

Norfolk Strategic Framework Update
Report by Planning Policy Officer

Summary: The report updates members on progress with the Norfolk Strategic Framework. In particular the progress on each of the task and finish groups, estimated timescales and group membership

Recommendation: That Members note the contents of the Report.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Norfolk Strategic Framework (NSF) is to produce a non-statutory framework with planning authorities across Norfolk about joint working to continue to ensure that the Duty to Cooperate is discharged and there is beneficial co-operation of strategic planning issues across a wide area. The NSF will draw on the existing information the authorities have on Housing, economic growth and Infrastructure and look to fill any areas this information falls short. The NSF will consult with other Key Public bodies including the Environment Agency and Homes and Communities Agency, and private sector infrastructure providers, particularly utility companies. It will ensure the conclusions of any reports are deliverable by consulting key business representatives.
- 1.2 Initial progress with the Norfolk Strategic Framework (NSF) has been good. The membership of the Task and Finish group is now settled and the overall attendance at meetings has been good from most authorities. So far, the housing group have met five times, the infrastructure and economic groups have met twice and the delivery group has met once. Whilst the delivery group was slow to progress initially, this has not held back progress of the NSF. The Terms of Reference have been agreed with the members of these groups.

2 Progress of Each of the Task and Finish Groups and Steering Groups

2.1 Steering

- 2.1.1 The Steering group has been set up and monthly meetings have started. The group will look at existing framework documentation and the outline of the final document. There is a general consensus that the Cambridgeshire model is the best approach to follow because of the positive testing and inspections, but that Norfolk will go beyond this in terms of detail. The group has also started to assess the approach and timescales for the framework documentation which highlighted that the consultation will need to be started in September/October next year, for an end date of Spring 2017. It will also look to update the NSF Terms of Reference regarding the opening up the

forum to the public and will also look to publish information on the county council website.

- 2.1.2 Please note that the Broads Authority is not represented on this group. Indeed, not all Norfolk authorities are.

2.2 Housing

- 2.2.1 The initial task of reviewing the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) has been completed. It has been identified that the main task of the group will be to complete the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). The purpose of this assessment is to identify whether LPAs have capacity to meet their objectively assessed need for housing and economic development needs. Cooperation between LPAs may be necessary if one authority does not have capacity to meet their need, thus there are advantages to using a common methodology.

- 2.2.2 To date, all districts have reviewed HELAA methodologies produced by the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and Waveney District Council. The group are now producing a draft of their own HELAA methodology which will be consulted on in February 2016, likely 15 February for 4 weeks. All authorities are hoping to consult together on the methodology to help save time and resources. Each authority will then undertake a HELAA in accordance with the agreed Methodology in accordance with their own Local Plan timescales and the final NSF will include a compilation of all HELAAs for Norfolk to demonstrate how housing and economic land needs will be met across the county.

- 2.2.3 The group have highlighted that their HELAA work requires feedback from the economic group on their economic land needs. These have been passed on to the economic group to ensure that they are not overlooked. The group will confirm the exact requirements that are expected of the economic group to ensure that they can complete their HELAA work e.g. Town Centre and Retail Studies.

- 2.2.4 The Broads Authority is represented on this group and will undertake a HELAA in accordance with Methodology should the consultation on the Local Plan Issues and Options conclude that it is necessary.

2.3 Infrastructure

- 2.3.1 The group membership has expanded to include Natural England and the Wild Anglia Local Nature Partnership.

- 2.3.2 Evidence is being gathered for the different infrastructure areas of roads, rail, public transport, green infrastructure, flood defence, water supply, water disposal, electricity network, education, telecommunications, and health. It has been identified that for some infrastructure areas such as green infrastructure, evidence gathering is likely to take significant time.

- 2.3.3 Alongside the main group, there has also been a water focused meeting held with the local water companies. This concluded that whilst there are issues

with supply, particularly in the Norwich area, Anglian Water have plans in place to address these. A water cycle study will now be scoped at a county level to include existing evidence which will help to identify any areas where there could be issues in Norfolk for inclusion in the Framework. This will cover water supply, disposal and potentially flood and surface water.

2.3.4 A flooding focused meeting is also arranged for January which will be supported from flooding experts from the County Council, Environment Agency and Norfolk Coastal Partnership. The meeting will cover flood risk issues in Norfolk and in particular surface water, fluvial and coastal flooding. It will help identify any constraints to land use in these areas assisting the production of the HELAA.

2.3.5 The Broads Authority is represented on this group.

2.4 **Economic**

2.4.1 The membership of the economic group has improved in terms of spatial coverage across Norfolk. Membership includes a mixture of planners and economic development officers to help support both economic evidence and planning requirements.

2.4.2 The group have discussed their roles and requirements and it was agreed that these will need to be clarified in more detail. Norfolk County council is attending the next meeting to provide guidance about the East of England Forecast Model (EEFM) and also to provide assistance to how the group's work links to the HELA process. It has been highlighted that the economic needs assessment is required for the HELA process and so clarity will be provided to the group about this.

2.4.3 At present all group members are putting together a table of economic evidence to help determine where any evidence gaps may be across Norfolk.

2.4.4 The LEP have organised a meeting with the group to discuss Norfolk/Suffolk evidence. They are yet to attend the economic group meetings but they have confirmed their attendance at the first meeting in January. It is hoped that they will have useful information to support the group's work.

2.4.5 The Broads Authority is represented on this group.

2.5 **Delivery**

2.5.1 The membership of the delivery group now includes the Homes and Communities Agency, a member of the Greater Norwich Projects Team (GNPT) and members from the Building Growth Group. A paper has been shared on delivery issues in Greater Norwich by the GNPT, and it is hoped that this will now be completed for the whole of Norfolk for the framework.

2.5.2 The initial meeting identified tasks that are required to complete an analysis of the types of development which have not been delivered, development that has been delivered, and to provide an analysis of land owner aspirations for land value.

2.5.3 The Broads Authority is not represented on this group.

3 Timescales

- 3.1 Whilst it is difficult to predict the likely timescales required to complete some of the evidence studies, it is hoped that the draft Norfolk Strategic Framework document will be put together between July 2016 and September 2016, so that the draft can be completed and consulted on between October 2016 and January 2017. It is hoped that by April 2017, the Duty to Cooperate Forum will have met and recommended their constituent councils to adopt the framework.
- 3.2 It has been identified that some work will need to be scoped to understand if it is achievable within the planned timescales. The main areas where there is uncertainty regarding how long work will take is regarding the economic needs assessment, any areas of infrastructure evidence which may take longer to complete, and with regards to the approval process for the framework which is not yet clear.
- 3.3 Finally, it is important to note that all of the Local Planning Authorities in Norfolk are working to different time scales, although have the same end date of the Local Plan of 2036.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 At present, it is not certain what external work needs to be budgeted for but the following concerns have been highlighted:
- Past economic needs data is either old or non-existent. It is possible the assigned budget will not be sufficient to cover the costs of this but it may be possible to seek funding to support this work externally (e.g. LEP) if required
 - There is likely to be a requirement for infrastructure work to be completed externally but it is unclear at this stage what budget will be required for this work
 - There may be a need to commission additional joint studies e.g. Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment
- 4.2 The Authority has been invoiced and has paid the £7.5k contribution for this year towards the production of the NSF.

Background papers: None

Author: Natalie Beal
Date of report: 25 January 2015

Appendices: None