Transport for Norwich
— Strategy —

Background and context

Chapter One - background

Spatial Portrait

1.1   Norwich is Norfolk's largest urban area and one of the largest centres of employment in greater south-east England, making the city an important focus in the region for a range of services, as well as the administrative and operational headquarters for a number of organisations. It is also a city of considerable historic importance and the city centre in particular retains many historic features such as narrow streets within the city walls lined by many medieval and Georgian buildings and churches, as well as two cathedrals and a Norman Castle. Norwich's landscape varies from the urban and historic core to open, green spaces and parks, facilitating recreation and leisure activities, as well as the River Wensum which traverses through the city.

1.2   Norwich, including its surrounding area (Broadland and South Norfolk Districts), has an estimated population of around 409,000 as of 2018. Of this, 55% of the population live in the Norwich urban area, around 10% live in surrounding market towns such as Wymondham and Wroxham, and 35% live in smaller towns and villages on Norwich's periphery. Both the city's urban centre and surrounding areas are undergoing, and are planned to undergo further, large scale growth and change. This growth will be through large housing and employment land allocations in adopted and emerging local plans.

1.3   Norwich is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK and contributes more than £3 billion per annum to the national economy. The Norwich area strongly features most of the sectors identified as having high growth potential regionally which include: manufacturing and engineering at Hethel; agri-tech, health and life sciences at the Norwich Research Park and Food

Enterprise Park; and IT and communications and digital creative industries in the city centre. The area also benefits from a strong and growing tertiary education sector provided by UEA, NUA, City College Norwich and Easton College which contribute research expertise and a skilled workforce. Norwich is a key employment hub resulting in people from across the county of Norfolk, and some outside, commuting into the city.

1.4   The Norwich-Cambridge corridor is of key strategic importance to the planned growth, with rail and road routes providing key strategic access to London, Cambridgeshire and much of the rest of the UK. The Cambridge to Norwich Tech Corridor, which includes Norwich, the North East Growth Triangle, the remainder of the Norwich Fringe, Hethersett and Wymondham, is the major focus for growth and change in Greater Norwich, accommodating approximately 74% of the planned growth. The A47 is an important road and bus route connecting Norwich to Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft to the east (which are also served by rail services) and providing access to King's Lynn, the Midlands and the north of the country to the west. There are also several key arterial routes, the Broadland Northway and an inner and outer ring-road, providing access in and out of the city from surrounding settlements for all types of vehicle, including by bus and forms of active travel.

1.5   Norwich also boasts an extensive leisure and cultural offer with a booming tourism industry supporting 54,000 skilled workers. Norwich and surrounding areas are experiencing growing numbers of day visitors, estimated at 40 million per year, and 12 million overnight visitors to historic buildings, parks and museums, cultural festivals and other regular events, along with access to the Broads and the coast.

1.6   The health of people in Norwich is markedly worse than the national average. However, the surrounding districts such as Broadland and South Norfolk are generally better. The city also has a higher level of deprivation than the Norfolk average. This takes into account the domains of income, employment, education, skills and training, health and disability, crime, barriers to housing services, and living environment. Transport has a key role to play in alleviating poverty by providing affordable access to jobs, education and services.

1.7   Travel patterns and behaviours can be very different across the area. People living away from the centre tend to travel more by private car, possibly due to trips being longer – meaning that active travel isn't always suitable – and public transport links scarcer.

About the Transport Strategy

1.8   The Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) was adopted in 2004. It set out a transportation strategy for the Norwich area until the year 2021. This version of the strategy reviewed and amended the previous one in the light of the then current transport policy, essentially updating it and rolling it forward. A small number of minor policy changes were subsequently agreed in April 2010 as part of the development of the Greater Norwich Joint Core Strategy.

       The most significant of these was to seek a step-change in the provision of public transport largely through the creation of bus rapid transit routes connecting major growth areas to the city centre and employment sites.

1.9   In 2010 a NATS Implementation Plan was adopted setting out how the strategy would be implemented on the ground.

1.10   The Transport for Norwich strategy is the successor to NATS. It is a high-level strategy setting out a vision, objectives and longer-term aspiration alongside an Action Plan setting out commitment to the major actions that will be undertaken to achieve the policy aspiration: like investigation of how to reach zero carbon target and meet air quality requirements; and subsequent implementation.

        The TfN strategy forms part of a suite of documents setting out transport policy in Norfolk. The LTP covers transport policy across the whole of Norfolk. The TfN strategy will nest within this and provide the detail for the area. Other more detailed plans and policies will themselves support TfN. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will be incorporated as part of the TfN strategy.

Geographical coverage of the strategy

1.11   The Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) had a defined area and covered the city of Norwich, its suburbs and the first ring of surrounding villages, an area approximately 22km by 18km including the Norwich City Council administrative area and parts of the districts of South Norfolk and Broadland.

1.12   The NATS area was broadly the same as the Norwich Policy Area that is defined in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS). Through the process of developing the TfN Strategy, consideration has been given to its geography.

1.13 The existing strategy is focussed on Norwich, including the contiguous major growth area, and includes a small rural hinterland. However, Norwich is important for people and businesses across a large area. The travel to work area extends roughly across Norwich, all of Broadland and South Norfolk plus parts North Norfolk, Breckland and Mid-Suffolk so what is done within Norwich therefore affects many more people and businesses than simply those who live within the urban area.

1.14 The transport issues, problems and opportunities within the city are very different from those faced in its rural hinterland so interventions appropriate within the city are often not appropriate elsewhere. How trips to Norwich are begun will be influenced by local factors such as the purpose of the trip, the distance to Norwich and the availability of different transport modes.

1.15 The LTP provides important policy context for transport across the county. The fourth LTP is nearing completion and it is planned to be adopted by August 2021. In addition, a series of more local studies and strategies exist for places including the market towns of Wymondham, Aylsham, Diss and Wroxham and Hoveton.

1.16 This TfN strategy will have a number of policy layers that will each have their own area of influence so the extent of the strategy cannot be easily represented by a line on a plan. However, there will be areas of focus for different policies as they are developed.

1.17 Examples of policy areas where geographic scope differs include:

• The need to consider longer distance trips to Norwich that originate elsewhere in the county or beyond

• Consideration of how implementation of measures within the city affects journeys originating from, or going to, areas outside the city.

1.18 Transport within Norwich and its strategic growth area, together with consideration of the longer distance trips from the county or beyond, will be where the strategy and its action plan have their main focus. In this context, 'Norwich' means the existing built up areas, the growth areas including the north east growth triangle and a small buffer zone where transport movements and general activities might be considered to be very closely associated with, or part of, the city.

Transport
for Norwich
Strategy
Geographical Scope
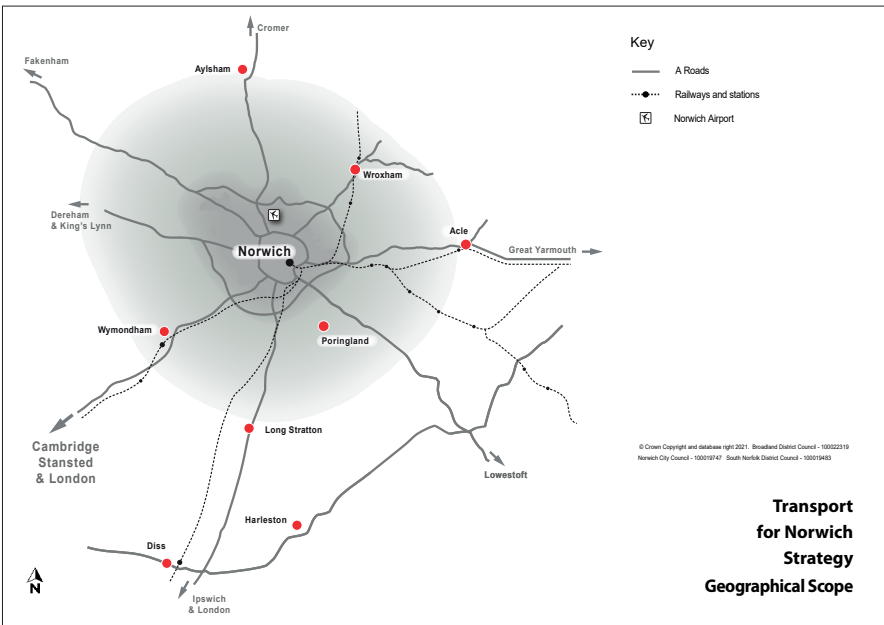
Current Progress and Achievements

1.19   The strategy develops implementation of projects and initiatives over a number of years including:

- · Successful bids for Transforming Cities Fund and rapid implementation including the Prince of Wales Road contra-flow cycle scheme, connecting the rail station to the city centre

- · Successful Active Travel Fund scheme bids (covid recovery) implemented on St Benedicts and Exchange Street; both allowing outside seating for eating and drinking, as well as reductions in traffic

- · Two rounds of Cycle City Ambition Grant funding for three cross-city cycle routes including extensive 20mph zones and cycle parking and further development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

- · High quality public realm schemes delivered in partnership with Norwich City Council eg Westlegate, Tombland

- · Bus priority schemes in the city centre, eg: Rampant Horse Street and Red Lion Street

- · Operation of six Park and Ride sites offering cross city bus travel and a direct link to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH) and UEA

- · Commercial bus network patronage increases and network stability

- · Improving air quality in Norwich Air Quality Management Area (AQMA): The Castle Meadow Low Emission Zone was fully completed as long ago as 2009

- Growing levels of cycling (40% increase where new cycle infrastructure has been provided)

- Effective use of camera enforcement for bus gates for traffic management

- Decreasing levels of traffic through the city centre, whilst maintaining the vitality of the retail

- Effective management of coaches travelling to the city; supporting continued growth in tourism

- Effective parking enforcement and operation of Controlled Parking Zones, eg residents parking, to support transport policy

- Effective maintenance of the highway

- Effective traffic signal control management using bus prioritisation

- Effective city centre car parking information system for motorists through variable message signs showing numbers of available spaces in car parks

- Targeted local safety scheme implementation

- Site allocation and highway development management role for major and minor developments ensure that development is aligned to the TfN strategy as best as possible and mitigation measures sought where necessary such as Travel Plans, junction improvements, new footways and crossing facilities.

- Successful partnerships with districts, eg provision of bus shelters, stakeholders, eg Norwich Business Improvement District and operators, eg Norwich Car Club

- Partnership with Norfolk Constabulary and the Safety Camera Partnership

- Effective coordination of road works and event disruption

- Provision of new waiting and loading restrictions to respond to a changing city

- New road infrastructure to reduce congestion and delays for all road users including buses on certain routes. The Broadland Northway has taken traffic out of the centre, allowed measures such as Westlegate pedestrianisation.

- Capacity improvements have been provided along Dereham Road and at the Dereham Road / Outer Ring Road roundabout.

- Efficient handling of new highway adoptions and securing commuted maintenance sums from developers where required

- Facilitation of highway stopping up for new development

- Effective traffic management to regenerate historic areas eg closure of through traffic at St Georges Street and public realm improvements have boosted footfall, local businesses and amenity of the city centre conservation area.

Chapter Two - Policy Context

Policy Context Summary

2.1   A wide range of local, regional, national and international policies have been taken into account in the strategy's development. A comprehensive review of all the relevant policies for the TfN Strategy will be published separately alongside the final strategy. The key policies providing context to the TfN Strategy include:

- The United Nations Paris Agreement 2015

- Climate Change Act 2019 revision

- Clean Air Strategy 2019

- Build Back Better: our plan for growth 2021

- Bus Back Better: A long term strategy for buses in England 2021

- Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking 2020

- Future of Mobility Strategy 2019

- East of England Route Strategy 2017

- Healthy Streets Approach

- Inclusive Transport Strategy (2020)

- Norfolk County Council Environmental Policy 2019

- Local Transport Plan (LTP4 due to be adopted 2021)

- Greater Norwich Local Plan (due to be adopted September 2022)

- Norfolk Greenways to Green Space Strategy.

2.2   The TfN strategy sits within the Norfolk Local Transport Plan (LTP) which sets out seven strategic objectives to guide future investment in Norfolk's transport network. These are: embracing the future, delivering a sustainable Norfolk, enhancing connectivity, enhancing Norfolk's quality of life, increasing accessibility, improving transport safety and providing a well-managed and maintained transport network.

2.3   Core policy messages informing the new TfN strategy include the following themes:

The environment

- Reducing carbon emissions, particularly from transport by facilitating zero emission vehicles, active travel, public transport and reducing the demand for travel

- Protecting and improving the environment

- Improving air quality particularly in built up urban areas

The economy

- Supporting economic growth and recovery including from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic

- Providing and enhancing connectivity between key hubs and locations, such as key employment sites, rail stations, ports and airports, and key cities and places both within the county as well as nationally and internationally

Society, health and equality

- Improving access to education, training and employment opportunities and tackling deprivation

- Encouraging equality and equal access to travel for all

- Improving the health of communities and increasing levels of physical activity

- Improving air quality for the health of communities

- Providing access to green space

- Encouraging and enabling active travel by providing safe, continuous, direct, comfortable routes

- Providing a safe, healthy and attractive environment for people to live and work in

Technology

- Adapting to and embracing of new technologies in transport. For example, micromobility and autonomous vehicles.

2.4   The TfN strategy brings these themes, from international to local policies and priorities together, in order to shape and set out a forward-thinking transport strategy for Norwich.

Chapter three - Problems Issues and Opportunities

Problems, Issues and Opportunities Summary

3.1   A number of key challenges need to be taken into account and overcome as part of the TfN Strategy. The following is a summary. These have been identified through a range of different sources including previous consultation, the councils' network management observations and monitoring, feedback from bus operators, surveys and computer-modelling analysis.

3.2   The main challenge is climate change and the achievement of net zero carbon targets. Norfolk County Council's Environment Policy, adopted in 2019, aims to achieve net zero carbon emissions from the council's operations by 2030 and a move towards carbon neutrality across all sectors by the same date. Alongside this, central government also amended the Climate Change Act in 2019 with a target to achieve net zero carbon by 2050. The UK's sixth Carbon Budget, due to become enshrined in law, will set a target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. The transport sector is one of the highest emitters of carbon dioxide and it is therefore expected that large carbon savings are made within the sector to contribute towards the achievement of the goals. The TfN strategy needs to contribute to this key ambition.

3.3   Within the built-up area of Norwich there are already high levels of active travel underpinned by recent investments. There is a well-developed commercial public transport network with a history of good working relationships between local authorities, businesses and transport operators. Encouragement of electric vehicles (EVs), public transport, active travel and reducing demands for travel are some transport interventions which could help Norwich and

the surrounding area contribute to carbon savings, as well as adequate planning and monitoring of carbon emissions such as the use of carbon budgeting.

Proportion of CO2 emissions in Norfolk districts by sector (2019)
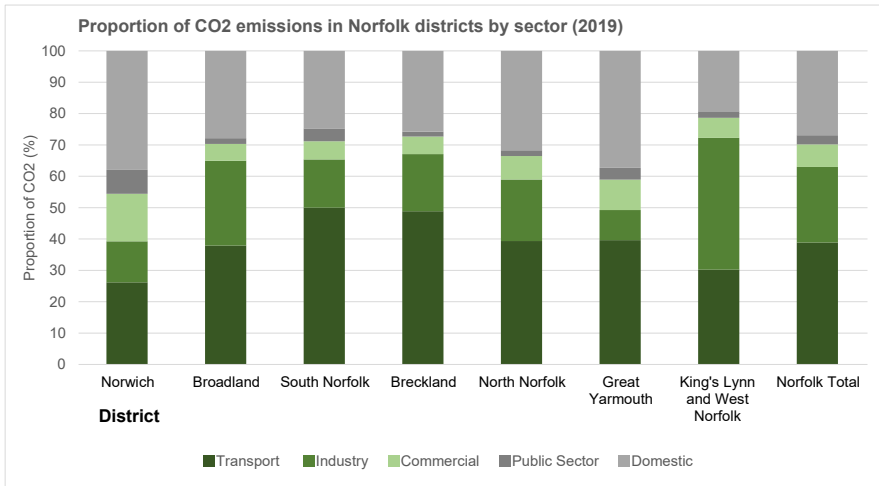
3.4   Air pollution is a significant issue for Norwich. The city centre is an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) due to the annual average nitrogen dioxide levels exceeding recognised thresholds. High levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter have also been identified along the primary routes into the city as well as in the wider urban area of Norwich. This has a detrimental effect on human health causing a reduction in life expectancy and increasing the risks of heart disease and lung cancer. It is a key issue the strategy needs to overcome for the health of both the people and environment of Norwich. Monitoring shows other locations where nitrogen dioxide levels are high, but not in excess of thresholds, and people often express concern about areas including outside schools.

3.5   The variety of landscapes, neighbourhoods, levels of wealth and lifestyles within Norwich and surrounding areas need to be respected and enhanced where possible when implementing transport interventions.

3.6   In areas of higher deprivation, travel particularly by private cars and buses can become inaccessible due to high costs. This can limit access to opportunities for employment, education and training and ultimately result in social exclusion. The challenge is to overcome this and provide a transport network accessible for all. Good progress has been made with the Beryl bike hire scheme and the roll-out of a comprehensive, high quality cycle (pedalway) network. Within the city centre in particular, improvements to the streetscape and removal of general traffic has added to the vibrancy of areas, supporting the city's and county's economy, preserving and enhancing the city as a major retail and employment centre for a large surrounding area.

3.7   Car ownership also varies considerably across the Norwich area with more central areas of the city having lower ownership and using a variety of travel modes, and the suburbs having the highest ownership rate. Many people have a perception that there is no suitable alternative to car travel; which can be the case for some trips. However, this can make public acceptance of schemes difficult to achieve due to the differing travel behaviours and needs across the Norwich area. Car culture and single occupancy vehicles are particularly difficult behaviours to address and it is made more challenging by the rurality of the areas surrounding Norwich where often there is no alternative but to use a car, at least for part of a journey. Bus fares do not compete with parking tariffs within the city, hence making the car a more attractive option and encouraging their use. In addition, in the same amount of time, you can travel further by car than by bus. This adds to the attractiveness of using a car.

3.8   Perceived concerns and lack of confidence in the safety of active travel options can reduce how often people travel by bike or on foot. This must be overcome to achieve net zero targets and to improve air quality and congestion. For many trips in and around Norwich there are viable alternatives to car use, especially single-occupancy car use, and these opportunities are increasing with the roll-out of a high quality cycle network, the trialling of e-scooters, hire schemes for standard and electric bikes and a comprehensive public transport network.

3.9   A number of large housing developments are currently being built and/or have been allocated in the Norwich area as well as the wider surrounding area. As Norwich is the primary jobs hub and the destination for many commuters across the county, the city centre becomes congested, particularly at peak times. Growth in Norwich and the strategic growth areas surrounding it will place increased demand on the city's transport networks. New developments in the Norwich area provide an excellent opportunity to design neighbourhoods and communities that will facilitate and encourage sustainable travel and build well-designed, well-connected neighbourhoods.

3.10   The rapidly changing use of the transport network also presents a challenge when planning transport interventions. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a large shift in travel behaviour as many people stayed at home. Whilst the national lockdowns were only temporary, some impacts of the pandemic on the transport network are likely to remain due to the adoption of home working practices. In addition, the impact of rapidly advancing technology is changing the way the transport network is used. For example, increases in online shopping and food delivery, and new modes of transport, such as micromobility and E-scooters, all pose a challenge towards the existing network. The identity of the high-street is also evolving and as a result will change the way people use, move around and access the central business district of Norwich.

3.11 Administration and funding of transport in Norwich adds complexity to the management of the transport network. For example, bus provision, car parking and enforcement of parking and moving traffic offences are currently carried out by different organisations making join-up possible only through working in partnerships.

3.12 Alongside the opportunity to refresh the TfN strategy, there are also opportunities being taken to progress, for example, the Norwich Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which is progressing ahead of the strategy, and finalising the Bus Service Improvement Plan by mid-2022. Funding bids provide an opportunity to secure funding for implementing measures, with current opportunities including Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund and Active Travel Fund. Preparation of the TfN strategy will provide the context for a range of opportunities, even though inevitably some of their timescales do not align exactly.

Chapter four - Vision and Themes

Vision

Norwich and the Strategic Growth Area around it will become a place to thrive because shared, clean, active and accessible travel are the first choice for journeys, and people within at least the urban area can access a range of services without a car.

Themes

Norwich and Norfolk

Businesses and people can succeed because they have clean, high-quality, modern and reliable connections. The health and well-being of people, and the success of the area and its places, is supported by a transport system that respects the environment.

A Zero Carbon future

Carbon is reduced: reductions in carbon emissions from transport in the Norwich area help achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 across all sectors in Norfolk. We have established a carbon baseline and developed a transport carbon budget.

Improving the Quality of our air

Air quality is good. We have no air quality management areas and our plans mean air quality won't be an issue in the future.

Changing attitudes and behaviours

People choose to primarily travel around by using active travel; public transport provides a suitable alternative for other trips.

Supporting Growth Areas

Sustainable growth in the right place is supported.

Meeting Local Needs

The transport system supports the needs of everyone, being designed to take account the different needs of different people.

Reducing the dominance of traffic

People and places are at the heart of what we do. The dominance of vehicle traffic will be reduced: Speeds are reduced to 20mph in residential neighbourhoods, traffic does not use the city centre unless it has a purpose to be there.

Making the Transport system work as one

People have confidence in the transport system because they benefit from knowing that it is well connected, safe and reliable. The facilities available for different types of journey have been well-planned and prioritised and there is seamless interchange between different forms of transport.

Making it Happen

Our vision is achieved through dialogue and action between people and partners.

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www.norfolk.gov.uk/tfnstrategy