail to achieve this will face government intervention;
  - The requirement for sustainability appraisal is to be scrapped and replaced with a sustainable development test;
  - The Duty to Co-operate is also proposed to be scrapped. Joint plans will still be encouraged, but not required;
  - Increased community involvement is proposed early in plan-making and reduced in implementation through major planning applications;
  - The new system will be based on data driven digital local plans (which will be machine readable) and digital engagement systems in planning;
  - A new standard methodology for housing requirements, which is expected to be based on the interim methodology currently being consulted on, will be introduced. Environmental constraints (such as green belts or national parks) will be factored in at the national level, so that each local planning authority (LPA) will be given a binding housing requirement to be met through their local plan;
  - Increasing housing supply, particularly in areas with high affordability pressures, will assist in increasing home ownership and providing for affordable rents. This will involve promoting competition by requiring large sites to come forward with multiple developers and supporting small builders;
  - The Housing Delivery Test will be retained, though the requirement to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply will be dropped;
  - Neighbourhood plans will be retained;
  - The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements are to be scrapped, to be replaced by nationally set infrastructure levy (IL). This is expected to be based on a proportion of the value of development delivered. The IL would be payable on completion of development and would be collected and spent locally. In addition, local authorities would be able to borrow against future income to forward fund infrastructure and have greater flexibility on spending, including on affordable housing.

8. The white paper makes it clear that new style local plans are expected to be in place by the end of the current parliament. This suggests that the primary and secondary legislation will be in force by the summer of 2022, approximately 30 months before the end of the current parliament. A further year is proposed to be given to authorities that have only recently adopted local plans under previous legislation.
9. The white paper indicates that there will be transitional arrangements introduced as part of the legislation to implement its proposals. The detail of these remain to be seen but the white paper refers to minimising disruption to existing plans and development proposals to ensure a smooth transition and making sure recently approved plans can continue to be implemented.
10. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), supported by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS), have stated that LPAs should continue the production of plans rather than stopping and switching to the new system. In support of this, **the requirement to adopt a 2018 NPPF compliant local plan by December 2023, established early in 2020, remains in place<sup>1</sup>**. Furthermore, Joanna Averly, the newly appointed chief planner, has stated that *“A local plan is pivotal, and planners shouldn’t take their foot off the gas here”* and that *“For areas identified for growth, you have a presumption in favour of development, and that forces you to have the conversation early. If you don’t have a plan in place, that’s a bigger risk than now.”* She also added that local plans *“shouldn’t be static - you shouldn’t plan, then stop”*, particularly as *“we need a proactive approach to planning more than ever”*.

### **The proposed interim methodology for assessing housing needs**

11. The July 2020 GNPD report highlighted the potential importance of the revised methodology to assessing objectively assessed housing need for the GNLP. The recently published government consultation document (which is on consultation until the start of October) has proposed changes to the method which would, if implemented, dramatically increase the scale of housing needs to be provided for in Greater Norwich.
12. The proposed changes to assessing local housing need set out a new, but once again temporary, formula for calculating need. Under the white paper it would be further reviewed to reflect environmental constraints before being introduced with the new style of local plans.
13. Using this formula, the revised GNLP figure would be 65,120 homes from 2018 to 2038, which is 3,256 per year, a 62.5% increase from just over 40,000 homes consulted on in the draft GNLP which use the current methodology. The numbers for Norwich would decline slightly, whilst those for Broadland and South Norfolk would increase steeply, more than

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<sup>1</sup> The first iteration of [Planning for the Future](#) in March 2020 stated ***“Setting a deadline for all local authorities to have an up-to-date local plan – the government will require all local planning authorities to have up-to-date local plans by December 2023. The government will prepare to intervene where local authorities fail to meet the deadline in accordance with the existing statutory powers, considering appropriate action on a case by case basis”***. This statement has not been amended since.

doubling in South Norfolk. The **annual housing needs figures by district** would change as follows:

District	Current methodology	Proposed new methodology
South Norfolk	893	1,832
Norwich	598	502
Broadland	517	922
<b>Greater Norwich total</b>	<b>2,008</b>	<b>3,256</b>

14. The consultation document makes it clear that transitional arrangements will also be put in place to allow authorities that are close to publication of their plans the ability to proceed with the preparation of the current plan. It proposes that authorities which are close to publishing the Reg. 19 version of their plan should be given three months from the publication of the interim standard methodology guidance to publish their Reg. 19 plan and a further 6 months to submit it.
15. Publication of the interim methodology is not expected to happen prior to December. This would suggest that if planning authorities can publish a Reg. 19 version of their plan by March 2021 and submit it prior to September, they should be examined using the current methodology.

### **Implications for the Greater Norwich Local Plan**

16. It is clear that the combined effect of the white paper and proposed standard methodology have potentially very significant impacts on the currently proposed timetable for bringing forward the GNLP insofar as the current timetable would not enable the transitional arrangements associated with the standard methodology to be used.
17. If the interim standard methodology is introduced as proposed the resulting overall plan figure would be significantly higher than the housing need figure of over 40,000 consulted on through the draft GNLP which was calculated using the current methodology. This current housing need figure translated into the housing requirement of 44,343 over the plan period to 2038 including the buffer set in the draft GNLP, of which 7,840 homes were to be met through new allocations. The new methodology, if implemented by government as proposed, is likely to require the number of new allocations to be increased to well in excess of 30,000 if it is to be met in full in the GNLP.
18. This is considered to present a major obstacle to bringing forward the plan as currently proposed as the current timetable does not appear to be compatible with the proposed transitional arrangements for the new methodology. Through the consultation work undertaken to date on the GNLP and the sites that have been promoted by the development industry, there is considered to be no prospect of being able to identify sufficient sites for the amount of growth required by the interim methodology which are both technically acceptable and can be delivered by 2038.

19. This means that the only way in which the current timetable can be delivered is if there is a re-think on the methodology in the light of the consultation, and the resultant methodology provided does not raise the requirement for allocations beyond around 10,000 additional homes that may be able to identified from the range of reasonable alternative sites that have been consulted on to date.
20. Experience from the past consultations suggests that that the government is unlikely to amend the policy approach this methodology promotes of requiring the greatest growth in areas with the worst affordability issues. Any significant change to the results of the methodology prior to publication is therefore considered unlikely.
21. To mitigate these risks the proposed Reg 18D consultation would need to address possible implications of significant changes in the scale of growth required in November/December 2020, almost certainly prior to any confirmation of the new methodology. This is wholly impracticable.
22. It is therefore concluded that current published timetable for plan preparation can no longer be delivered.
23. This has created unpalatable and sub-optimal choices for the procedure that should now be followed for plan-making for Greater Norwich. Three broad possible options for progressing have been identified:
  - Option 1, to accelerate plan-production, making use of the transitional arrangements provided by government, based on the draft GNLP we have already consulted on;
  - Option 2, to extend the existing timetable, planning for the (as yet to be confirmed) higher housing numbers proposed by government in its consultation. However, this would require a new call for sites, collecting new evidence for the new, likely significantly higher, interim housing numbers and re-consulting on the draft plan, greatly extending the timetable. It would be likely to extend the date of adoption of the GNLP by at least a year, risk a failure to meet the statutory deadline of 2023 and would potentially result in needing to resource preparation of the GNLP alongside plan preparation under new legislation. This option is not considered tenable and is therefore not covered further in this report;
  - Option 3, to cease production of the GNLP and to work on emerging issues flagged up by government in the white paper, including improving our digital plan-making capacity, new settlements and focussing on the design codes we will need to produce to provide locally distinctive, high quality development.
24. Options 1 and 3 are examined in turn below.

## Option 1 - Use the Transitional Arrangements

25. Under this option the proposed further consultation under regulation 18 (18D) would be dropped and the timetable for plan production amended as follows:

Production timetable	Current Timetable (set July 2020)	Revised Timetable (option 1)	Notes
GNDP Board	30 September 2020		GNDP endorsement of further timetable and LDS changes
Reg. 19 Plan to be endorsed by GNDP (public)	Late June 21	w/c 7 December 2020	Endorse Reg. 19 document and consultation. Publish papers w/c 30 November
Cabinets agree Reg. 19 plan	Late July 21	11 – 13 January 2021	Publish papers w/c 20 December (in order to go through other committees first) and agree to amend the LDSs.
Reg. 19 consultation on soundness and legal compliance	August/Sept 21	1 February – 15 March 2021	Govt. transition arrangements allow for submission within 6 months of Reg. 19 consultation.
Purdah/elections	End March – early May 2021	End March – early May 2021	
Submission of GNLP to the Secretary of State	Oct/Nov 21	July 2021	The period from submission to examination will be dependent on the Planning Inspectorate
Public Examination	Feb/Mar 22	Nov/Dec 2021	
Consultation on proposed main modifications	Jun/Jul 22	Mar/Apr 22	Dates depend on the outcome of the examination
Publication of inspector's report	Sept 22	July 22	
Adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan	Nov/Dec 22	Sept 22	

26. Using the fast-track transitional arrangements would have a number of benefits. Mitigation measures would allow us to address many of the risks that forced us to change the timetable recently, adapting to the now wholly changed circumstances as set out above.

27. The main advantages are that the approach would:

- I. Be in accordance with government advice to progress existing plans using transitional arrangements. Advice from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) on the transition to the “Planning for the Future” system is to *‘Get your Local Plan to the finish line’*. Government statements, as set out in paragraph 10 above, very strongly suggest that **we will still be expected to have an up-to-date plan which complies with the current NPPF adopted by December 2023;**
  - II. Put us in the best position, given that the changed circumstances created by the white paper, to give confidence to the market to keep the supply of planned sites coming forward. This would strengthen the position in relation to any changes to calculating the 5-year land supply which could come forward from government;
  - III. Enable sites allocated or supported by plans and SPDs dependent on the GNLP to be brought forward (potentially including the South Norfolk Villages Site Allocation Plan, the Diss area Neighbourhood Plan and the East Norwich Masterplan);
  - IV. Enable the GNDP to take advantage of the longer period for plan making under the new legislation meaning that new style plan(s) would not need to be introduced until 42 months from the new system coming in to force (potentially the end of 2026).
28. Use of the transitional arrangements carries a number of risks, though these could be mitigated as set out in paragraphs 29 to 31 below. Overall, option 1 would require streamlining of our decision-making processes to meet very demanding timescales, an acceptance that the plan would not be as tight or as evidenced as we would like it to be and would not have as broad a coverage as we have recently agreed.
29. As we would not be able to hold a Regulation 18D consultation in November/December 2020 as recently agreed by the GNDP, this would mean that we would not take the route previously intended (see para. 2 above) to:
- a. **Undertake additional Reg. 18D consultation on key issues including: Gypsy and Traveller sites; small sites/settlement boundaries and potential changes in housing numbers.** However, under option 1, these issues would be mitigated by:
    - i. Further evidence which is being produced on Gypsy and Traveller policy. If this confirms a need to provide an additional sites or sites, this could be done through the planning application process or through consultation on site allocation by the Inspector;
    - ii. More limited parish council focussed consultation on small sites and settlement boundaries in November/December 2020 which would also be available for wider comment, aiding soundness;
    - iii. Referring to the revised standard methodology, the July GNDP report stated that delaying the GNLP timetable would allow us *“to have regard to new Government planning policy (the publication of which has been delayed)”*. The government have now produced the draft housing numbers referred to and awaited in the July report. It is the production of these significantly higher interim housing numbers which is now guiding our options for plan-making. Since contingency and reasonable alternative sites have been consulted on throughout Greater Norwich, these sites could consequently be



used to increase the number of housing allocations in advance of submission should this be considered acceptable.

- b. **Update the Viability Study, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and economic evidence in detail** to reflect the likely impacts of both Brexit and the Covid-19 crisis. These issues would be mitigated by:
- i. In relation to viability, the July 10<sup>th</sup> GNDP report stated that *“Revised typologies are intended to be established for the next stage of the Viability Study, with strategic sites requiring dedicated viability appraisals to be provided by site proposers”*. These revised typologies would still be produced within the tight timescales to inform the Reg. 19 plan. There is the additional possibility of undertaking further work on the potential for brownfield and strategic sites to meet plan requirements for issues such as affordable housing. This further evidence would be submitted with the plan and would assist the Inspector in recommending any modifications which might be required to the plan;
  - ii. The changes proposed in the white paper mean that there is no longer a need to review the CIL, freeing up staff time and resources (see para. 47 below);
  - iii. The July 2020 GNDP report pointed to the advantages of delay to enable a comprehensive analysis of economic issues to take place once the economic situation becomes clearer. This can be mitigated by making some updates to the evidence base, including an initial assessment of the impacts of Covid-19 and Brexit to inform policy making, within the tight timescales for option 1. This would allow some updates to the GNLP to reflect changed economic circumstances along with new and emerging national policy to be made. If considered necessary, longer-term updates could be commissioned after the Reg. 19 stage for submission to the Inspector;
  - iv. Other evidence studies (including the Water Cycle Study, detailed flood risk assessments, the Habitats Regulation Assessment and topic papers), will be completed for the Regulation 19 publication. It is likely that they will need to be signed off under delegated authority. In the case of topic papers, these will not be as detailed as previously intended. This issue would be mitigated by including the reasoning for the changes we will have made to the draft GNLP in the reports to the GNDP and Cabinets. Officers are keeping a record of the reasoning behind proposed changes as work progresses. These records would inform the GNDP/Cabinet reports and the topic papers which would be published for Regulation 19.
- c. **updating delivery/supply figures, to engage with the industry over delivery prospects in the light of market circumstances and funding decisions, and to update the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)**. These issues would be mitigated by:
- i. As with other evidence, to meet a much tighter Reg. 19 timetable, there is a need to prioritise the evidence which is needed first, most particularly on the delivery trajectories for housing. This work is currently being done.
  - ii. As they are being produced on a 6 LPA basis, updates to the Housing Needs Study will not be ready for the Reg. 19 version of the plan. This risk would be

mitigated by the fact that we have an existing study and by completing the new study and making any updates it proposes available for the Inspector, either with the submission documents or at examination. This would allow the Inspector to propose any modifications required to the submitted plan.

30. The GNDP report on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020 also highlighted the need to comprehensively incorporate consultation feedback in the re-draft of the plan. It stated that *“Representations have been summarised in the previous report but to ensure that proper consideration is given to these comments additional time is required”*. Work on this task has been prioritised and has progressed well. Staff are currently re-drafting policies based on consultation comments and new and emerging government policy.
31. The allocation of the Norwich Western Link (NWL) envisaged in July would not be possible under option 1. However, as in the draft version of the GNLP, the road would still be promoted by policy 4 on implementation and would be delivered through the Transport for Norwich Strategy. This is a common approach to transport infrastructure delivery.
32. Option 1 may create public confusion as the current timetable was only recently agreed. This, however, appears unavoidable if transitional arrangements are to be used and progress the GNLP quickly to secure an adopted plan which promotes sustainable investment in Greater Norwich, assists in promoting our potential to take a leading role in transitioning to a post-carbon economy, and provides a good foundation for planning under the new system.
33. As the above shows, compromise on the coverage of the plan, the timing of the completion of some further evidence and other mitigation measures mean that under option 1 the issues that led to extending the timetable recently can largely be addressed.
34. Option 1 has considerable merits as it provides for short-term needs sustainably, supporting quick delivery of housing and jobs, and is the best first step available to implementing the new planning system.

### **Option 3 - Do not progress the GNLP**

35. The alternative is to cease work on the GNLP and restart on plan-making when the new planning system is implemented. It is too early to set out a timetable for any plan preparation under this scenario as neither is the date for when legislation will be introduced known, nor are the plan making requirements.
36. However, some initial possible actions have been identified that may assist in putting the partnership in the best place to shape future growth under the new regime. These are as follows:
  - Examining best practice and building design skills in order to prepare for public sector led masterplanning and design codes that are very likely to be required for growth areas. This workstream could progress once the national design code is produced. There is no

published timetable for this, but it has been suggested that it may be available before the end of 2020;

- In view of the likelihood of considerably higher housing numbers being required, further work could be done on the possible location for one or more new settlement(s), including understanding associated infrastructure requirements and delivery challenges;
- Preparation for the “*radical, digital-first approach*” to plan-making that is proposed in the white paper. MHCLG has informally asked for local authorities to put themselves forward as pathfinders for this work.

37. Of these, committing significant resources to the first option alongside production of the GNLP prior to further detail being available about how the government intends to take forward the white paper would be premature. Items 2 and 3 may have merit and it is considered that these could be pursued alongside the production of the GNLP without impacting on its timetable. In the case of the new settlements, officer work to compare the proposals is ongoing. Improvements are also being made to our digital capacity. The new settlements work would be best further progressed by bringing in external expert resource to advise the GNDP on options, possibilities and costs. In the case of the digital-first approach, officers could investigate the potential for acting as a pathfinder. These may add to the budget and resource requirement.

38. Option 3 is not favoured on its own because it does not provide us with the certainty needed to meet housing needs and sustainably grow the economy in the short-term using an up-to-date plan. It also does not make use of the considerable investment already made in the GNLP. There is a real risk that in the absence of an up-to-date local plan that the interim standard methodology will be used as the basis for assessing 5-year housing land supply, thereby exacerbating the risk that for much of the period until a new plan is adopted, it will be difficult to demonstrate that we have a 5-year land supply. Finally, there is also a very real threat of sanction for not having an up-to-date local plan in place by December 2023 as currently required by government.

39. However, including elements of option 3 with option 1 would have benefits as set out below.

### **Conclusions on the options**

40. The current uncertainty resulting from the high-level nature of the white paper, which may be resolved by government to a certain extent through their responses to the consultations, means that it is not the right time to cease progress on the GNLP. If by January 2021 we find either that it is no longer in our interests to produce the Reg. 19 GNLP in February due to publication of the outcome of current consultation by the government, or that we are unable to do so due to unforeseen events, we would be able to halt progress at that point. We would then resort to the only other realistic alternative option, option 3. Consequently, it is premature for a decision to be made to drop the GNLP at this stage.

41. This decision will primarily be dependent on what approach government provides us with when it details the transitional arrangements, particularly over the revised methodology for calculating housing need and how the 5-year land supply issue will be covered up to the introduction of the new local plan regime. There currently seems to be a real risk that we will open ourselves up to 5-year land supply issues if we do not progress to an early Reg. 19, but the picture should become clearer over time.
42. The national changes mean that option 1 would take us towards Reg. 19 at some risk and we would not be able to cover some key issues in the way members had previously wanted us to as the rapid timetable would force us to make compromises. However, there are solutions for each of these issues as set out in this report which should enable us to produce a sound plan. By streamlining the content of the plan and submitting some further updates to evidence with the plan, rather than at the Reg. 19 stage, we will be able to address issues, including the limited delays identified in the July 10<sup>th</sup> 2020 GNDP report arising from the Covid-19 crisis.
43. A hybrid approach based on options 1 and 3, using the transitional arrangements being consulted on by the government, whilst at the same time progressing work on key elements of option 3 to prepare for the new planning system, is therefore considered to be the best approach.
44. The hybrid option offers us the opportunity to submit a plan based on an excellent draft, comprehensive consultation, a broad evidence base which can be further updated, and taking account of new and emerging government policy. Such a plan is very likely to be found sound. A well-resourced team as proposed below will allow the key elements of option 3, work on digital plans and new settlements, to be progressed in tandem, with work on design codes to follow the production of national guidance.
45. The proposed approach should allow an Inspector to take a positive view on adopting the GNLPA under transitional arrangements. This would provide the best means of promoting investment in our area, avoiding a highly damaging impact on the reputation of the plan-making process locally and nationally and reducing risks on land supply issues.
46. To conclude, officers are confident that there is a good chance that a sound local plan can be prepared quickly in the circumstances, with longer-term issues enabling us to transition effectively to the new system "Planning for the Future" will bring about being addressed in tandem. It is considered that the pressure of the statutory deadline for local plans to be adopted, the increased level of housing allocations which could be included and the prospect of the latter stages of the plan production effectively overlapping with preparation of work on the new style plan would serve to considerably de-risk plan production.

#### **Resource Issues arising and proposed actions**

47. The GNDP is currently committed to review the CIL alongside the production of the GNDP. A job description for a post to lead this process and a brief for consultancy support had been drafted, with budgets being amended to allow this. In the light of the proposals in the white paper it is suggested that all work on this matter should cease. Viability evidence to support

the GNLP will need to be based on current CIL rates and the emerging proposals for the Infrastructure Levy. This should reduce expenditure over the next 18 months and allow a greater focus of GNLP activities on bringing forward the local plan.

#### **Timetable and Budget for the hybrid approach**

48. The timetable to which the GNLP could be produced under the hybrid option 1 and 3 approach is set out below alongside the previously agreed timetable. It should be noted that the ability to deliver the timetable is highly dependent on the planning inspectorate.

<b>Production timetable</b>	<b>Timetable revised July 2020</b>	<b>Timetable revised September 2020 (hybrid 1 and 3 option)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
GNDP Board	30 September 2020		GNDP endorsement of further timetable and LDS changes
Reg. 19 Plan to be endorsed by GNDP (public)	Late June 21	w/c 7 December 2020	Endorse Reg. 19 document and consultation. Publish papers w/c 30 November
Cabinets agree Reg. 19 plan	Late July 21	11 – 13 January 2021	Publish papers w/c 20 December (in order to go through other committees first) and agree to amend the LDSs.
Reg. 19 consultation on soundness and legal compliance	August/Sept 21	1 February – 15 March 2021	Govt. transition arrangements allow for submission within 6 months of Reg. 19 consultation.  Work on digital plan-making capacity and new settlements could proceed at this point. Consideration could also be given to progressing work on design codes, depending on the production of government guidance.
Purdah/elections	End March – early May 2021	End March – early May 2021	
Submission of GNLP to the Secretary of State	Oct/Nov 21	July 2021	The period from submission to examination will be dependent on the Planning Inspectorate
Public Examination	Feb/Mar 22	Nov/Dec 2021	
Consultation on proposed main modifications	Jun/Jul 22	Mar/Apr 22	Dates depend on the outcome of the examination
Publication of inspector's report	Sept 22	July 22	
Adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan	Nov/Dec 22	Sept 22	

49. The budget associated with the hybrid option has been examined. Owing to the quicker timetable for preparation of the GNLP, there is less time to prepare evidence and no

requirement to commit resources to the review of CIL. However, this is partly offset by a proposed increase in staff costs. Provision has been built into the budget to maintain the current staff level and enhance this through the addition of two part time posts: a 0.6fte project sponsor role to provide oversight of the project and ensure that there is regular engagement with leaders from this autumn until completion of the Examination; and a 0.4fte strategic planning advisor.

50. This is initial work which still needs further refinement, but it shows that the costs can be borne in 20/21 from current committed budgets, with c£130k carried forward into 21/22. To meet costs in 21/22, it is anticipated that each district will need to increase their contribution to the project from the £65,000 that has been the case in previous years to £120,000. This increase is rather less than was expected to be associated with the previous timetable and CIL review.
51. Costs in 22/23 are expected to be substantially lower, currently estimated at £12k for each district.

### **Overall conclusions and the need for consensus**

52. It is both dangerous and premature to abandon work on the GNLP at this point. It is considered that the likely consequence of this action would be to undermine confidence in the planning system and make it more difficult to bring forward the emerging allocations that are favoured locally. Additionally, it is highly likely that it would preclude the GNDP from using any transitional arrangements brought in to provide relief from the higher housing numbers associated with the new standard methodology. As a result, there is a strong possibility that if the plan is abandoned at this point, the stance on having a 5-year land supply will be undefendable by the new year.
53. Whilst acknowledging that there are risks associated with pursuing the hybrid option, these are regarded as manageable. It is considered that the requirement to have a further new style local plan produced in the years following the GNLP will significantly mitigate the risks and allow the inspectorate a route through which any deficiencies in the plan can be addressed. The pressure not to delay progress on bringing forward significant development on allocated land, such as in East Norwich, will also assist this.
54. Consequently, it is recommended that the hybrid option is pursued for the time being and the matter be reconsidered once the Reg. 19 draft plan has been prepared and the details of transitional arrangements are known.
55. Consensus and a commitment to streamlined decision-making are required to allow this approach to succeed. This is the best way to reduce the risk of returning to appeal led planning in Greater Norwich.