

Greater Norwich Local Plan 2025–2045
New Settlements Topic Paper

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1. Summary and local context

- The adopted GNLP makes reference to exploring the potential delivery of a sustainable new settlement, or settlements, as part of any future Local Plan review.
- There is evidence to suggest based on lessons learnt, both locally and nationally, that planning for and delivering infrastructure-led, sustainable new settlements at scale, whilst challenging, can lead to improved outcomes relative to incremental approaches to delivering growth.
- The UK Government has signalled its intent to accelerate and increase housing delivery across the UK, along with a renewed commitment to delivering large-scale new towns across the UK. Whilst Greater Norwich was not selected as one of the shortlisted New Towns by the New Towns Taskforce, the Government has still signalled its support for enabling the delivery of well-planned, large-scale new settlements across the UK. This positive commitment, and recognition of the unique challenges and potential benefits which can arise from delivering large-scale new settlements is acknowledged in the draft NPPF.
- The evidence base preparation and plan-making process for a new settlement, or settlements, will cut across all thematic and policy areas within the GNLP, and will need to address a number of key questions (see below).
- These questions will be addressed through a robust Site Assessment process, plan-wide evidence base preparation and identification of a preferred spatial growth strategy ahead of identification of sites for proposed allocation.

Table 1: Prompt questions

Prompt	Questions
Why?	- What is the housing and economic need for a new settlement, or settlements? - How many should there be and at what scale? - Role of a new settlement, or settlements, in a Greater Norwich and Norfolk context? - Impact on, and relationship with, the existing settlement hierarchy? - What is the place and context specific purpose and vision?
Where?	- Where are the optimal locations based on strategic priorities? - Where are the potential sites based on an overlay of constraints and opportunities, including infrastructure deliverability and viability considerations? - Where are the available sites? - Balance between 'red lines' of sites submitted at Call for Sites vs broader allocation if there is a strategic case to do so?
What?	- What should the mix of uses be – balance between housing and employment? - Approach to social, community and local centre uses? - Sustainable transport, movement and connectivity? - Green and blue infrastructure strategy? - Approach to environmental, ecological, climate and sustainability? - Design quality and placemaking – what does a high quality, contextually designed, resilient and adaptable place look and feel like in a Norfolk context?
How?	- How can an infrastructure-led approach be viably delivered? - What will the role of the public sector be in enabling, planning, funding and delivering? - What are the delivery and funding mechanisms which will enable delivery? - What form will a planning framework take?
Who?	- Who will the credible delivery and funding partners be who are capable of delivering complex, large-scale and long-term developments? - What forms of partnership will be required? - Are interventions around education, skills and supply chains required to ensure capacity and capability to deliver at the scale and pace required?

2. Coverage in current Policy, the draft NPPF and Implications for the GNLP 2045

The adopted local plan for the three Greater Norwich districts is comprised of a suite of policy documents. Primary among these is the previous Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP), alongside the Development Management (DM) policies for each district, Area-specific Action Plans (AAPs) and several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). Table 4 contains details of how existing policy is relevant to new settlements. These existing policy stipulations have been assessed against the draft 2025 NPPF, with full conclusions available in Table 5.

Current policy

Greater Norwich Local Plan

The adopted Greater Norwich Local Plan provides reference to new settlements by the supporting text to Policy 1: Sustainable Growth Strategy. This noted that new settlements were considered in preparing the GNLP but regarded as premature. Commitment was made to explore the potential for a new settlement, or settlements, as part of any future Local Plan review.

Draft NPPF

Table 5 of this topic paper shows that the draft NPPF gives stronger policy support for planning and delivering new settlements through strategic plan-making, local plan allocations and related planning frameworks. It highlights the need for the GNLP 2045 to align with the emerging Spatial Development Strategy and identify any new settlement locations through local policy. Clear expectations will also need to be set for infrastructure, facilities, placemaking, phasing, tenure mix, delivery assumptions and delivery models. Table 5 also points to the need for flexible long-term planning, particularly for multi-phase development, sustainable transport and the use of masterplans, design codes and other tools to guide high-quality, locally specific outcomes.

Commented [IK1]: I have attempted to use Copilot (!) to summarise tables 4-6 (highlighted text). This will require review by an original author.

3. Early policy direction of thoughts

Table 2: Early policy direction of thoughts

Policy theme	Initial direction of travel (post-2025)
Growth strategy	Whilst the adopted GNLP includes reference to exploring potential new settlement(s) this needs testing and an evidence base will need to be established. It will be necessary to consider the relative merits and risks of alternative growth strategies, including consideration of the evidence base required and form of consultation. A new settlement(s) is only one option.
Identification and allocation of new settlement(s) location(s)	It will be necessary to interface with the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) process and ensure the Local Plan evidence base considers the strategic context. Consideration to be given to the balance between a reactive (i.e. market-led, Call for Sites-led) vs proactive (i.e. public sector-led) approach to defining locations, site boundaries etc, recognising the different drivers and objectives of public and private stakeholders and unique challenges and opportunities of delivering a new settlement, at scale. Site Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) processes will need to reflect the unique scale and opportunities of new settlements and be informed by robust evidence base and technical analysis which goes further than it would for smaller sites.
Defining the planning policy framework – scope and structure	Evidence shows that new settlements are complex and long-term projects. A clear planning framework, beyond just a site allocation but including a site-specific framework (policy or supplementary guidance), is required. This is needed to provide certainty and clarity around all plan-making areas. It should be grounded in a vision and masterplan which is owned by the planning authority and community and is not just developer led. In particular, emphasis will be put on infrastructure planning, funding, and delivery. It will also be necessary to define a robust but flexible spatial planning framework with a clear, locally specific 'new settlement(s) vision', principles and objectives to define expectations which delivery partners will be measured against. The Local Plan should clearly set out what this framework structure will look like, covering its form, scope, timing etc.

4. Evidence – what we have and what we need

In order to underpin an individual site allocation for a new settlement, or settlements, and to satisfy both the Site Assessment and SEA processes, it will be necessary for a robust evidence base to be established.

Given the weight which the Local Plan could potentially put on a new settlement or settlements in satisfying housing targets, the robustness of the evidence base and demonstration of deliverability and viability will be key. The interaction between the site-specific and the plan-wide evidence base will be crucial.

Some of the site-specific evidence base will be prepared by the site promoters – and early requests (in addition to the Call for Sites templates) have been made by the GNLP team of each promoter to ensure the breadth, depth and consistency between the evidence prepared to allow for comparison.

Equally, the extent to which the public sector either relies on, or leads, the preparation of the further evidence base is linked to the key question about what role the public sector wishes to play in the process – i.e. purely reactive to site promoters, or designation strategic allocations beyond the 'red line' of promoted sites where there might be a strategic case to do so?

Table 3: Existing evidence/strategies

Evidence	Status	Lead/commissioner	What it informs
Site-specific evidence base: (1) Baseline site and context analysis AND (2) impacts, mitigations and opportunities AND (3) detail of proposals including scale, land use mix, infrastructure, viability and deliverability statement. Covering principal thematic areas of: (a) transport and connectivity; (b) ecology, green and blue infrastructure; (c) utilities; (d) heritage and archaeology; (e) flood risk and drainage; (f) landscape character; (g) soil quality and agriculture (h) settlement hierarchy:	Supplemental information requested from promoters of new settlements in addition to Call for Sites Dialogue ongoing re. programme for info prep (Spring – Autumn '26)	Commissioned and prepared by site promoters NOTE – GNDP might need to commission independent technical support to check, challenge and supplement	To inform Site Assessment, SEA and Growth Strategy definition

Evidence	Status	Lead/commissioner	What it informs
Strategic spatial planning study (GIS-based) to identify potentially suitable locations for a new settlement based on an overlay of strategic constraints and opportunities	LP evidence base RFQ issued, consultant appointment will be confirmed by mid-March '26 Study to be complete by July '26	Commissioned by SNC on behalf of partnering authorities	To inform a review of Call for Sites submissions and feed into Site Assessment, SEA and Growth Strategy definition
Additional site-specific evidence base to support allocation development: (a) Vision (b) Illustrative spatial framework masterplan (c) Indicative infrastructure delivery plan (d) Indicative viability analysis	Evidence base for allocation AND/OR supplementary framework plan / guidance (TBC)	TBC – balance between site promoters AND public sector Contingent upon public sector appetite and role, and approach to the broader planning policy framework	To underpin draft allocation OR potentially for subsequent development of a planning framework (i.e. Supplementary Plan) NOTE 1 – even if key elements such as the IDP and masterplan might be developed as part of a subsequent planning framework document preparation, it will still be necessary to test a draft allocation based on indicative assumptions.

Evidence	Status	Lead/commissioner	What it informs
Plan-wide evidence base interaction with site-wide evidence base. Priorities: (a) viability (b) strategic infrastructure needs (c) energy infrastructure (d) housing needs assessment (e) housing market assessment (f) employment needs assessment (g) transport and connectivity Secondary priorities: (a) water cycle study (b) green infrastructure (c) SFRA (d) landscape character (e) settlement hierarchy assessment	Plan-wide evidence base	Plan-wide studies and assessments will require a proportionate and/or bespoke approach to accounting for potential new settlement(s) – i.e. plan-wide viability assessment will need to make special assumptions for infrastructure costs etc for new settlements where there are limitations to a typologies based approach There will need to be a degree of iteration between the preparation of the site-specific and plan-wide evidence bases given the relative weight on a strategic allocation(s) to meet planned growth	To ensure alignment between plan-wide strategic approach and site-specific allocation preparation

5. Spatial strategy linkages and cross-boundary issues

- **Settlement hierarchy** – relationship of new settlement(s) with existing settlements, including how this might evolve over time
- **Sub-regional spatial strategy (SDS)** – role of potential new settlement(s) for Greater Norwich within the sub-regional context and strategic housing and economic growth considerations
- **Interface with Breckland Council Local Plan process and draft strategic allocations** – i.e. risks / credibility / cumulative impacts of multiple strategic A11 new settlement-scale allocations
- **Strategic transport planning** – iterative relationship of planning for new settlement(s) with strategic transport infrastructure planning
- **Strategic utilities infrastructure planning** – iterative relationship of planning for new settlement(s) with strategic utilities infrastructure planning
- **Strategic infrastructure funding** – delivering new settlement(s) typically require appropriate and proportionate approaches to infrastructure planning, funding and delivery. Work is required to explore potential alternative infrastructure funding, financing and delivery mechanisms.
- **Delivery model(s)** – work is ongoing to explore potential delivery models and mechanisms (including public-private partnership) to unlock large-scale new settlement growth which could have a bearing on the approach to plan-making.

Appendices / map book placeholders

Table 4: Adopted local plan policies relevant to New Settlements

Document	Reference	What it does now
GNLP	Supporting text to Policy 1 (Sustainable Growth Strategy) – Paras. 164-165	Supporting text noted that new settlements were considered in preparing the GNLP but regarded as premature. Commitment was made to explore the potential for a new settlement, or settlements, as part of any future Local Plan review.

Table 5: Implications of draft NPPF on GNLP 2045

Topic aspect	Draft NPPF position	Implications for GNLP 2025-45
Strategic plan-making – interface	Policy PM1: Spatial development strategies	Draft NPPF policy makes clear that the SDS will set the strategy for sustainable growth including <i>'identifying broad locations for strategic development including new settlements'</i> . The interaction between the LP and SDS plan-making processes needs to be considered. It will be important that any new settlement proposal is rooted in an analysis of its strategic context (i.e. role in a Norfolk context – and potentially beyond)
Allocating new settlements	Policy HO4: Land for large-scale residential & mixed-use development	Local policy is needed to identify locations for new settlement(s) with detail around infrastructure and facilities needed (with timings), focus on 'sustainable communities' (i.e. on-site employment; sustainable transport strategy). Local policy needs to set clear expectations around policy and placemaking, and relationship with design tools such as masterplans and design codes. Local policy needs to clearly set out what the proposed planning framework will be. Policy should also address phasing, tenure mix, realistic delivery assumptions and potential delivery models.

Topic aspect	Draft NPPF position	Implications for GNLP 2025-45
Multi-phase strategic developments	Policy HO13: Build out of residential & mixed- use development	This draft NPPF policy puts emphasis on the need for the consenting framework for large-scale developments (i.e. new settlements) to take a flexible approach to delivery to allow for changing circumstances through time (i.e. changing housing need, viability, design etc.) whilst balancing certainty around elements such as infrastructure delivery. The interplay between the policy framework (i.e. setting expectations and securing outcomes) vs allowing for flexibility will need to be navigated through both allocation and subsequent policy framework development.
Vision-led approach to planning for transport	TR1: Vision-led approach to planning for transport T2: Local parking standards TR3: Locating developments in sustainable locations	Embed sustainable transport at the earliest stage acknowledging that the largest-scale developments, by virtue of scale, can 'become' sustainable' through mitigation and infrastructure delivery. Link to policy HO13 in structuring allocations and consents which allow for a scheme to evolve over time in response to need and circumstances.
Masterplanning strategic sites	DP1: A strategy for design DP2: Local Design Guides, Local Design Codes and Masterplans	Development plans should 'at the most appropriate level' identify where design guides / codes / masterplans are necessary to delivery specific outcomes. NPPF policy is clear that these tools can and should be developed to provide locally-specific analysis of context, constraints and opportunities and set out detail to a degree which is 'proportionate to the circumstances and scale of change proposed', in a manner which can allow for adjustments in light of implementation – and all supported by effective community engagement.