

Environment, Development and Transport Committee

Item No. xx

Report title:	Proposal for a Market Town Network Improvement Strategy
Date of meeting:	17 March 2017
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services
Strategic impact <p>This proposal will support the Good Infrastructure objective in that it will facilitate Norfolk's market towns and larger villages' sustainable development through addressing the transport pressures of planned housing and employment growth by improving access to public transport and reducing congestion.</p>	

Executive summary

Many of Norfolk's market towns and larger villages have a considerable amount of planned housing and employment growth identified through the relevant Local Plans. Addressing the transport pressures this growth will bring is vital to facilitate the economic prosperity of these towns and villages and as such planning this ahead of growth allows the County Council to respond accordingly.

This proposal is for an overarching strategy to support the delivery of a suite of market town transport studies. These will identify the most effective transport improvements to support future planned growth and help address transport issues such as congestion, enhancements to safety and access to public transport. It is intended that the studies will support the economy of the area by helping to prioritise proposed schemes, assist with growth assumptions and influence potential funding opportunities in the future and ultimately facilitate planned housing and employment growth in these towns and villages.

Recommendations:

Members agree a programme of broad transport studies (3-4 per year) looking at the transport impacts of growth in market towns and large villages in Norfolk.

1. Proposal

- 1.1. Many of Norfolk's market towns and larger villages have a considerable amount of planned housing and employment growth identified through the relevant Local Plans.
- 1.2. This proposal is for a programme of broad transport based studies (3-4 per year) looking at each of these locations in turn so that the County Council can consider the impact of growth and develop a plan of network improvements as necessary.
- 1.3. Strategies will be developed in collaboration with stakeholders and will incorporate potential measures to help address existing network constraints and enhance public transport infrastructure, together with an element of scenario-based planning assumptions around future growth pressures over the coming years. It is intended that the studies will support the economy of the area by helping to prioritise proposed schemes, assist with growth assumptions and

influence potential funding opportunities. They are also intended to help address current transport issues such as congestion, enhancements to safety, network resilience and access to public transport.

2. Evidence

2.1. A market town is defined historically as a mid-sized town that regularly holds a market. Norfolk's market towns include:

- Attleborough;
- Aylsham;
- Cromer;
- Dereham;
- Diss;
- Downham Market;
- Fakenham;
- Harleston;
- Holt;
- Hunstanton;
- Loddon;
- North Walsham;
- Sheringham;
- Stalham;
- Swaffham;
- Thetford;
- Watton;
- Wells-Next-The-Sea; and
- Wymondham.

At the last Census (2011) 186,886 people lived in Norfolk's market towns (22% all Norfolk residents).

2.2. The County Council produces a biannual 'Market Towns Report'. The 2015 report is attached as Appendix A (the 2017 report is currently in production). The report contains a range of economic health indicators and/or changes in Norfolk's market towns as well as Long Stratton, Wroxham and Hoveton. Data is gathered via desktop research and surveys carried out in each market town.

The 2017 report will be used as part of the evidence base for the proposed market towns transport studies.

2.3. There are also a number of other villages that are taking a significant level of new housing and employment growth:

- Acle;
- Blofield;
- Brundall;
- Horsford;
- Long Stratton;
- Reepham; and
- Spixworth.

2.4. In discussion with Norfolk's Local Planning Authorities, other settlements where further growth is likely to be focused will be included in this proposal.

3. Growth in Market Towns

3.1. Since 2001 and to the end of the relevant adopted and emerging Local Plans, growth of almost 30,000 new homes will be built in Norfolk's market towns. This housing growth will be supported by considerable allocations of employment land aiming to provide opportunities for residents to live and work in the same location.

3.2. It is important that this growth is planned for in a pro-active way to help the County Council develop a strategic and effective programme of infrastructure improvements to support growth.

3.3. The County Council will require a range of additional infrastructure provision to support growth in market towns (e.g. for schools, libraries, green infrastructure and provisions for the fire service), however this proposal only covers transport network improvements. It is considered that the infrastructure elements most

relevant to market towns would include:

- Changes to existing roads, junctions and streets to meet movement, access and place-making functions;
- Routes for walking and cycling, including facilities for people with visual and mobility impairments;
- Intelligent Transport Systems to optimise the performance of the public transport services and the roads network, and to provide data for inclusion in information systems;
- Parking and kerbside provision (e.g. on-street parking and deliveries, bus stops, electric charging, cycle lanes and associated street furniture, signs and markings);
- Driver information systems to help manage off-street parking provision and planned or predictable events); and
- Network resilience, particularly focusing on flood risk;
- New roads.

This list is not exhaustive and is not in any particular order as specific requirements for each market town will be different.

- 3.4. In planning over the longer term the County Council can aim to develop transport networks in market towns that are 'future fit' and help to deliver housing and jobs growth; enabling, rather than being a barrier to development.
- 3.5. A strategic view of growth in market towns will allow for smart investment choices that support incremental growth in a timely manner. The aim of the market town studies is to develop potential measures to help address existing network constraints, enhance public transport infrastructure and consider intermodal transport options. It is intended that the studies will support the economy of the area by helping to prioritise proposed schemes, assist with growth assumptions and influence potential funding opportunities in the future. They are also intended to help address current transport issues such as congestion, enhancements to safety and access to public transport.
- 3.6. Continuing to work closely with the Local Planning Authorities and Parish/Town Councils, some of which have or are developing Neighbourhood Plans, the County Council can help shape growth in market towns and help identify effective transport network solutions for growth. These solutions will be fed into the pipeline of infrastructure projects for future funding prioritisation.
- 3.7. Developing a set of market town studies will help the County Council respond pro-actively and strategically to Local Plan consultations in a transport capacity. In developing a suite of market town strategies the County Council can fulfil its ambition to help shape places and create communities, building upon the existing approaches set out in key documents including:
 - Local Transport Plan;
 - Transport Asset Management Plan;
 - Operational Network Management Plan;
 - Route Hierarchy and Street-lighting Policies;
 - Speed Management Strategy for Norfolk;
 - Norfolk Parking Principles;
 - Surface Water Management Plans; and
 - Flood Investigation Reports.

These approaches are currently being further informed by a developing locality-working approach and an increasing use of the 'Safe System' approach to reducing road casualties, under the governance of the Norfolk Road Casualty Reduction Partnership.

- 3.8. The importance of stakeholder and community engagement is critical. This proposal will be supported by a robust Communications Strategy in order to gain stakeholder and community engagement. This will aim to support the integration between infrastructure delivery, over time, and much broader decision-making by others, and may refer to the dependence of the strategy on resources and programmes of activities which are outside the control of the County Council.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. A budget of £20,000 will be required per market town study. This will be used to develop a programme of broad transport based studies as described above.

5. Background

- 5.1. Appendix A: [Norfolk's Market Town Report September 2015](#)
Appendix B: [Norfolk Compendium of Local Plans 2016](#)

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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