

**Long Stratton Bypass  
Communications Strategy January 2021**

## 1. Project Overview and Context

- 1.1 Norfolk County Council (NCC) intends to build a bypass in Long Stratton. It will comprise of a 4km bypass on the eastern side of Long Stratton, which will be single carriageway.
- 1.2 NCC made the Long Stratton bypass one of its three infrastructure priorities in 2016 in recognition of its potential to attract future investment and development to the area, create skilled jobs and business opportunities and give local people a better quality of life.
- 1.3 The project objectives of the Long Stratton bypass are as follows:
  - To remove through traffic, including HGVs, from the centre of Long Stratton
  - To reduce congestion, queueing and delay on the A140 at Long Stratton
  - To improve journey times and journey time reliability, for all users of the A140
  - To improve the journey times and reliability of bus routes through Long Stratton
  - To improve conditions for people walking or cycling in Long Stratton
  - To enable full delivery of 1,800 planned new houses in Long Stratton
  - To enable the development of up to 9.5ha of new employment land in Long Stratton
  - To improve conditions for businesses in Long Stratton and stimulate investment in the town
  - To improve the accessibility of Long Stratton town centre for people
  - To improve conditions for the delivery of goods and reduce transport costs for businesses
  - To improve the environment of Long Stratton town centre by reducing noise and visual intrusion
  - To achieve a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions
  - To improve air quality in Long Stratton town centre
  - To reduce community severance in Long Stratton
  - To facilitate improvements to the public realm in Long Stratton
  - To reduce the number of people killed or injured in collisions in the area affected by the scheme.
- 1.4 NCC in liaison with South Norfolk Council, Norfolk Homes Ltd and Norfolk Land Ltd as key stakeholder's, will develop a robust Communication and Engagement Strategy for the scheme. This will set out how and when information will be placed in the public domain and how the Council will communicate with stakeholders throughout the development and delivery of the scheme. It will include well established protocols to ensure that enquiries from the press, members of the public, elected councillors, stakeholders and other interested parties are handled correctly, in a timely fashion and build upon the consultation work already undertaken by the developer as part of the planning application process.
- 1.5 NCC are working closely with the developers Norfolk Homes/Norfolk Land. Norfolk Homes are currently updating the existing planning application, which will include the Long Stratton Bypass scheme within it. The developer will work with the NCC project team to mitigate any risks that might arise as a consequence of

submitting the application.

## **2. Communications planning and objectives**

- 2.1 Wherever possible, communication about the Long Stratton bypass will be planned in advance as details about the forward programme are known.
- 2.2 There will be a need to react to any emerging queries, concerns or opportunities and provide updates and reassurance as necessary. Those people with responsibility for communications on the project, as well as the wider project team as necessary, will need to be flexible in responding to issues which could become or already are reputationally damaging.
- 2.3 The communications objectives must support the project objectives and the effective delivery of the Long Stratton Bypass. Therefore, the communications objectives are to:
  - Raise awareness of the Long Stratton bypass, its development and its expected benefits
  - Instil widespread confidence in the project by providing up-to-date information, regular updates and opportunities to ask questions and comment
  - Encourage independent advocacy by providing targeted information to key stakeholders
- 2.4 The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have some impact on how communications and engagement work is carried out throughout 2021 and possibly beyond. Face-to-face briefings and events may not be permitted or advisable. Creative solutions to this challenge will be sought wherever possible, for example through the use of technology and easy-to-digest materials, printed and electronic. Proposed activities will be kept under review at regular communications meetings and adjusted in line with current guidance and to minimise risks to the public and those representing the project.
- 2.5 COVID-19 may also have impacts on the planned delivery of the Long Stratton bypass. The potential extent of these impacts is not yet known but careful reputational and communications handling of this will be required if the pandemic does affect delivery.

## **3. Key messages**

The Long Stratton bypass:

- will ease traffic congestion in the town, shortening journey times and improving journey reliability
- will boost the local economy by supporting the delivery of new homes and employment growth in the area
- will benefit the people of Long Stratton and has strong and widespread support

- is a collaborative project between NCC, South Norfolk Council, Norfolk Homes and Norfolk Land.

Norfolk County Council:

- is very experienced at working on large-scale infrastructure projects of this nature
- will work hard (with appointed contractors) to keep people informed and keep any disruption to road traffic and the local community to a minimum.

#### **4. Project identity**

- 4.1 We will ensure a consistent and professional look and feel to all relevant project materials (e.g. leaflets, newsletters, event branding), utilising the well-recognised NCC logo to build trust and recognition of this significant project. This will be used in conjunction with project partner/contractor logo's as appropriate and standard templates for regular communication channels, such as letters, newsletters and e-news will be developed which incorporate these logos. In addition, we may also consider developing a distinct project logo and sub brand, should our Outline Business Case be approved and sufficient funds available.

#### **5. Stakeholders**

##### 5.1 Key stakeholders

- 5.2 Key stakeholders have vital interests in the project or are essential to effective delivery. They need to be engaged through targeted communications, as well as the general communications channels.

We have identified the following key stakeholders:

- Local residents (not directly affected as landowners)
- Landowners/occupiers
- Local media
- MP for South Norfolk
- Long Stratton Town Council
- Local community and residents' groups
- Norfolk Land, Norfolk Homes
- Local businesses
- South Norfolk Council
- New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership
- Norfolk Chamber of Commerce
- Relevant county and district councillors
- Utility companies
- Emergency services
- Bus companies
- Department for Transport
- Relevant NCC departments
- Highways England
- Environment Agency
- Natural England

- Historic England
- The Diocese of Norwich
- CPRE Norfolk, the countryside charity
- Norfolk Ramblers Association
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- Other campaign/pressure groups interested in countryside access/protection e.g. Extinction Rebellion
- Accessibility Groups such as Norwich Access Group, Equal Lives, Vision Norfolk, RNIB, Norfolk Deaf Association and Guide Dogs for the Blind

### 5.3 Other stakeholders

Other stakeholders may be affected by the project as potential users or have lesser interests in the project delivery. Providing accessible general information will usually be sufficient but some milestones, such as the start of construction and the road opening, will be publicised to a wider group of stakeholders. This group includes other Norfolk residents, MPs, local authorities and interest groups not directly involved.

### 5.4 Local media

The local media have an important role in providing information to other stakeholders. The media can also lead, as well as reflect, public opinion. NCC has established good working relationships with local news outlets and maintaining these throughout the project will be essential to its success.

## 6. Communications methods

- 6.1 Clear, timely and easily accessible communications across a variety of channels and methods will be produced to ensure stakeholders are well-informed throughout the project. Low and no-cost channels will be utilised as a priority in order to minimise spending.
- 6.2 As well as 'broadcast' communication, it will be important to facilitate conversation about the project so that stakeholders have the opportunity to comment, query and air concerns, and provide feedback to Norfolk County Council that may inform the management of the project.
- 6.3 The main communications methods that will be used are:
- **Website** – the Long Stratton bypass webpages on the Norfolk County Council website ([www.norfolk.gov.uk/strattonbypass](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/strattonbypass)) will remain the core information resource, serving both as a comprehensive reference library for background information and a source of the latest updates, utilising maps, visualisations, photos and videos. A frequently asked questions section will be maintained. All other communications will direct people to the friendly url for these webpages to find out more about the project. The webpages will be reviewed monthly and updated regularly to ensure up-to-date information is provided, with substantial updates planned to coincide with significant project milestones.
  - **Email** – distribution lists of key stakeholders' email addresses will be created

and maintained in line with data protection laws and updates about the project will be sent to this list. A project email address has been set-up, and this will be promoted as the primary means to get in touch with the project team.

- **Newsletters** – a monthly e-newsletter will be established to which anyone interested will be able to sign up via the NCC website for updates, news and information on the project.
- **Letters** – targeted letter drops will be used to properties in close proximity to the site in advance of work that could impact on them. This could include traffic management measures, parking restrictions and noisy work. These will include contact details for the contractor team where recipients can refer any questions.
- **Social media** – significant updates will be posted on Norfolk County Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts, which are well-established and have strong followings. Content, including wording, images and videos, will also be provided to partners for their own channels. Targeted Facebook advertising will also be utilised to deliver messages to people in the local area around key activity, such as key milestones and disruptive work.
- **Briefings** – meetings will be offered and arranged with key stakeholders as appropriate ahead of announcements and project milestones, to inform them of upcoming work and agree appropriate mitigation and in response to any concerns being raised. In many instances, these briefings will also serve the purpose of encouraging the stakeholders to share the information via their own channels and advocate for the project. Where appropriate, these may be carried out remotely via Microsoft Teams or similar applications.
- **Local media** – good relationships have been built and will be maintained with local editors and reporters. Regular information and multimedia content will be provided to them via press releases, interview and photo opportunities, media briefings and site visits (where appropriate).
- **Events and meetings** – opportunities to attend relevant groups, events and council committees that grant access to multiple key stakeholders will be sought out, with the intention of providing updates and answering questions. Where appropriate, these may be carried out remotely via Microsoft Teams or similar applications.

## 7. Stakeholder and working groups

- 7.1 A Long Stratton bypass project board and member group have already been established which bring together several of the key stakeholder groups.
- 7.2 Other methods such as NCC's residents' magazine, partner channels and national/trade media will be targeted and used as appropriate throughout the project.

## 8. Communications strategy development, approval and delivery

- 8.1 The communications strategy will be updated regularly by the NCC

Stakeholder and Engagement Manager to reflect changes to the project programme and emerging details. Approval for significant updates to the strategy will be sought from the Long Stratton bypass project board and member group where appropriate.

- 8.2 The stakeholder and engagement manager at NCC will lead on the delivery of the strategy, including seeking approval for communications as appropriate. Members of the Long Stratton bypass project team, the NCC communications team and senior councillors and officers at the council will also contribute to the plan's delivery.

### 9. Roles and Responsibilities

<b>Role</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Senior Oversight - NCC	Tom McCabe Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services  Grahame Bygrave Director, Highways and Waste Chair of the Long Stratton Bypass Project Board	Final approval of high-profile/milestone communications
Senior Responsible Officer - NCC	David Allfrey, Major Projects Manager	Approval of lower level communications
Project Management - NCC	Rod Kelly, Projects Team Manager	Approval of lower level communications and responsible for factual accuracy of statutory process.

Role	Person(s) Responsible	Responsibility
<p>Communications and Stakeholder Engagement - NCC</p>	<p>Chris Andrews, Stakeholder and Engagement Manager</p>	<p>Leads on the delivery of the communications strategy, creates and reviews key communications, main liaison with contractor communications and engagement leads, management of relationships with key stakeholders, media relations lead, provides regular updates to the project board, supports the project team in planning for events/consultations, provides direct support for Members (particularly the Cabinet Member) and senior officers, and is a key point of contact with the NCC comms team and communications leads at partner organisations.</p>
<p>Senior Approvals/comms leads - Norfolk Homes/Norfolk Land</p>	<p>James Nicholls Commercial Director, Norfolk Homes</p> <p>Craig Lockwood Land and Planning Manager, Norfolk Homes</p> <p>Phillip Makepeace Managing Director, Norfolk Land</p>	<p>Overall responsibility for planning applications, approval of all communications from developer perspective and all matters in relation to technical and factual accuracy.</p> <p>Also responsible for coordinating key communications with the NCC communications/ project leads, sourcing and providing relevant information and content and gaining approvals. Also responsible for engagement with key stakeholders identified with respect to planning and housing development.</p>



<b>Role</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Planning/comms leads – South Norfolk Council	Phil Courtier – Director of Place  Tracy Lincoln – Development Manager  Chris Watts – Principle Planning Officer	Responsible for approval of all communications in respect of planning application process/factual accuracy.  Also responsible for coordinating key communications with the NCC communications/project leads, sourcing and providing relevant information and content and gaining approvals in liaison with South Norfolk Communications Team.

## **10. Communications activity to date**

- 10.1 Publicity and engagement have been carried out at the following key milestones for the project:
- July 2020 – Site investigations works carried out by NCC
  - October 2020 – NCC Cabinet approval for board member steering group
  - January 2021 – NCC Cabinet member approval for submission of Outline Business Case.

## **11. Consultations**

- 11.1 Consultations on route strategies and options have been previously undertaken by Norfolk County Council and more recently by Norfolk Land / Norfolk Homes through South Norfolk Council's planning application process.
- 11.2 In 2002, a public consultation was undertaken in which five route strategies at both dual and single carriageway standard were presented. This was followed by a supplementary consultation on four variants of one of the options.
- 11.3 These consultations revealed a very strong level of support for the principle of a bypass, with the balance in favour of an eastern route. In choosing the standard of the road, the public consultation indicated a clear preference for a dual carriageway.
- 11.4 In 2003 further assessment and consultation was carried out with key stakeholders on preferred options.
- 11.5 In 2004/05 the preferred option was subject to public consultation as part of a planning application process in which the bypass was unanimously approved but did not proceed due to lack of funding.
- 11.6 In 2015 the Long Stratton Area Action Plan (LSAAP) developed by NCC and South Norfolk Council was consulted on widely, identifying the need to support future housing and employment growth in the area and involve the local community in the assessment of future transport needs.
- 11.7 In 2018 following the submission of planning applications from Norfolk Homes/Norfolk Land plans were advertised and consultation letters sent to:
- Residents and businesses directly adjacent to the A140
  - Residents and businesses directly adjacent to the application site
  - Residents and businesses directly opposite or at the junction of a new access

- Residents and businesses to the east of Long Stratton affected by severance of Public Rights of Way or highways

Site notices were posted at key locations including employment areas and their locations published on the Council's website.

11.8 NCC intend to carry out further detailed consultation on public rights of way in Summer 2021 as part of the updated planning submission by Norfolk Homes/Norfolk Land.

11.9 More detailed information on past consultations is available in the Strategic Case of the Outline Business Case (Sections 2.13 and 2.14)

## 12. Communications and engagement in the operational phase

12.1 Once the new road opens:

- NCC's Long Stratton webpages will be maintained and updated as required
- There will be the opportunity to provide feedback on the Scheme via NCC's Customer Call Centre and the Scheme specific email address
- Questionnaire surveys will be undertaken via the scheme website.
- Targeted interviews will be arranged with selected key stakeholders to examine the impacts of the scheme in greater depth.

## 13. Communications activity schedule

13.1 As a programme of works is defined for the development stage, this schedule will be updated to show more detail.

13.2 This schedule is based on the project programme, which assumes statutory processes are completed.

Dates	Project activity	Communications activity	Audience
January 2021	OBC Submission to Department for Transport (DfT)	Press release and publication of OBC on NCC website	Key stakeholders All Media
April 2021	DfT approval of Outline Business Case	Press Release, web/social media updates, direct communications to key stakeholders	Key stakeholders All Media
May-July 2021	Statutory Consultation through SNC Planning Process	Press Release and wider promotion of consultation materials through website, social media, local/virtual events, direct mail and targeted local advertising	Local residents/business affected Other key stakeholders Local Media

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Project activity</b>	<b>Communications activity</b>	<b>Audience</b>
October 2021	Planning Consent	Press Release, web/social media updates, direct communications to key stakeholders	Key stakeholders All Media
November 2022	Procurement through Eastern Highways Alliance	Press Release, web/social media updates, direct communications to key stakeholders	Key stakeholders Trade Press Local Media
March 2023	Contract award and FBC submission	Press Release, web/social media updates, direct communications to key stakeholders	Key stakeholders All Media
May 2023	Final approval from DfT	Press Release, web/social media updates, direct communications to key stakeholders	Key stakeholders All Media
June 2023	Start of construction	Press Release, Ground-breaking event, web/social media updates, direct communications to key stakeholders.	Key stakeholders Media Wider Public
December 2024	Scheme open to public	Press Release, opening event, web/social media updates, direct communications to key stakeholders.	Key stakeholders Media Wider Public