

Greater Norwich Local Plan 2025–2045
Vision & Objectives Topic Paper

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1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 This topic paper outlines the process undertaken to develop the vision and objectives that will guide the Greater Norwich Local Plan 2045 (GNLP 2045). It begins by outlining the policy context and the Government requirement to develop a vision and objectives as a key part of new local plan preparation. It then goes on to discuss the role that the collection and analysis of baseline data and the development of a SWOT analysis has in early visioning work. Finally, the document explains the process of developing, consulting on and refining the vision and objectives themselves.

2. Policy Context

2.1 A new local plan making system was introduced through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 followed by the publication of a ministerial statement on 27 November 2025, alongside a [website](#) containing a number of explanatory documents. Regulations were published on the 4 March 2026 to implement the new system which came into force from the 25 March. This new system requires local plans to be made within a 30-month time frame from the completion of the newly required Gateway 1 self-assessment with resulting changes in the way plans are prepared and what they should contain.

2.2 One of the explanatory documents that has been published is entitled '[Preparing a local plan vision](#)' which sets out how local authorities should go about developing a vision for their new local plans.

2.3 The guidance is clear that local planning authorities must prepare a vision as part of their local plan and the purpose of the vision is to set out how the area should change over the plan period. It should be ambitious but also realistic and locally distinctive. The vision will be a golden thread that runs throughout the local plan, helping to guide its development by setting the direction for change and indicating the kind of place it is aspired to create.

2.4 The vision should comprise a short statement including aims and objectives for the area. Ten measurable outcomes must be identified so that progress towards meeting the vision statement can be monitored, and the success of the plan following adoption can be measured.

2.5 Work to prepare the vision and objectives starts before the formal 30-month period of plan preparation commences and continues as the plan is developed. One of the first tasks is to gather and analyse baseline information. This is followed by gathering early feedback on priorities and an initial SWOT analysis through a Scoping Consultation. This information is then used to help develop a draft vision which is consulted on as part of the Regulation 23 consultation on proposed plan content and evidence. Following the Regulation 23 consultation, the vision should be updated to take account of the feedback received and then submitted as part of the Gateway 2 assessment. The final vision will form part of the Regulation 27 Proposed Local Plan consultation and eventually the Gateway 3 assessment and local plan examination.

3. Baseline Data

3.1 In November 2025, MHCLG published [guidance on the collection of baseline information for local plan making](#) under the new system. This guidance confirms that the gathering of baseline data is one of the first stages in advance of commencing the 30-month plan-making timetable.

3.2 The MHCLG guidance sets out the minimum baseline information required to understand existing conditions and recent trends within the plan area. In line with this guidance, a series of headline topics were identified to establish the current context of Greater Norwich. These include:

- Population change
- Household size and composition
- Levels of deprivation
- Economic change and labour market trends
- Delivery of housing allocations
- Delivery of employment land allocations
- Overall housing delivery compared with identified housing requirements
- Delivery of specialist housing
- Delivery of Gypsy and Traveller plots
- Changes in housing affordability ratios
- Delivery of key infrastructure
- Trends in transport use
- Transport connectivity
- Existing environmental assets
- Existing heritage assets
- Patterns of flood risk
- Existing air quality
- Effects of climate change

3.3 In addition to understanding the current position, the guidance requires baseline evidence to provide an indication of the potential future picture of the area. To address this requirement, data has also been gathered on:

- Local Housing Need
- Likely unmet housing need
- Population projections

- Potential infrastructure needs, investment requirements and capacity constraints
- Future effects of climate change

3.4 Baseline data has been collected from a range of national and local sources. National datasets include, but are not limited to, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Nomis, Natural England, Historic England, DEFRA and the Department for Transport. Local data sources include Local Planning Authority monitoring information, locally commissioned evidence studies, and data provided by Norfolk County Council.

3.5 The baseline data has been analysed to identify key trends, patterns, anomalies and distinct characteristics of Greater Norwich. Where appropriate, data is compared with that of comparable cities or towns elsewhere in England. In addition, comparisons are made against regional and national trends, subject to data availability and relevance.

3.6 Greater Norwich comprises three local authority areas. As such, data has been collected and presented at different spatial levels depending on the nature of the dataset. Where possible, information is provided at individual district level to reflect local variation. In other instances, data is only available or most meaningfully interpreted at the Greater Norwich level and is presented on that basis.

3.7 The analysis of baseline evidence provides an initial understanding of the strengths, challenges and opportunities facing Greater Norwich. It helps to identify areas and themes where improvement may be required, alongside areas where the existing approach is performing well. This evidence has also played a key role in supporting early engagement with local councillors, helping to frame discussions about the long-term future of Greater Norwich and the ambitions that the new local plan could seek to achieve.

3.9 Data has been collected using a combination of charts, tables and maps to aid clarity and interpretation. Visual outputs can be used to illustrate trends over time, highlight spatial variations across Greater Norwich, and support comparisons with regional and national benchmarks where relevant.

3.10 Accompanying narrative was then used to explain what the data shows, identify notable patterns or anomalies, and draw out implications for plan-making.

District level data was presented where available to identify local trends and set alongside Greater Norwich-wide information to allow comparisons to be made. Any limitations in data availability or consistency were clearly noted.

3.11 Overall, the collection of the baseline evidence is designed to provide a robust, proportionate and user-friendly foundation for developing the vision and objectives of the local plan, while also supporting informed discussion with elected members and other key stakeholders.

4. SWOT analysis

4.1 The new government local plan making guidance requires new local plans to include a SWOT analysis as a structured way to understand the context of our area. This technique is intended to help us identify factors which are likely to have the greatest impact on the direction of growth over the new local plan period and should help us to define our key priorities.

4.2 To complete the SWOT analysis, the Greater Norwich authorities have defined each element as the following:

Strengths: Positive internal attributes within our control. What does Greater Norwich consistently do well?

Weaknesses: Internal factors which could represent risks or areas for improvement. What repeatedly limits progress for Greater Norwich?

Opportunities: External attractive factors that can help develop and propel the area forwards. What external changes could reshape Greater Norwich?

Threats: External factors outside our control which could represent where contingency plans may be needed. What external forces could destabilise Greater Norwich?

4.3 These definitions have helped us determine the difference between internal and external, positive and negative attributes whilst ensuring the analysis remains place-based, focuses on key qualities and is context specific to Greater Norwich.

4.4 The SWOT analysis was undertaken in stages and forms part of an iterative process. Officers completed an initial SWOT analysis to identify key attributes of Greater Norwich that represent strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This initial assessment was presented to elected members as part of a Member Workshop and refined using their knowledge and input. Work already undertaken in collating the baseline data (section 3) was also used to identify any other key attributes.

4.5 Following this, officers expanded upon each of the key attributes in the SWOT analysis, detailing what each of these mean in the context of Greater Norwich.

4.6 Finally, baseline datasets were assigned to the corresponding attributes showing how this has informed the conclusions of the SWOT analysis. Figure 1 shows the details of this process in full for one example attribute.

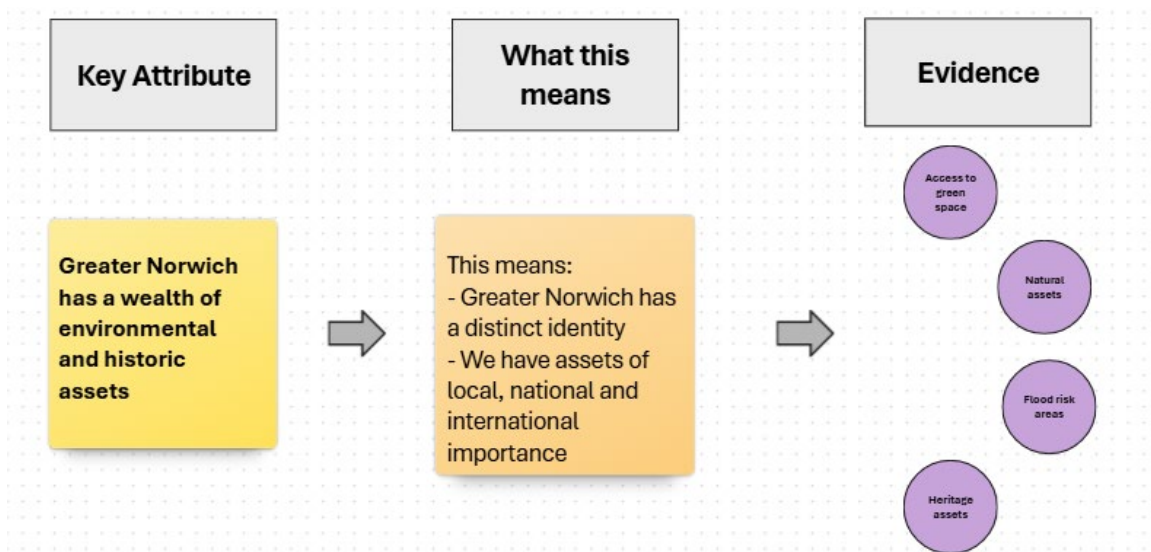


Figure 1: A diagram showing the SWOT analysis process identifying a key attribute, how this links to a detailed explanation of what this means and what datasets are used as evidence.

4.7 Completing this process for all the key attributes also enabled officers to identify areas where additional baseline datasets were needed or were missing. Additional baseline data has then been collated to supplement the existing data and demonstrates the iterative approach that has been taken to creating an evidence-driven SWOT analysis.

4.8 The completed draft SWOT analysis can be found in the main Scoping Consultation.

5. Potential next steps

5.1 The SWOT analysis is being presented as part of the GNLP 2045 Scoping Consultation material. Feedback received from stakeholders will be considered, and the SWOT analysis amended as appropriate.

5.2 The SWOT analysis will then be used to identify the following strategies:

- SO – How can we use what we are good at to benefit from external opportunities?
- WO – How can we address our weaknesses so we can benefit from available opportunities?
- ST – How can we use what we are good at to reduce or defend against external threats and risks?
- WT – How can we minimise our weaknesses to avoid or reduce the impacts of external threats or risks?

5.3 Applying the above strategies will provide a holistic understanding of the key themes which the GNLP 2045 should focus on. These themes, alongside the SWOT analysis and resulting strategic approaches, will inform the development of the Local Plan's vision and associated measurable objectives. Together, these elements will form a coherent thread throughout the plan, ensuring clear alignment between the vision, objectives, and policies, and demonstrating how the plan will deliver the intended outcomes for Greater Norwich.