

CABINET MEMBERS DELEGATED DECISION

Open/Exempt		Mandatory/			
Any especially affected Wards		Discretionary/			
		Operational			
Lead Member: Cllr Jim Moriarty (Cabinet Member for Planning and Licensing) E-mail: cllr.James.Moriarty@West-Norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted:			
		Other Members consulted:			
Lead Officer: Alex Fradley (Planning Policy Manager) E-mail: alex.fradley@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Officers consulted: Stuart Ashworth (Assistant Director – Environment and Planning); Michael Burton (Principal Planner); Luke Brown (Senior Policy Planner) Karl Patterson (Senior Housing Development Officer); Clare Cobley (Housing Development Officer); Jemma Curtis (Regeneration Programmes Manager); Ged Greaves (Senior Corporate Governance & Risk Officer/Climate Change Manager).			
Financial Implications YES/NO	Policy/Personnel Implications YES/NO	Statutory Implications YES/NO	Equality Impact Assessment YES/NO If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES/NO	Environmental Considerations YES/NO
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)					
Date of publication of report: 26 June 2025			Date decision to be taken: 03 July 2025		
Deadline for Call-In: 10 July 2025					

TITLE: NORFOLK STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NSPF) UPDATE

Summary

This report sets out the updates to the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF) document, which when endorsed will be the fourth edition of the document. The NSPF document is going through a comparable endorsement procedure with all the planning authorities in Norfolk.

The main matters covered by the NSPF include:

- how local plans across Norfolk will be delivered.
- how housing and economic needs will be met.
- how the planning authorities will work together on strategic cross boundary matters including climate change.
- continuation of the Norfolk Health Protocol (approved by the Borough Council March 2025).
- continuation of the recently established process for a strategic approach to a Norfolk wide Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (approved by the Borough Council December 2024).



The NSPF continues to provide an important function in delivering sustainable local plans capable of supporting housing and economic growth together with the necessary enabling infrastructure and service provision. Cross-boundary cooperation is a cornerstone the NSPF and provides a framework for meeting the Duty to Cooperate (legal requirement) and is therefore of particular importance for local plan preparation. The fourth edition retains many of the previous agreements and updates a number based on the latest planning policy and legal landscape as well as data.

Decision to be taken

To endorse the up-dated Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework as part of the Borough Council's ongoing "Duty to Cooperate". Noting there may some minor changes for accuracy or presentation purposes.

Reason for Decision

The Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework has already been used successfully to support the development of the Local Plan. It must be kept up to date to continue to fulfil this role going forwards.

1 Background

Purpose

The Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF) is used by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in Norfolk to address the Duty to Cooperate (DtC) and statement of common ground requirements as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The NSPF is not a policy document and does not include planning policies or proposals, rather it is intended to document areas of agreement between the Norfolk authorities and other bodies on strategic planning issues.

Key milestones include:

- Drafting commenced in 2016
- Full public consultation 2017
- First version endorsed by all LPAs in Norfolk 2018
- Second version endorsed 2019
- Third version endorsed 2021

The updates have ensured that the document was up to date and included changes in line with updates to the NPPF. New sections were added over time covering subjects such as climate change and health. The Third version is currently the latest endorsed version of the NSPF and is available at the member forum website via the following link: www.norfolk.gov.uk/nsf

Success of the NSPF

The NSPF has been recognised for successfully meeting the DtC requirements, including being used as a case study within the County Council Network, but more importantly it has been successfully used for all Norfolk local plan examinations since 2018. No local plans in Norfolk have failed the DtC requirements.

This includes the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan which was adopted earlier this year. The Inspectors' Report following the examination which covers the DtC



legal aspect can be viewed via the following link:

https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/info/20079/planning_policy_and_local_plan/1207/local_plan_2021-2040

Update of NSPF

Since the NSPF update in 2021 there have been various changes to the planning system, and these include:

- Revised NPPF(s).
- Changes in legislation.
- New strategic planning issues such as nutrient neutrality.
- Changes in structures for example at the NHS and the abolition of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

This latest iteration of the NSPF takes account of these changes. With updating required to support new local plans coming forward. Currently, or shortly, Great Yarmouth, the Broads Authority, and Breckland will be at the formal local plan examination stage.

NSPF Update Progress

Updating the NSPF commenced in early 2024. A small officer task and finish group from the authorities across Norfolk was established to review and update the NSPF. These updates include:

- A review at officer level of the vision and objectives and of the agreements which includes the removal of agreements completed or no longer relevant.
- A review of all sections to ensure all information is correct and up to date and all hyperlinks work.
- Updates to all statistical information and to ensure the relevant dates have been used for local plan end dates
- A review of the economic information in light of the Norfolk County's economic strategy, which replaces the previous LEP strategies.
- Updates to the health section in line with changes at the NHS.
- Updates to the infrastructure section taking account of new information including:
 - The new Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan
 - Changes to the delivery of digital infrastructure
 - The Water Resources East Plan
 - Flood risk data
 - Updated Green Infrastructure & Recreational Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS) action plan
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)
- A new section has been created to cover Nutrient Neutrality
- Updates requested by signatories have been included which reflect current information, these include Anglian Water, Water Resources East, Marine Management Organisation, Environment Agency, Active Norfolk, and healthy bodies.



Next Steps

The final draft of the new NSPF is now complete and was provided to LPAs and signatories for final review and comments. These have been incorporated and at the NSPF Member Forum (29/05/2025) the NSPF update (version 4), which is appended to this report, was endorsed by all the local planning authorities in Norfolk and the County Council. This means it will be taken to each for endorsement, hence this report.

2 Options Considered

The NSPF has been successful as outlined above. To not be part of this would likely mean that the DtC legal test would be failed, and a local plan would not be found sound and capable of adoption by Government appointment planning inspectors. Endorsing the NSPF shows continued cooperation as other LPAs in Norfolk enter local plan examination and the Borough Council prepares a new local plan. It is therefore proposed that the NSPF update is endorsed.

The Borough Council could withdraw its support for the NSPF and come to separate agreements with each adjoining Norfolk planning authority, the County Council, and other bodies. This would likely be an inefficient process and may undermine the ability to demonstrate the Borough Council's ongoing commitment to support the delivery of planned economic and housing growth.

3 Policy Implications

The NSPF contains a suite of agreements between the Norfolk authorities on how local plans will be prepared and a steer on what policies will be sought for inclusion. This has influenced directly the Local Plan the Borough Council adopted earlier this year. It will continue to be a key component of the local plan preparation process going forward.

4 Financial Implications

None arising directly from endorsement of the NSPF.

5 Personnel Implications

None.

6 Environmental Implications

None arising from endorsement of the update. Endorsement would demonstrate commitment to environmental matters with a strategic context. This includes climate change mitigation and adaptation, and protection of the European protected environment sites.

7 Statutory Considerations

The NSPF is a non-statutory document, although it should be noted that currently the DtC is a legal requirement for local planning authorities to be able demonstrate ongoing cooperation through their local plan process.

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment undertaken. This demonstrates that there is no requirement to undertake a full EIA.



9 Risk Management Implications

As stated earlier the risk to not endorsing would be likely failure of the legal DtC test and therefore it would be unlikely that a future local plan could be found sound and capable of adoption by planning inspectors.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None.

11 Background Papers

The updated Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework for endorsement is appended to this report.

Signed: 

Cabinet Member for: PLANNING & LICENSING

Date: 25/6/25



Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Planning Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF) Update 2025				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>	New		Existing	X	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	<p>The NSPF continues to provide an important function in delivering sustainable local plans capable of supporting housing and economic growth together with the necessary enabling infrastructure and service provision. Cross-boundary cooperation is a cornerstone of the Duty to Cooperate and the NSPF contributes towards demonstration of this requirement.</p> <p>The Duty to Cooperate is a statutory requirement as part of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). Failure to meet this obligation would likely mean that the Borough Council's local plan would not be capable of being found sound and adoptable by Planning Inspectors.</p>				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>	<p>The NSPF is a document created through collaboration and led by a Member group. All of the Norfolk Local Planning Authorities (Breckland, Broadland, Broads, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn & West Norfolk, North Norfolk, Norwich City, South Norfolk) and Norfolk County Council have been involved. In addition, a number of other organisation/bodies have been consulted and these include some which will also endorse the document: Natural England, Environment Agency, Anglian Water, and New Anglia Enterprise Partnership. A full list is contained within the NSPF itself.</p>				
Question	Answer				
1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			x	
	Disability			x	
	Sex			x	
	Gender Re-assignment			x	
	Marriage/civil partnership			x	
	Pregnancy & maternity			x	
	Race			x	
<p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>					



<i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i>	Religion or belief			X	
	Sexual orientation			X	
	Armed forces community			X	
	Care leavers			X	
	Health inequalities*			X	
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			X	
*For more information on health inequalities please visit <u>The King's Fund</u>					

Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:

Among the shared objectives and agreements set out in the NSPF is a commitment to ensure that new housing allocations will have a positive impact on communities in terms of supporting and enhancing the provision of services; support well-being & health; and support the delivery of infrastructure.

The NSPF will inform preparation of the Borough Council's next local plan and all of these matters will be considered as part of that process in detail.



Question	Answer	Comments
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No	Although within the limits of legislation and practice certain aspects such as affordable housing are covered. The Norfolk Planning Authorities will quantify the need for, and plan to provide for, the specialist accommodation needs of the elderly, students, gypsy and travelling show people, and those residing in other specialist types of accommodation and working together will ensure that the distribution of provision responds to locally identified needs. This will be carried out as part of local plan preparation.
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No	This is a non-statutory document which set out agreements between the Norfolk Authorities
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	No	<p>Actions: None</p> <hr/> <p>Actions agreed by EWG member:C Dorgan.....</p>
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member:C Dorgan.....</p>		
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	Yes	<p>Please provide brief summary:</p> <p>A local plan, and indeed the Borough Council's recently adopted Local Plan considers the Public Sector Equality Duty. This forms part of a local plan examination and the Inspectors' concluded that the Borough Council had demonstrated that the policies of the Local Plan would not have a negative impact on people with protected characteristics. Evidence to support this included a full EIA.</p>



Assessment completed by: Name	Alex Fradley		
Job title	Planning Policy Manager		
Date completed	12/06/25		
Reviewed by EWG member	C Dorgan	Date	23/06/25

✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy
(corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk)