



York Civic Trust

Comparator Case Studies for York's 2024 Local Transport Strategy Norwich May 2024

Introductory note

This is one of nine case studies originally produced in draft in May 2021 at the request of the City of York Council. At the time the Council intended to publish a new Local Transport Plan in December 2021, and had invited York Civic Trust, through its Transport Advisory Group, to offer advice on content. The nine case studies, of cities chosen in discussion with the Council, were developed sufficiently fully to allow the Council to decide which it wished to incorporate in its Local Transport Plan. That decision was never taken, and the 2021 Local Transport Plan was never completed. In February 2022 York Civic Trust collated its advice into *A Transport Strategy for York*, Section 6 of which summarises the key messages from the nine case studies. In February 2023 the Council produced a first draft of a Local Transport Strategy. In March 2023 the Council's Scrutiny Committee on Economy and Place reviewed the nine case studies and recommended that "the Executive Member for Transport work with York Civic Trust and relevant officers on taking the report forward with two or three case studies and focus on building public buy in into medium and long term traffic strategies".

In March 2024 the Council's new administration agreed to publish a Local Transport Strategy for the city in June 2024, based on a consultation on key principles launched in November 2023. The Trust was invited to update the nine case studies, within the limited resources available to it, and to produce brief summaries of key messages for York's Local Transport Strategy. While these summaries and updated strategies are now being published on the Trust's website, it is important to stress that they have not been fully researched, and thus may not be wholly up to date.

Summary

Norwich has many similarities to York. A compact university city with flat geography and a historic core. Similar in size in terms of core population (140,000 within the city boundary), it is however characterised by greater density within its built-up area and a significantly larger population within its catchment area. Recent data for traffic modal shares are hard to find, but published figures from 2020 suggest similar levels to York for both cycling and walking at 9% and 24% respectively.

The defining feature of Norwich’s transport policy is that it is administered at county-level. Norfolk County Council is reliably Conservative and thus reflects the transport priorities of a predominantly rural constituency. Norwich, by contrast is characterised by Labour and Green domination, with a smattering of Lib Dem and independent representation.

This geography and political structure no doubt goes a long way to explain the make-up of the region and the city’s transport strategy (LTP4, 2022, and TfN 2021). Both are long on ambitious progressive aspiration, but short on specifics, apart from on the matter of road building and development – which is in terms of detail, is prolific and very specific.

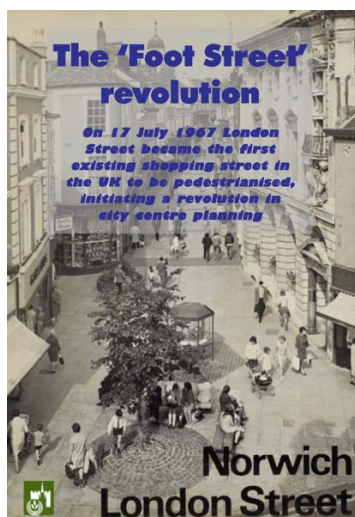
While the County Council’s recent work on its Local Transport Plan does not offer much of particular help to York, its earlier experience with its pedestrian area and removal of through traffic, and its current approach to designing new developments, offer useful exemplars of good practice.

1. Context

Background

Norwich is the county town, and by far the largest urban area in Norfolk. It sometimes styles itself as “the capital of East Anglia”. It lies about 118 miles north of London, and 78 miles east of Peterborough.

Norwich shares much in common with York in terms of its history, economic development and physical geography. It is a cathedral city, and probably the most extensive Medieval urban environment in the UK. It has an extensive pedestrianised core, a major campus university and hospital. There is a further university in the central area, and a major FE College.



Norwich has always had a tightly-drawn boundary, which is fully developed and has a population of around 140,000. However, the built-up area of the city extends outside this area and contains about double that population. Where Norwich does differ from York is in

having a very sizeable catchment area – almost 400,000 people. This has meant that the retail and service function of the city is better developed than one might expect.

The plans for Norwich forecast an increase of some 30,000 homes over the next decade. There are 13 sites allocated to house significant numbers of dwellings. The largest site (3,500 dwellings) is at North Sprowston/Old Catton. A new eco-town was planned for the Rackheath area to the NE of the city. Over the last two decades the population of central Norwich – largely within the walls) has risen by over 60%.

Governance

Until 1974 Norwich was a unitary authority, responsible for its own planning and highways matters. It developed a reputation for innovation, for example, appointing the first separate planning officer, developing a 'loop and cell' approach to traffic management and introducing the first pedestrianised street in the country. After 1974 it became a district of Norfolk County Council, with very limited planning and transport powers.

For strategic planning and policy on transport the lead authority is now Norfolk County Council. It works in the context of the approved Norfolk Structure Plan (1999).

Norwich City Council plays no real role in strategic transport policy-making, except perhaps as a consultee. It does have limited powers in local highways and transport management, and on enforcement (under the Traffic Management Act).

The New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, covering Norfolk and Suffolk, is based in Norwich <https://newanglia.co.uk>. This sets out the economic and industrial strategy. It identifies Norwich and "Greater Norwich" as a '*priority place*' – having significant opportunities for future growth.

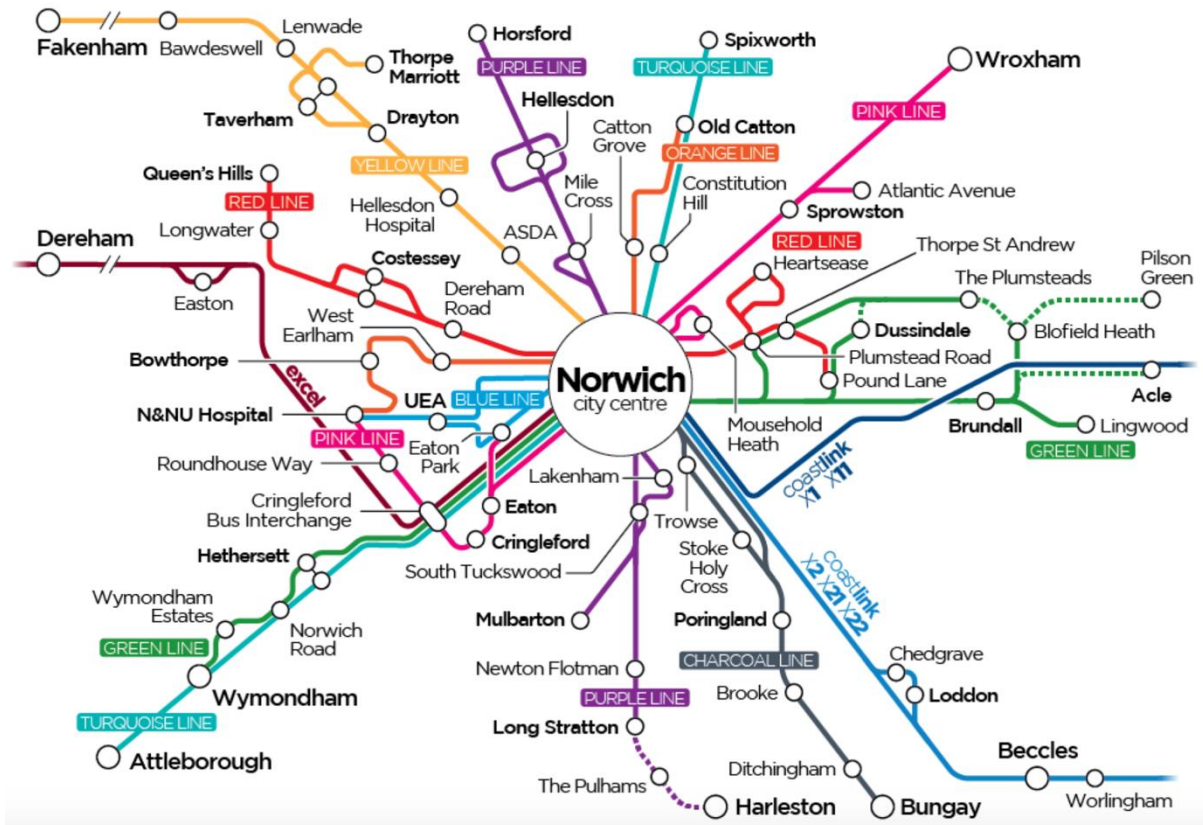
Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk Councils have formed the Greater Norwich Growth Board <https://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/reports/> to oversee the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan.

Thumbnail of current transport provision

Rail services are provided by Greater Anglia, and NCC has been a stakeholder in the provision of updated rolling stock. Major lines link Norwich to London, Cambridge/Stansted and Peterborough.

Norwich has a well-developed P&R system. There are 6 sites, with 2 more under consideration. Also 6 Bus Rapid Transit routes linking major employment zones. Arguably, York's P&R is better quality, but there are some lessons to learn, e.g. extended hours access and free barrier-controlled exit.

The commercial bus network is complex but most commercial services within the city are run by FirstBus (Network Norwich).



There is a Quality Bus Partnership. The *Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS)* from 2004 includes a plan to achieve a major shift towards public transport use, through more priority measures, improve operating frequencies and develop orbital travel opportunities. Access to bus services should be available to all within 400 metres (5 minute walk).

Smart electronic ticketing has been introduced. There is also a strong community transport network.

2. Transport planning

County Wide LTP4

A Local Transport Plan for the whole county was adopted in July 2022 covering the period 2021-2036. This LTP4 consists of two parts – Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy, and Local Transport Plan 4 Implementation Plan, which describes how the strategy will be implemented, including financing.

The Norfolk County Council LTP4 can be found on these links:

[Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy](#)

[Local Transport Plan 4 Implementation Plan](#)

Priority objectives of the Plan

Key priorities for LTP4 are: “working towards carbon neutrality when we make changes and improvements to our transport network” via prioritising a shift to... lower carbon technology and cleaner fuels with a particular emphasis on electric vehicles.”

“Looking at behaviour change and interventions that can help to increase the use of sustainable transport.”

“Prioritise tackling poor air quality problems where air quality falls below the recognised thresholds. This includes investigating vehicular restrictions or charging in urban centres.”

“Work closely with partners to ensure that new developments are located in suitable areas with access to services and leisure facilities via sustainable and active transport and not in areas that would be reliant on the private car.”

“Improve connectivity between rural areas and services in urban centres with a focus on active travel and public transport.”

“Tackle accessibility problems in partnership, targeting those communities most in need.”

Arguably, while LTP4 says many fine things, it is weak on the specifics of how its objectives can be achieved. The Implementation Plan is particularly vague on timescales (“Ongoing”, “from 2023” etc); suffers from a lack of tangible or numerical targets, and where budgetary information does exist, seems insufficient for the task.

A Strategy for Norwich

Norwich has its own *Transport for Norwich Strategy* (TfN) published in December 2021. This sits within the overall county-wide LTP4 and replaces the *Norwich Area Transportation Strategy* (NATS) from 2004.

Its headline vision is as follows:

Norwich and the strategic growth areas around it will become a place to thrive because affordable, 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.

This vision is to be delivered through nine themes, the most eye catching of which are:

A zero-carbon future. Acknowledgment this this will involve far reaching interventions including reductions in travel demand, modal shift through an increased emphasis on active travel and supported by an accelerated switch to zero emission vehicles.

Improving air quality. Significant interventions will be *considered*, such as: Clean air zone; Workplace parking place levy; Road charging / congestion charge; Vehicle bans (e.g. prohibiting petrol and diesel engine vehicles from the city centre).

Supporting growth areas. Acknowledgement that priority should be given here to walking, cycling and public/ shared transport links in these areas.

Reducing the dominance of traffic. It is suggested that this aspiration could be achieved through low traffic neighbourhoods, school streets and reductions in speed limits, based around the principle of Healthy Streets.

Making the transport system work as one. A reflection that streets cannot accommodate every demand at the same time, so priorities must be made:

A system to ensure efficient movement of large numbers of people. Identify roads where general traffic is prioritised; where public transport is prioritised; and where active travel is prioritised. Elsewhere, streets will primarily support communities who live there, businesses or for leisure uses like meeting friends or entertainment. Parking to be reviewed to consider current parking capacity, arrangements, cost, availability and type.

Modal shares

Neither the LTP4, nor TfN nor the LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) specify the modal shares to be achieved.

Key performance measures

Neither the LTP4, nor TfN nor the LCWIP specify any performance measures.

Provision for disabled travellers

LTP4 specifically mentions encouraging accessibility for all, including disabled people.

Norwich has a system of 'talking bus stops' with RNIB React software at the P&R sites. At the bus station is a tactile map with audio information. It also has a system of Braille bus hailers.

5% of parking spaces at the entrance to new developments should be reserved for disabled drivers, including provision for outsize vehicles.

Disability awareness training is provided for all transport operators.

The City Council runs a Blue Badge parking scheme

https://www.norwich.gov.uk/info/20008/parking/1086/blue_badge_parking_permit

Blue Badge parking is not permitted in pedestrian streets at any time, in contrast to York's current policy.

There is an active local access group <https://www.inclusivenorwich.org.uk/>

3. Relevance to York

Useful lessons and pointers

The LTP4 does have a strong environmental component. The Local Transport Plan is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal which assesses the environmental, social and economic impacts of the plan, and factors that can mitigate any negative impacts. A Scoping Document identifies the scope and level of detail of information to be included in the [Sustainability Appraisal](#) (see link). We assume that a similar appraisal will be required in York.

NCC is a leader in highways maintenance and tackling congestion (National Highway Transportation Survey).

NCC won a Transforming Cities bid to improve public transport. It is involved in the Cycle City Ambition programme. An extensive network of community transport complements the commercial operations.

All new development proposals are to be based on a consideration of sustainable transport. This will limit car use and maximise the benefits of limited transport investments. LPT4 sees upgraded broadband as a way to reduce travel.

A Safer and Healthier Journeys to School project is linked to school travel plans.

Urban Bus Challenge funding has been used to develop orbital bus routes – most traditional services operate along the radials.

NCC examined the potential for light rapid transit, but opted for buses on the grounds of cost and impact on the historic environment.

Consideration has been given to the formation of a Freight Quality Partnership or Urban Freight Forum.

Norwich recognises the importance of its visitor market, and therefore the importance of top-quality signage and travel information.

Norwich City Council has taken powers under the Traffic Management Act and takes civil enforcement very seriously.

Traffic calming measures are designed to reduce speeds on all roads categorised as ‘access roads’ to under 20mph.

Any aspects which make it less relevant to York

Not being a unitary authority, Norwich’s transport planning tends to be dominated by the concerns of its rural hinterland. This tends to be car-dominated.

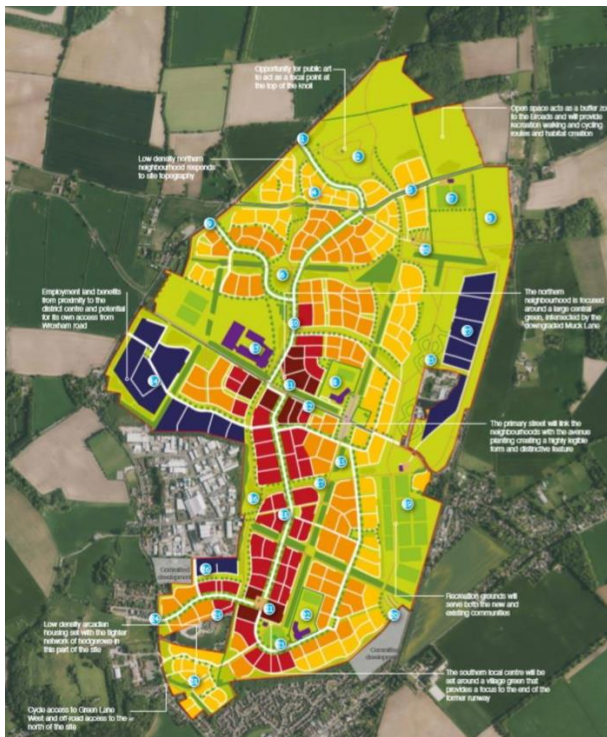
Norwich is larger than York. It has an international airport. It is quite remote from other large urban areas. It has two complete ring roads and a third now almost complete - comprising northern and southern by-passes.

With a multiplicity of river crossings within the city centre Norwich it does not suffer as acutely as York from such transport bottlenecks.

Demonstrator new neighbourhoods

The planned extension at Bowthorpe (population just under 12,000), to the west of the city, is now largely complete. It comprises three neighbourhoods and an industrial estate, all linked to the city by frequent bus.

Rackheath Eco Settlement (as illustrated below) proposes just over 5,000 homes. There is a Master Plan, and the aim is to be carbon-neutral. It would connect to the city by road and the P&R, and by rail via new station. Modal split would also be affected by bus-gating and new cycle tracks.



Best practice in engagement and consultation

NCC commissioned an evidence report, drawing together statistics, traffic data and research. This informed public consultation on the best scenarios to test.

Policy 4 of the new LTP deals with achieving the required behavioural changes to support the use of sustainable transport.

LTP4 was subjected to extensive consultation with the public, stakeholders and special interest groups. This lasted 6 weeks, and focused on expressing priorities. The consultation involved Norfolk Youth Parliament, and attempted to engage with under 18s.

Additional research was commissioned on environmental impacts, providing a basis for consultation with statutory environment bodies. Research was commissioned to assess the impact of various policy measures on carbon emissions.

Possible contacts

The role of Transport and Waste Director of Community and Environmental Services, Lead for Infrastructure, Norfolk County Council, is Grahame Bygrave.

The person responsible for the LTP is David Cumming, Strategic Transport Team Manager, Infrastructure Development, Community and Environmental Services Norfolk County Council.

Author: John Stevens V2.0 17th May 2021.
V3.0 Updated by Andy Shrimpton. 8th May 2024.