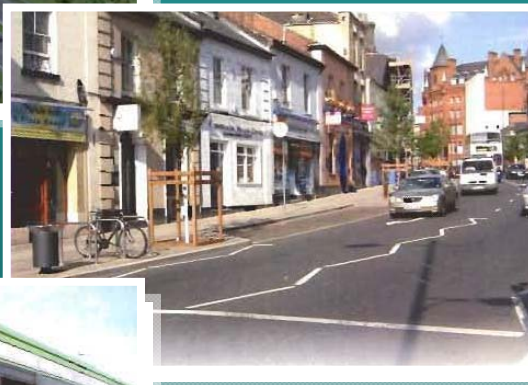


# **Major Scheme Business Case**

## **Norwich Northern Distributor Route**

### **Strategic Case**



# **Major Scheme Business Case**

## **Norwich Northern Distributor Route**

### **Strategic Case**

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## **2 Strategic Case**

### **2.1 Background information**

#### **2.1.1 Geography and demographics**

The proposed NDR scheme comprises a new road around the north and east of Norwich and significant traffic management in the city centre, plus the northern and western suburbs. It is located in the district of Broadland which is to the north of Norwich City.

The population of the Norwich Policy Area (NPA) is 230,000. However as a result of the growth it is required to accommodate, as set out in the East of England Plan it is expected to rise to 280,000 by 2025.

Norwich serves a large rural hinterland and exerts a powerful strategic economic and social and cultural influence over the surrounding market towns and villages and is one of the largest urban areas in the East of England. It is an important focus in the Eastern region for a range of services, housing, and the administrative and operational headquarters of a number of large organisations. As well as a large employment centre, Norwich is also a major retail destination and is regarded as one of the top ten retail centres in the UK in terms of the quality and range of facilities. Norwich is a medieval city retaining many features of historic importance including a street pattern that is not particularly suited to motor vehicles.

Outside Norwich to the east and northeast are The Broads, a world renowned wetland area with National Park status, which uniquely for any city in Britain, extend into the heart of Norwich. To the west are the Brecks, while the North Norfolk coast is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These environmental resources of national and international importance add to the unique and special qualities of the wider Norwich area and its surroundings.

The Greater Norwich area is a national Growth Point and the East of England Plan projects that the area will grow by at least 33,000 dwellings and 35,000 jobs by 2021. The Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP), made up of Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council, Broadland District Council, South Norfolk Council and the Broads Authority, has been set up to meet the challenges of co-ordinating and delivering this growth.

## **2.1.2 Existing travel patterns**

The travel patterns in the area are varied and complex. In addition to commuting and shopping/leisure trips to the city centre there are commuter movements across the northern part of the Norwich built up area and from the outlying villages. These movements are to access employment opportunities in the Broadland Business Park to the east and the Longwater Industrial Area to the west as well as the employment areas around Norwich International Airport just north of the built up area. At present many of these movements rely on the Norwich Outer Ring Road or rat-running through unsuitable rural roads to the north of the built up area.

For longer distance traffic not wishing to access Norwich, the east/west movement is catered for by the A47 trunk road bypass to the south. However, the north/south movement is not specifically catered for. Traffic from the north has to use minor rural roads to access the trunk road to the east and west of Norwich or stay on principal roads and use the urban ring roads or cross the city centre to access the trunk road bypass to the south.

## **2.1.3 Existing highway network**

The existing highway network in the area comprises radial routes emanating from Norwich to Fakenham, Aylsham, North Walsham, Wroxham and other destinations. These are mainly A roads, with some B and C class roads. The main route that spans across these radial routes is the Norwich Outer Ring Road which has built up areas on either side. This is a road of variable width with many busy signalised junctions and is predominantly a single carriageway in each direction between junctions. Other roads connecting the radials are either minor residential or rural roads. These are shown in Figure 1, included in Appendix 2.B.

## **2.1.4 Existing public transport provision**

The majority of bus services in Norwich run on radial routes into the city centre and out to provide cross-city links. These offer good frequencies in the built up area. Most bus services operate during the day and evenings, with only one operating 24 hours a day. This is on the route that links the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and the University of East Anglia to the railway station via Norwich city centre. There is a new bus station in Norwich city centre, built as part of a £10m major project that included improved public transport links between the bus and railway stations. The main interchange points for onward bus or pedestrian journeys in the city are on-street in Castle Meadow, St Stephens Street and at Anglia Square, and off-street at the bus and railway stations.

Outside of the built up area there are services to the surrounding market towns but these run on much lower frequencies. A key aspect of public transport/parking provision for Norwich is Park and Ride. There are 6 Park and Ride sites around Norwich, providing almost 5,000 spaces and a bus service frequency of approximately every 8-10 minutes between 0700 and 1900 Monday to Saturday.

### **2.1.5 Transport problems**

The existing Norwich Outer Ring Road in the north of the city acts as a distributor road for trips wishing to switch from one radial route to another. Due to its capacity constraints some trips are either using unsuitable rural roads outside of the built up area, or residential roads within it instead of the Outer Ring Road. Overall, this effect and the demand for travel in the area are causing the following identified problems.

- Peak hour traffic congestion at key junctions causing blocking back;
- Delays to public transport, including Park and Ride services, caught up in congested areas;
- Safety problems;
- Environmental problems – e.g. noise pollution;
- Air pollution resulting from traffic (Broadland District Council are about to declare an Air Quality Management Area)
- Intrusion and dominance of motorised traffic;
- Impact of heavy goods vehicles in inappropriate areas;
- Reduced access to facilities for non car owners;
- Problems in getting about for the disabled;
- 'Road rage' and stress caused by driving in congested conditions

### **2.1.6 Transport related problems**

In general these transport problems are causing access constraints for businesses in the area, in particular those situated close to Norwich International Airport. The Chamber of Commerce reports that some businesses are either not expanding as a consequence or considering leaving Norwich altogether. Anglian Windows, a national company, has recently reviewed their operations across the country and concluded that their Norwich operation is an issue for them due to the access constraints of its location. There are other companies near the airport who would benefit from better access to the national road network, these include Aquaterra Energy Limited and Heatrae Sadia Heating Limited.

In relation to economic success, there are many issues that were identified in a study undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners (RTP) in 2005. Particular aspects that it was thought an NDR would have a positive impact upon were:

- major developments around Norwich, including Broadland Business Park,

- growth of the Airport and supporting the new strategic employment site proposed in policy NSR1 of the draft East of England Plan (EEP) for airport-related commercial activities.
- existing businesses located further from the NDR in areas which will have access to major markets improved by the NDR.

The main benefits identified by the RTP study are summarised below.

- The development of Norwich Airport, by releasing the planning restrictions imposed due to poor surface access. Both in terms of an increase in passenger numbers that could support the enhanced marketing of Norwich and Norfolk as a tourist destination, as well as opening up new employment areas for airport/aircraft-related businesses.
- The development of employment sites near the route of the NDR (eg Broadland Business Park) where a wider labour catchment would prove particularly valuable to new businesses.
- Improved access for businesses located further afield (especially to the north of Norwich) in areas such as Spixworth, Rackheath, Wroxham, Cromer and North Walsham, etc. through improved connections.
- The NDR scheme will enable removal of more through traffic from the city centre, which will lead to physical improvements to the environment for shoppers, businesses and employees.
- Increase tourism through providing better accessibility in and around Norwich. This will lead to an increase in the volume and value of additional visitors to Norfolk. The current network, both external to Norfolk and the need to cross or circumvent Norwich to reach their destinations can act as a disincentive – particularly for day visitors.
- Employment areas will be more accessible to the workforce, thus widening the labour market pool from which companies can recruit.
- By helping to address poor perceptions of Norfolk, exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure, it would make the county more attractive to inward investment.
- Positive transport benefits for businesses, which are captured in the cost/benefit analysis. These show substantial 'value of time' savings in favour of the road, which will improve the competitiveness of all Norfolk's businesses that rely on transport infrastructure either directly or indirectly.

### **2.1.7 Future problems**

In view of these current conditions on the transportation network in the area there is great concern about the future situation. This is a serious issue bearing in mind the current situation will be exacerbated by traffic resulting from 33,000 new dwellings and 35,000 new jobs that the Norwich area is expected to accommodate up to 2021, as well as general growth.

The GNDP is currently preparing a Joint Core Strategy for the Norwich area. This seeks to accommodate the housing growth on a mixture of brownfield sites and of necessity will need to use some of the more accessible and sustainable greenfield sites. One key housing site which features in all the emerging options is the north east of Norwich which will provide between 7,000 and 10,000 dwellings. Despite enhanced public transport provision as part of the strategy for the area, there will be new car trips generated by this new development. This will add to the general underlying growth in trips, broadly in line with national trends, that we are seeing in the peripheral parts of the Norwich built up area. This is a particular issue for the northern parts of the built up area of Norwich. By contrast, in the centre of Norwich and based on evidence from traffic counts across the ring roads we are seeing reductions in traffic due to demand management measures that have been, and are continuing to be implemented.

For the growth in jobs, the strategy seeks to develop and expand existing employment locations. This includes business land available around the airport which may not be realisable without better access to the wider highway network than is currently available. Across the area there is a fear that the take up of allocated employment land by existing and new employers will be limited due to transport constraints. (See letters of endorsement from Shaping Norfolk's Future and the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce in Appendix 4E)

## **2.2 Scheme objectives**

In view of this analysis, the objectives of the NDR scheme in conjunction with complementary measures that form part of the overall NATS are:

- Reduce congestion on strategic routes to the north of the city
- Reduce noise, air pollution and accidents for communities in the northern suburbs of Norwich and outlying villages
- Enable the removal of through traffic from the city centre, and implementation of widespread pedestrianisation/bus priority measures
- Provide direct access to growth locations, helping to deliver significant housing and employment growth as set out in the EEP RSS/RTS
- Support the continued success of the Norwich economy as the driver to growth across the north of the region
- Provide improved access to north and north east Norfolk.

In relation to these objectives the scheme will impact upon the following Local Transport Plan (LTP) targets and National Indicators.

- Traffic levels entering Norwich city centre (LTP6)
- Resolution of declared AQMA's in Norwich (LTP 8)



- Road safety casualty reduction (NI 47 and 48)
- Public transport patronage (NI 177)
- Accessibility (NI 175)
- Bus services running on time (NI 178).

## **2.3 Scheme history and development**

### **2.3.1 Norwich Area Transportation Strategy**

An NDR scheme was first suggested in a 1991 review of the NATS. Further work and consultation was carried out on route options in the following years.

In 1994, as a result of strong environmental objections to parts of the routes and due to changes in national policy it was agreed to no longer investigate an NDR scheme. At that time less money was being made available for road building and national policy was changing away from increasing road capacity to placing more emphasis on demand management. However, the transport problems and issues had not changed and the council agreed to investigate alternative measures to resolve the problems on the eastern and western fringes of Norwich. In particular this involved undertaking a study into the north-west sector of Norwich and possible improvements between A1067 Fakenham Road and A47 to the west of Norwich.

In 2002 the NATS was reviewed once more. The review built on the successful elements of the previous strategy which were to be retained such as long stay parking restraint and the provision of Park and Ride. The process was overseen by a Member steering group drawn from the Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council, Broadland District and South Norfolk Council and the adopted strategy was endorsed by all four authorities.

The problems and issues stage of the 2002 review identified the following for the Norwich area:

- The need to address aspects of transport provision that people have rated poorly – bus services, the bus station, quantity of car and cycle parking, cycle routes and safety in the city centre after dark;
- Making it easier to travel in and around the area;
- Allowing people – especially people who are poor, from deprived areas or don't have the use of a car – to access places like work, shops and medical facilities;
- Reducing traffic congestion;
- Minimising people's fears about travelling;
- Reducing accidents and noise and air pollution;
- Reducing traffic problems in areas where people live;
- Catering for the economic growth aspirations of the area contained in Local Plans, and in particular expansion of Norwich International Airport and the Norwich Research Park;
- Identifying transport solutions for the increasing population, and social trends such as a move towards smaller household sizes;

- Addressing the impact of traffic on minor roads and residential streets around the north of Norwich;
- Addressing air quality issues within the city centre; and
- Increasing travel choice and providing options for ways in which people can travel.

Based on these problems and issues the following vision and objectives were agreed in January 2003:

### **Norwich Area Transportation Strategy - Vision**

*To provide the highest possible level of access to and within the strategy area to benefit people's individual needs and enhance the economic health of the strategy area. To ensure that journeys minimise any adverse impact on people and the built and natural environment.*

<b>Norwich Area Transportation Strategy – Objectives</b>	
Environment	<p>Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport by encouraging sustainable modes of travel and vehicles using fuels derived from renewable sources or waste.</p> <p>Promote the use of alternative modes of transport and less polluting fuels, particularly within Air Quality Management Areas.</p> <p>Minimise noise, vibration and visual intrusion from transport, particularly in the public, urban open spaces in the historic city centre.</p> <p>Implement transport solutions that protect open space, wildlife habitats and water resources.</p>
Economy	<p>Minimise congestion and delays for all modes of transport by improving the efficiency of the transport network.</p> <p>Promote a vibrant city centre, and other commercial centres, by improving accessibility for people and goods.</p> <p>Cater for the travel consequences arising from growth aspirations. In particular accommodate transport needs arising from future growth of the airport and the cluster of the Norwich Research Park, University and Hospitals at Colney.</p> <p>Improve the competitiveness of the Norwich area as a retail, tourist and business centre, whilst enhancing its image and maintaining a high quality environment.</p>

Safety	<p>Maximise safety and security for everyone.</p> <p>Minimise the number and severity of road traffic accidents.</p> <p>Lower the incidence of crime experienced on the transport system and remove the perception of fear of crime for vulnerable people.</p> <p>Minimise fear and intimidation from traffic.</p>
Accessibility	<p>Maximise transport choice for all travellers.</p> <p>Reduce social exclusion through transport solutions and promote equal access to jobs, goods and services.</p> <p>Protect and enhance residential amenity and minimise community severance.</p> <p>Enhance access for non-car modes.</p>
Integration	<p>Promote sustainable means of travel, minimise the length of trips and encourage reduced car-use through land use policies, layout of development and promotion of travel plans.</p> <p>Improve integration and interchange.</p> <p>Reduce the need to travel.</p>

The types of transport interventions assessed and, where possible, modelled for the **Norwich Area Transportation Strategy** were:

- Improvements to Public Transport - Orbital Bus Routes, Light Rapid Transit
- Improvements to Cycling/Walking Networks
- Major Highway Improvements - NDR, Inner and Outer Ring Road junctions
- Traffic Management/Restraint - City Centre Ring and Loop;
- Land Use/Travel Planning
- Parking Strategy - reduced Long Stay Parking in City Centre and more Park and Ride

These were assessed against the problems and issues, and the new vision and objectives. The assessment results then underwent a coarse sieving process, leading to the identification of interventions to be assessed in more detail. These interventions were then combined into six strategy options for testing.

The six NATS strategy options are described in the table below

<b>Norwich Area Transportation Strategy – Options</b>	
1	A package of public transport improvements based on the provision of an orbital bus route, major improvements to existing radial bus services, improvements to junctions on the Inner and Outer Ring Roads and implementation of measures to reduce through traffic in the City Centre.
2	A light rapid transport system linking the north east of Norwich to the south west of Norwich and serving key growth locations, complemented by charging mechanisms within the city centre and other measures to reduce through traffic in the City Centre and improvements to junctions on the Inner and Outer Ring Roads.
3	A package of sustainable transport initiatives, including planning new development to reduce the distance between home, work and services, financial incentives for implementation of workplace travel plans, including targets for reduced car use by existing businesses as well as those expanding or relocating. Infrastructure improvements to walking and cycling networks, measures to support safer and healthier journeys to school and promotion of alternative modes, alternative fuels and delivery of individualised marketing campaigns in support of travel plans.
4	Option centred on the provision of an NDR scheme from A47 at Easton to A47 at Postwick complemented by measures to reduce the impact of traffic on minor roads and residential streets around the north of Norwich, improvements to radial bus services, implementation of measures to reduce through traffic in the City Centre and improvements to junctions on the Inner and Outer Ring Roads.
5	Option centred on the provision of an NDR scheme from A140 Norwich Airport to A47 Postwick complemented by measures to reduce the impact of traffic on minor roads and residential streets around the north of Norwich, improvements to radial bus services, implementation of measures to reduce through traffic in the City Centre and improvements to junctions on the Inner and Outer Ring Roads.
6	Option centred on the provision of an NDR scheme from A1067 Fakenham Road to A47 Postwick complemented by measures to reduce the impact of traffic on minor roads and residential streets around the north of Norwich, improvements to radial bus services, implementation of measures to reduce through traffic in the City Centre and improvements to junctions on the Inner and Outer Ring Roads.

Assessment of these six options was undertaken, in accordance with the Department for Transport, Transport Analysis Guidance to ascertain the beneficial and adverse impacts. This assessment considered the five Government transport objectives; environment, safety, economy, accessibility and integration, together with an assessment against local and regional objectives. Appraisal Summary Tables (AST)

were prepared for each option, together with an assessment of the additional benefits and disbenefits of the complementary measures.

### **2.3.2 Consultation on the NATS**

After consideration of these options and the preparation of the Appraisal Summary Tables, a preferred NATS strategy was developed for consultation. This was Option 6 with a full NDR scheme.

Key elements of the preferred strategy option were:

- A new distributor road around the north of Norwich linking with the trunk road network
- A new bus station and improved links between the bus and rail stations
- Improving bus, rail and other passenger transport
- An additional Park and Ride site in either Drayton or Taverham
- Road safety measures, such as in residential areas of the city
- Addressing pollution in Air Quality Management Areas
- Greater education encouragement and enforcement measures
- Giving priority where it is most needed (for example where there is high pedestrian/vehicle conflict)
- Improving the efficiency of the road network – by making better use of the computerised urban traffic control system
- Traffic management measures to reduce through traffic in the city centre, residential side streets and on suburban and rural roads around the north of Norwich

The preferred NATS strategy underwent public consultation in late 2003. It gained widespread public support, including over 78% of respondents expressing views in favour of the NDR scheme element. In view of this the revised NATS strategy including the NDR scheme was adopted in October 2004 by Norfolk County Council.

### **2.3.3 Taking NATS forward**

The implementation of NATS will involve responding to new challenges as they emerge. In particular the development of the Joint Core Strategy for the greater Norwich area with increased levels of growth will need to be addressed. In view of this work is currently underway to determine what particular schemes and measures will be implemented on the ground. The issue of how we bring about a step change in public transport provision to cater for the additional housing and jobs growth will be key. What has become apparent from the JCS work is how important and indeed essential the NDR will be in facilitating transport improvements to serve the currently envisaged levels of housing and jobs growth

### **2.3.4 Consultation on routes for an NDR scheme**

Following the adoption of the preferred NATS strategy which included an NDR scheme, a full public consultation into alternative routes for the NDR scheme was carried out. This public consultation involved presenting the preliminary engineering design, the results of specialist surveys relating to environmental topics and an assessment of the traffic and economic implications of each of the route options.

The impact of each option in terms of traffic patterns in the Norwich area was assessed using a traffic model developed from surveys in 2002. This work showed that constructing the road to a dual carriageway standard was justified and this in itself would attract more traffic from the wider network, helping to reduce congestion. Whilst a dual carriageway road could be responsible for more induced traffic onto the network, the model predicted this to be only in the order of 1.5%. At this stage Norfolk County Council took the decision to promote the road to a dual carriageway standard. The Traffic and Economic Appraisal Report (2004) gives the results of this work. The environmental aspects of this consultation were informed by a Stage 2 Environmental Assessment. The surveys for this assessment had been carried out during summer 2004 and the results presented in the Stage 2 Environmental Assessment Report in published in February 2005.

One of the most significant outcomes of this consultation was the strong concerns expressed by the Statutory Environmental Bodies (SEB) about the impact of constructing a new road and bridge over the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to the west of Norwich.

### **2.3.5 Further assessment work**

In March 2005, in view of this outcome from the public consultation Norfolk County Council Cabinet decided that it would be premature to make a decision on a preferred route, principally because of the strong adverse comments expressed by English Nature (EN) and the Environment Agency (EA) in relation to the proposed road crossing the River Wensum SAC and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). They therefore resolved to defer a decision on a preferred route and carry out further assessment work.

This further assessment work included developing mitigation measures in consultation with EN and EA using more detailed analysis usually carried out for a Stage 3 environmental assessment. In addition to this an Economic Impact



Assessment (EIA) was carried out by Roger Tym and Partners. The key outcomes of this work are set out in section 2.1.6. It must be noted that this assessment was based on the NDR alone and not the NDR in conjunction with complementary measures that form part of the overall NATS.

A comparative assessment was also carried out of NDR solutions that did not extend all the way to the A47 in the west. Building on the previous work on options for NATS this demonstrated that there were still considerable benefits in providing an NDR that extended from the A47 at Postwick to the A1067 Fakenham Road at Attlebridge Hills.

### **2.3.6 Preferred Scheme for an NDR Scheme**

After careful consideration of the more detailed environmental analysis, it was concluded it would not be possible to devise satisfactory mitigation measures for the section of the route across the Wensum Valley from the A47 to A1067. However, the further assessment work on route options and the EIA work indicated the merits of a scheme that did not cross the sensitive Wensum Valley area.

Another key issue was the requirement to accommodate ever increasing amounts of growth in the Norwich area, as outlined in the emerging East of England Plan. An important area for housing growth was the northeast sector of Norwich and it was becoming increasingly apparent that this would not be realisable without the NDR. The evidence presented to the Examination in Public on the draft East of England Plan in November 2005 was prepared on this basis.

When the results of this additional work and the emerging East of England Plan were reported to Norfolk County Council Cabinet in September 2005 it took the decision to adopt a dual carriageway NDR route between A1067 Fakenham Road at Attlebridge Hills and A47 at Postwick.

## **2.4 Alignment with Government, Regional and Local objectives**

The objectives and outcomes of implementing the NDR scheme as part of the NATS strategy have been considered for their alignment with Government, regional and local objectives. For each strategy or initiative the goals and objectives are shown down the side of a table and NDR objectives across the top. Where a strategic fit exists, text is provided to show the link. This has been carried for the following strategies or initiatives and the results are shown in Appendix 2.A Strategic Fit Tables.

- Department for Transport - Towards a Sustainable Transport System (October 2007)
- Department for Transport - The Eddington Transport Study Report (December 2006)
- East of England Development Agency - Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England (Consultation Draft September 2007)
- Government Office for the East of England - East of England Plan - The Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (May 2008)



- Greater Norwich Development Partnership – Draft Joint Core Strategy
- Norfolk County Council – NATS
- Norfolk County Council Local Transport Plan 2006-(11 March 2006)
- Norfolk County Strategic Partnership – Norfolk Ambition - sustainable community strategy for Norfolk 2003-2023 (March 2008)

It is clear from these tables that strong demonstrable links exist for the NDR scheme to local, regional and national objectives.

#### **2.4.1 Regional Support**

A letter of support for the scheme from the Chair of the Regional Planning Panel was sent to the Chief Executive of Norfolk County Council in March 2008. A copy is included in Appendix 4.E.

#### **2.4.2 Stakeholder support**

All key stakeholders have shown their support for the NDR scheme by writing letters to the Director of Planning and Transportation at Norfolk County Council and these are shown in Appendix 4.E. A key stakeholder which represents many others is Shaping Norfolk's Future. This is the EEDA supported, business led, Sub-Regional Economic Partnership for Norfolk. A letter from the Chief Executive of Shaping Norfolk's Future is contained in Appendix 4.E.

#### **2.4.3 Regional Fit and the Regional Funding Allocation**

The NDR scheme was submitted to the East of England Regional Assembly in 2005 for prioritisation alongside all of the other major schemes in the region. The methodology of the prioritisation process which took account of environmental, social and economic criteria was agreed by the local transport authorities in the region. Out of this process the NDR scheme was placed in the highest priority category for implementation in the period up to 2016. The assumption made at that time by EERA was that the scheme would seek 60% funding from the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) and 40% would come from local contributions comprising developer and other sources based on the status of Norwich as a Growth Point Area.

In view of the priorities expressed by the region, in July 2006 the NDR scheme was included in an indicative list of priority schemes by the DfT. These are those that can be progressed so that they are ready to be added to the RFA for a start of construction in the years from 2009/10 to 2015/16.

Inclusion of the NDR scheme into the RFA demonstrates that it has an important role to play in terms of regionally agreed objectives.

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## **Schedule of Appendices to Section 2**

2.A Strategic Fit tables

2.B Figure 1