

# Economic and Housing Growth Inspection

**Greater Norwich Development Partnership**

Broadland District Council

Norwich City Council

South Norfolk Council

Norfolk County Council

The Broads Authority

**March 2010**

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# Contents

<b>Service Inspections</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Report</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>How good is the service?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>What are the prospects for improvement to the partnership?</b>	<b>16</b>

# Service Inspections

This inspection has been carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. These principles embody the objectives of our Strategic Plan and Strategic Regulation. They also reflect the principles from *The Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services (July 2003)*. Audit Commission service inspections should:

- focus on public service outcomes from a user perspective;
- act as a catalyst to help inspected bodies improve their performance;
- concentrate inspection work where it will have most impact, so that it is proportionate and based on an assessment of risk;
- be based on a rigorous assessment of costs and benefits, with a concern for achieving value for money both by the inspected organisation and within the inspection regime itself;
- be, and be seen to be, independent of the inspected organisation;
- report in public, using impartial evidence to inform the public about the performance of public services so as to enhance accountability;
- involve collaborative working with other inspectorates and external review agencies to achieve greater coordination and a more holistic approach to the assessment of performance by audited and inspected bodies;
- share learning to create a common understanding of performance that encourages rigorous self assessment and better understanding of their performance by inspected organisations;
- be carried out objectively by skilled and experienced people to high standards and using relevant evidence, transparent criteria, and open review processes; and
- enable continuous learning so that inspections can become increasingly effective and efficient.

We assess services using published key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to inform our judgements. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk).

This report is issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.

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# Summary

- 1 The Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP), established in 2006, brings together the three district councils in Greater Norwich, plus the Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council, to develop plans to meet ambitious local housing and job targets as set out in the East of England Plan.
- 2 The Partnership is close to successfully completing the first phase of its work. It has produced two key policy documents; a draft Joint Core Strategy which will provide a planning framework for future housing growth, and an Economic Strategy, which aims to help create the conditions for future job growth. As a coalition of local authorities in one of the East of England's designated 'engines of growth', the strategy documents are therefore based on a good understanding of local regional economic and housing factors, including need.
- 3 The Partnership has been relatively low cost, with few staff and much pooling and lending of assets. One of the main benefits of the establishment of the Partnership has been the value-added understanding of complex local agendas that are now well understood throughout the Partnership as a result of working together. But sometimes this has made the partnership too inward looking, and not market orientated enough.
- 4 The Partnership has begun to deliver local improvements, for example in the city's congested road networks. There are now 17 projects that are designed to improve access for local people to shops and jobs and green spaces. The Partnership has led the way in trying to change the way the local economy is structured. It has done this by investment in high technology, high wage sectors of the local economy, building on existing strengths and providing much needed opportunities for graduates now filling lesser skilled jobs. But it has not yet done enough to show how this restructuring will improve opportunities for the most disadvantaged.
- 5 The Partnership does a reasonable job of managing itself. It works well, despite internal differences. Projects are well managed, and there is a focus on improving local quality of life, including the environment. It does not yet focus enough on what is actually being achieved for local people, and at what cost, so it can show that it gives good value for money.
- 6 The Partnership has gone a long way to delivering the first phase of its objectives; namely to produce a mechanism for planning and managing the large scale growth proposed for the Norwich area in the East of England Plan. There is a clear track record of achievement against these primary objectives.
- 7 The Partnership structure needs to be reviewed and improved so it will be ready to deliver the challenges ahead. But it is not yet in a position to successfully deliver its plans. It needs to ensure that it has the capacity and funding to meet its targets. It now needs to get ready for the next phase, the most important one, of actual delivery of new houses and jobs. The forthcoming decision on the Local Government Review (LGR) will enable the options for the future shape of the partnership to be evaluated so it can be moved forward.

# Recommendations

- 8 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the Council. In addition, we identify the approximate costs<sup>1</sup> and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context, the inspection team recommends that the Council should do the following.

### Recommendation

- R1** The Partnership should move quickly to put the future delivery of housing and economic growth onto firmer foundations. To achieve this, the partnership should:
- review and learn from the experience of housing and economic growth delivery mechanisms in other growth points in England; and
  - use this knowledge to inform the future options and plans that the partnership has already been considering so that a decision can quickly be made once the outcome of the Local Government Review is known.

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the Partnership will have a good understanding of the lessons learned from the experience of housing and economic growth elsewhere;
- decision-making on the future processes will take account of the views of local residents, as well as the public and private sector people who will help make future growth possible;
- the future prospects for successful delivery will be enhanced; and
- the implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented during 2010.

### Recommendation

- R2** The Partnership should do a better job of managing value for money and performance. To achieve this, it should:
- develop a simple way of internally reporting what exactly has been achieved for local people, at what cost;
  - compare local achievements and costs with other growth points in the East of England, and learn lessons from that; and
  - publish a clear and simple report on achievements and costs, to keep local stakeholders and residents informed.

<sup>1</sup> Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- future decisions will be based on a better understanding of the relationship between cost and outcomes;
- local people will know more about what is happening, at what cost, and with what outcome; and
- the partnership will be better placed to get the best value for money from their activities.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented during 2010.

### Recommendation

- R3** The partnership should engage more fully with the private sector, on both housing and economic growth. The Partners should then:
- use this renewed dialogue to get a better mutual understanding on future growth; and
  - make sure that future plans benefit from regular input and challenge from the private sector.

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- future plans will be informed by a clear understanding of private sector interests and concerns;
- misunderstandings can be more quickly resolved; and
- GNDP will become less government orientated and more market-led.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented during this financial year.

# Report

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## Context

### The locality

- 9 The Greater Norwich area comprises the City of Norwich, and the Broadland and South Norfolk districts, including large parts of the Norfolk Broads. It covers an area of almost 1,500 square kilometres and accounts for almost half of Norfolk's population. In 2007, the estimated total population of this area was 372,500, with over 200,000 living in the Norwich urban area. The increase in the total population of around 20,000 is attributed to internal migration mainly to Broadland and South Norfolk and an increase in the numbers of migrant workers, mainly from the European Union. Norwich has a relatively high proportion of young people while in Broadland and South Norfolk there is a higher proportion of older people. Life expectancy and local quality of life are both above the national average.
- 10 Norwich was designated as one of the seven 'engines of growth' in the Regional Economic Strategy, the East of England Plan, which set a target of 35,000 new jobs to be created between 2001 and 2021. The City has growth point status and this has set targets of 36,740 new homes from 2008 to 2026 (of which 33,000 will be in Norwich). The extension of the original timeframe to 2026, when set against the numbers of new jobs created since 2001, means that in all, a further 27,000 new jobs have to be created by 2026.
- 11 The Norwich economy is relatively diverse. Just over 200,000 people are employed in Greater Norwich, with around 50 per cent of those in the City area, and the rest split equally between Broadland and South Norfolk. Until the recession, the economy was performing strongly, with employment growth of 25.2 per cent between 1995 and 2007, against 18.2 per cent regionally and 17 per cent nationally. The job growth between 2001 and 2007 was even more marked, at 14.7 per cent, against 4.9 per cent regionally, and 4.3 per cent nationally. The traditional reliance on agriculture and manufacture declined further during this period, though agriculture is still the main land use and the automotive engineering sector remains strong. The service sector has been the main recent growth area, reflecting the fact that Norwich is a major regional centre for tourism and culture. As the region's highest ranking retail centre, it is one of the ten most important shopping destinations in the country, and it is weathering the recession relatively well. Elsewhere in the local economy, the downturn caused by the recession, especially in Norwich City, has been prolonged; for example unemployment claimant counts, which have always run above regional and national levels, stood at 4.7 per cent in the City in October 2009, (3.4 per cent regionally, 4.2 per cent nationally), up from 3.1 per cent 12 months earlier.

- 12 The area's other economic strengths include the growing knowledge economy, financial services and creative industries. The Norwich Research Park (NRP), together with the University Of East Anglia (UEA), has become recognised as a world leading centre for innovation and research in life sciences and health. With over 9,000 people, the NRP has one of Europe's largest single site concentrations of research in these disciplines. Analysis of the most highly cited scientists in the UK in the past 20 years ranks Norwich fourth after London, Cambridge, and Oxford. There are some relative structural weaknesses in the local economy, notably low wages, low productivity, low skills levels and low levels of entrepreneurship, though the trend on the latter is improving in the City. The National Statistics 2001 Area Classification groups Norwich with Salford and Bristol as similar places. Since 2001 Salford has grown its total number of jobs by nine percent, Bristol has lost 2 per cent of its jobs, and Norwich has lost 1 per cent of its jobs. Outside of the City, the rural economy is based on agriculture and town-based enterprise, but both Broadland and South Norfolk saw significant increases in jobs from 1995 to 2007, Broadland increasing by 50.6 per cent and South Norfolk 68.1 per cent.
- 13 Housing growth has been less strong in the years up to the beginning of the recession, but the performance has been respectable nonetheless. From 2001 to 2009, over 13,500 homes were built in the area, with just over 6,000 in the City, just over 5,000 in South Norfolk and the rest in Broadland. This rate of growth is slightly below the original target set by the East of England Plan in 2001, and the need for housing, including affordable, remains high. Completions of affordable housing have met the original targets set, and exceeded them significantly in 2007/08 but these still fall far short of local housing need. More recently, the recession has seen the housing market stall, in common with the rest of the country.
- 14 Broadland and South Norfolk are relatively affluent. But there are small pockets of rural deprivation and more significant areas of multiple deprivations in Norwich City, making it the second most deprived local authority area in the region. Over 50 per cent of the housing in the City is either current or former council stock, the result of the massive house building programme in the inter-war years. The City has a number of government-funded neighbourhood renewal programmes but the external funding for these ends in 2011.
- 15 Norwich has no motorways, relying on the A47 and A11 trunk roads. The A47 is partially dualed, and the A11 dualing is due for completion in 2013. There are no high speed rail links to either London or the Midlands, with continuing problems of reliability with the existing services. International connections are made through the relatively small Norwich International Airport, and through Eastport (Great Yarmouth), and Haven Gateway to the south (Felixstowe and Harwich). Local public transport facilities are generally good in the urban area, with bus use on the increase and the most bus-based park and ride facilities in the country. But the traffic network remains congested, operating at over 90 per cent of capacity. Greater Norwich has the Broads on its doorstep. This is an internationally important and part of the National Park family, and mainly comprises of ecologically fragile wetlands.



### The Partnership

- 16 The shared need to meet ambitious local housing and job targets as set out in the East of England Plan has made cross-boundary cooperation essential. In October 2006, this pattern was formalised in the creation of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership. This comprises Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council, South Norfolk Council, Norfolk County Council and the Broads Authority.
- 17 The Conservative Party has had political control of all of the Councils in the partnership, except for Liberal Democrat control of South Norfolk until May 2007 and Labour control of Norwich City (now a minority Labour administration).

### The Partnership Structure

- 18 The partnership is not a legally established entity. It relies instead on a three tier structure supplemented by advisors from inside and outside of the five authorities. At the top is the partnership Policy Group, which comprises members from all five authorities, and which is chaired on a rotational basis by a council Leader. Beneath that sits the Directors' Group, which is made up of authority Directors, the Chief Executive of Shaping Norfolk's Future and representatives of regional bodies, such as Government Office (GO) East, the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Beneath this sits the implementation unit, with five working groups, covering transport, planning, economic development, placemaking and the integrated development programme. These are supported by a core team of five, headed by the partnership manager, and with an annual administrative budget of around £500,000.

### The scope of the inspection

- 19 The inspection is scoped to the work of five authorities - Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council, South Norfolk Council, Norfolk County Council and The Broads Authority - that they deliver through the GNDP, in particular the planning framework for the delivery of future housing and job growth targets. The inspection follows the six questions of the Audit Commission's service inspection methodology and is informed by the Commission's published regeneration key lines of enquiry. The inspection has been tailored to reflect the work of the authorities in GNDP (see Annex). The inspection covers five authorities in the GNDP partnership, so no collective scored judgement is made.

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# How good is the service?

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## What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 20** The Greater Norwich Development partnership (GNDP) was created to provide a mechanism for planning and managing the large scale growth proposed for the Norwich area in the East of England Plan. The main work of the partnership has thus been to produce two key strategy documents; the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the Greater Norwich Economic Strategy (GNES).
- 21** The JCS, which is due for submission in January 2010, is the fulfilment of the Local Development Framework responsibilities of three of the five partners (Broadland, Norwich City, South Norfolk). One of the first joint strategies of its kind in the country, it is aligned with the pre-existing core strategy for the Broads Authority and is intended to meet the following strategic challenges for the period 2008 and 2026.
- To identify land to meet the requirement of providing around 37,000 additional homes.
  - To enhance the special environment of the area, while limiting any adverse impact of growth.
  - To secure another 27,000 new jobs of all types and levels in all sectors of the economy, and for all of the workforce.
  - To maximise the high quality of life currently enjoyed, respecting the patterns of living which characterise the area.
  - To ensure that essential infrastructure, services and community infrastructure are provided.
- 22** The Greater Norwich Economic strategy for 2009 to 2014 focuses on 'jobs, homes, prosperity for local people'. It has four main objectives.
- To strengthen the area's economy, maximise diverse employment opportunities and ensure that businesses can flourish. This is underpinned by two key priorities, the first about creating more sustainable jobs and encouraging entrepreneurship, the second about supporting the growth of the knowledge economy.
  - To improve the skill of the labour force to ensure it matches the needs of employers, to ensure local people benefit from job growth. This has three supporting priorities: to raise aspirations and provide appropriate learning opportunities; to address mismatches between skills availability and requirements; and to ensure there is a strong economic component to regeneration and neighbourhood renewal strategies.

## How good is the service?

- To ensure that the area has the necessary infrastructure and environmental quality to attract and retain investment. The underpinning priorities are: to contribute to improved and sustainable transport and communications infrastructure; to maintain an appropriate supply of employment land and premises; and to ensure that infrastructure investment takes place, to avoid constraining development of key sites.
  - To raise the profile of Greater Norwich as a high quality place to live, work and visit. The supporting priorities are: promoting a strong and coherent image, especially as a business location; attracting and retaining private and public investment; supporting the development of a vibrant city centre; and revitalising market towns and rural economies and encouraging the development of distinctive offers.
- 23** These strategies are part of a wider array of strategies which also include the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) and strategies for housing and green infrastructure, as well as Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) for each of the districts, and the County. Collectively they feed into the developing implementation plan (Integrated Development Programme) which will provide a robust roadmap for the future of the area, driving housing and economic development from the regional to the district level.
- 24** The first phase of the work of the partnership - drafting strategies - is close to an end. In parallel with the preparation of the JCS and the GNES, the first phase of the partnership, a number of projects to support the achievement of the strategic goals have been delivered. A total of 17 projects, with an annual spend in the last year of just over two million pounds are now being implemented.

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## Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?

### Access, customer care and user and/or community focus

- 25** The Partnership's two main strategies - the JCS and the GNES - are based on a clear understanding of local need. The JCS builds on the work done in recent years by the Greater Norwich Housing Partnership (GNHP), a cooperative body whose existence pre-dates that of the GNDP. The Economic Strategy is based on a wide range of detailed study papers. Some of these have been specifically commissioned for the purpose, while others, such as those of Shaping Norfolk's Future (SNF), are already guiding the future economic development of the area. The close understanding of local need is continuously refreshed. Various formal and informal consultation processes on housing, and regular comprehensive reports on the local economy ensure this.

- 26 The partnership approach is generally accessible and responsive, but gaps have recently opened up in the dialogue with the private sector. The GNDP, being a partnership based on a willing coalition of widely differing local groups, has the advantage of increased accessibility and responsiveness to local views. The Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) have been perhaps the most important of many channels of communication between the partnership and local residents. The rooting of the Partnership in the local democratic process has ensured that the views of local residents are heard and acted on. The dialogue with the private sector began strongly, but in the past year, has not been sustained with the same level of intensity. The growing pressure to deliver a draft consultation document for the JCS has undoubtedly been a factor in squeezing out this dialogue.
- 27 The Partnership consistently combines the contributions of each of the partners in ways that add value. Despite seeming like a necessary alliance to deliver local growth, the partnership was no easy coalition, with a legacy of disputes between each and all of the local authorities. That both strategies and projects are being delivered between the partners is a testament to the political will of all partners to make the arrangements work. Bringing the Broads Authority into the Partnership has ensured that the focus on key green infrastructural challenges, especially water, has remained sharp. All this has resulted in a Partnership that is generally seen, even by critics, as a necessary and positive contribution to the future of the area.
- 28 The arrangements for consultation and communicating are generally effective, but the core messages have not yet built a strong local coalition for growth. The Partnership has made considerable efforts to consult on both its strategies and projects. For example the Norwich Chamber of Commerce hosted workshops in preparation of the GNES, and there has been extensive consultation in the development of plans for key projects, such as Anglia Square redevelopment. Communication, at first limited, has improved markedly with the use of a private firm, but there is still some ground to make up. Though there has been a positive recent shift in attitudes in the local academic community towards growth, Norwich has not matched the likes of Cambridge in developing a strong, broad-based coalition in support of growth and economic development.

### Diversity

- 29 The Partnership has taken due account of the specific needs of local diverse communities in spatial planning, but has yet to convert its good understanding of shifts in local demography and patterns of multiple deprivation into a robust economic response. As a result it has not yet set out how the delivery of its plans will actively support the most disadvantaged, whether by geography, income or diversity strand.

## How good is the service?

- 30** The Partnership has a good record on taking account of diversity in spatial planning. GNDP's understanding of the housing needs of people with support and specific needs are drawn from work done by Norfolk County Council's adult and social care department, including the Supporting People Programme and its strategic approach to older people. There were widespread consultations on the JCS, which drew in a wide cross section of the local community. The specific housing needs of Gypsy and Traveller families were assessed within the Greater Norwich sub-region through a jointly commissioned study and this has gone on to inform the JCS and sub-regional housing strategy. This work identified the need for further provision of sites for show industry travellers in Norwich City, which is now being built into future plans. Meanwhile delivery of new Gypsy and Traveller sites needed by 2011 is well underway in the Partnership authorities, with South Norfolk having already met its target. In addition to this, an equality impact assessment has been undertaken on the sub-regional housing strategy. All of these measures are helping to ensure new housing should meet the diverse needs of residents of Greater Norwich.
- 31** On the economic side, the partners have a good base of knowledge about diversity and deprivation but they are not clearly demonstrating how their policies will improve the prospects of the most disadvantaged.
- 32** At a strategic level, understanding of local needs is being incorporated into an approach which seeks to improve overall local job prospects by repositioning businesses in Greater Norwich to provide high wage, high value, and high technology jobs. New higher end jobs should in turn release opportunities further down the market, where up to now graduates have been blocking opportunities for lower skilled local people. This will tie in with elements of the new Action Plan which aims, among other things, to deliver improved skills and attainment and better paid jobs.
- 33** At the level of delivery, a number of the GNDP transportation projects are designed to improve access from deprived and diverse communities to the employment areas of the City. In addition Anglia Square will sympathetically renovate a key shopping centre serving North Norwich's diverse community. Another example is the Northern City Centre Area Action Plan, in which GNDP plays a key catalytic role which is focused on local deprivation and minority communities. What the GNDP approach currently lacks, however, is a clear indication of the improvement in economic prospects for the most disadvantaged that its policies will deliver. This makes it difficult for people who live in area's deprived and diverse communities to understand how the GNDP work benefits them.

### Partnership Outcomes for Users and the Community

- 34 The partnership has gone a long way to delivering the first phase of its objectives; namely to produce a mechanism for planning and managing the large scale growth proposed for the Norwich area in the East of England Plan. There is a clear track record of achievement against these primary objectives.
- The Partnership has made good progress on the JCS, having almost reached submission stage. This is one of the first joint core strategies nationally.
  - The Partnership has produced a medium term Economic Strategy covering the three districts.
  - Working in conjunction with EEDA, the Partnership has pioneered the development of an Integrated Development Programme (IDP) which is intended to act as a road map for future delivery of the key strategies.
  - The Partnership framework is demonstrating its commitment to helping the area meet the challenges of climate change and sustainability. Examples include; the ecocommunity development at Rackheath, zero carbon development (using advanced design and construction), improved energy efficiency and use of renewable energy and a network of green links connecting urban and rural areas.
- 35 These achievements have enabled the Partnership to make a step towards meeting the next phase of housing and job growth objectives under the East of England Plan. The Partnership recognises there is still a long way to go.

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### Is regeneration delivering value for money?

- 36 The Partnership delivers adequate value for money, because it has delivered on its initial priorities at a low cost relative to other growth point authorities, but it still has some way to go before it can show that it is consistently managing value for money. The Partnership has been constructed on the basis of minimising costs. Unlike other growth point authorities who have opted for the setting up of arms length Development Corporation, with an average annual operating cost in excess of £1 million, the GNDP has a budget allocation of around half that, to cover planning for growth in the period 2006-2011. The budget is managed by Norfolk County Council. There are five permanent staff who are all on contracts that expire in 2011. Other staff are drawn in as appropriate from partner authorities, and the premises rotate among the partners to further keep down costs. Capital expenditure for 2008/09 was £2,470,582 and revenue expenditure for 2008/09 was £490,840. GNDP Directors review the budgets regularly; both capital and revenue budgets are reviewed at the monthly board meetings. The GNDP accounts are subject to the same audit processes as the rest of the County Council's finances.

## How good is the service?

- 37** The alignment of relevant partner programmes improves value for money. Costs are pooled by the partners for almost every aspect of GNDP work, from projects to studies, to the green infrastructure plan and the joint core strategy. This has enabled the Partnership to do more than collectively would have been possible separately. A jointly funded shared communications strategy has been developed and common approaches are being taken, for example to 'planning gain' charges. The Partnership approach has helped to secure support from external organisations, such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Close working between the GNDP and the GNHP has secured external funding to support housing growth, such as through the HCA. As a result the GNDP has a better understanding of development costs on both previously developed and 'greenfield' sites, which are shared and used to support investment plans. Without such alignment and pooling, the individual partners would not have achieved as much as they have, as is clear from the lack of progress on measures to provide a framework to stimulate growth in the years before GNDP was set up.
- 38** Most capital projects have been procured through the County Council's existing strategic procurement partnerships, which has kept procurement costs to a minimum and enabled early progress on delivery. But while value for money is one of the four criteria used to prioritise projects, and the costs of projects are closely monitored, there is no reporting on outcomes and their cost. There are no specific targets to secure cost or efficiency savings in relation to housing growth through the GNDP. The most significant weaknesses are, however, in the longer term approach, with no strategic financial framework or capacity to successfully deliver the Greater Norwich growth targets.

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# What are the prospects for improvement to the partnership?

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## What is the partnership track record in delivering improvement?

- 39** The Partnership has begun to build up a good track record of delivering improvement. In the past three years, the Partnership has been largely focused on the creation of a robust framework for future growth. The JCS is still in draft. But the Partnership has now begun to deliver, or help to deliver, improvements in local outcomes.
- 40** Most of these improvements come directly from the Action Plan of the Economic Strategy. These include the following.
- Institute of Food Research (IFR2). Refurbishment of an existing redundant building to create 4,000m<sup>2</sup> of joint laboratory/office accommodation housing up to 12 new companies, creating 400 jobs. GNDP provided £1 million of bridging funding to enable this development to go ahead.
  - Hethel Engineering Centre, Phase 2. Hethel Engineering centre opened in 2006 as an enterprise hub supporting the engineering sector, especially automotive. Since opening it has created 21 new businesses and 90 new jobs, and supported 4,000 trainees and 3,000 businesses. It has also integrated its work into the national curriculum for local schools, to help improve attainment. This second phase will add 1600m<sup>2</sup> of office and meeting space, allowing for the creation of another 12 new businesses and 60-100 jobs by 2018. This is a joint GNDP/EEDA project.
  - Green Infrastructure projects. These have a high profile within the strategic planning process of the Partnership. A number of small projects have been delivered to date, examples include the Wensum Valley Parkway and Whitlingham walks;
  - The Halls. GNDP provided £100,000 for the first phase of refurbishment of St Andrew's and Blackfriars Halls, a medieval friary complex dating back to 1500, to upgrade them as a multifunctional cultural and community venue for Norwich city and the region.
  - Barrack Street road widening. This £1.3 million scheme, funded by GNDP, improved traffic flow and reduced congestion and opened up the area to future development.
  - St Augustine's roundabout system and Anglia Square development. The master planning for this £3.3 million project, largely funded by GNDP, started in January 2010. Once constructed the new gyratory system will reduce traffic congestion in the northern city centre, thereby improving air quality in improved streetscapes, while opening the way for sympathetically regeneration of a tired 1970s shopping centre.



## What are the prospects for improvement to the partnership?

- Dereham Road. GNDP has contributed £1.25 million to this pilot project for the six proposed Bus Rapid Transit routes connecting Greater Norwich. The scheme aims to deliver a high-quality, rapid public transport system within the context of a green infrastructure plan that protects and improves existing open spaces, and creates new ones.
  - The Enterprise Centre. This project, again part-funded by GNDP, will create 4000m<sup>2</sup> of new office and meeting space next to Earlham Hall on the University of East Anglia campus. The target is to create a new link between research, development and commercial application, generating 160 additional jobs by 2016, and 613 by 2021.
  - The St Stephens Street Masterplan has been produced, part-funded by GNDP. This will stimulate investment by improving facilities and access in this prime city centre site.
  - The Norwich Northern Distributor Road (NDR) got a green light from the Government on 16 December 2009, a further significant step to unlocking the growth potential of that Northern arc of the city. As a result, £21 million of Community infrastructure Funding (CIF2), the largest such allocation in the country, is being released, enabling work to start in February 2010.
- 41 Not all of the improvements in which GNDP played a key role came directly from the two key strategies. Some of them were more opportunistic, the result of money suddenly being made available, usually from external sources, that could be spent on projects that would contribute to future growth. These include:
- the eco-community development at Rackheath has met the requirements of central government, and a programme of development bids has been submitted; and
  - Norwich Research Park. The establishment of The Genome Analysis Centre (TGAC) is a new £13.5 million centre for non-biomedical applications and employing 60 scientists and technicians in plant genomics. The aim is to create 157 new jobs in the next two years, and a further 400 knowledge jobs by 2026. GNDP played an important catalytic role in the decision to locate this in Norwich.
- 42 It is too early to make definitive judgements about the direction of travel of local of key performance indicators as a result of GNDP activities. Some 8,000 new jobs were created between 2001 and 2008, which was above the rate needed to meet the 2026 target. There were just over 13,500 housing completions from 2001 to 2009. Affordable housing completions are another area of progress; between 2004/05 and 2008/09, the proportion of new housing built that was affordable met the 30 per cent target, with a surge in the final year of 715 completions, significantly exceeding the 465 LAA target for that year. The impact of the GNDP on all of these achievements was probably marginal, given that the key strategies were still being developed.
- 43 It follows from this that residents are unlikely to attribute recent positive changes in housing and jobs to the actions of the GNDP. Despite the new communication effort by the partnership, GNDP does not have a high profile locally. In the initial phase of developing strategies, a low profile is understandable. Moving into delivery creates a different dynamic, as is clear from the higher profile efforts of other growth point authorities to attract inward investment.

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### How well does the service manage performance?

#### How good is the Partnership's improvement planning?

- 44 The Partnership's approach to improvement planning has been of a generally good quality, so far. It has maintained a clear focus on the need to establish a coherent framework for the delivery of long term growth in housing and jobs in Greater Norwich. It has produced the two key strategy documents which provide a clear vision of their goals and aspirations through to 2026. The detailed priorities within those strategies, and others associated with the future growth of Greater Norwich, such as the Norwich Area Transport Study (NATS) and the Green infrastructure Plan, are beginning to be translated into an Integrated Development Programme(IDP) that is intended to address all of the issues relating to growth in a single sustainable package.
- 45 The Partnership's improvement plans are largely complete and the focus is now moving to their delivery plans. A start has been made on delivery of the Action Plan of the Economic Strategy. The over-arching Integrated Development Programme(IDP) will be developed further once the JCS is submitted. There is no forward plan for improving value for money. Delivery on the basis of the draft JCS awaits examination and final adoption of the strategy, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2010.
- 46 Performance monitoring and management processes vary in quality. The arrangements to manage performance on housing growth in advance of the adoption of the JCS are sound, using the appropriate committees in the GNHP, the GNDP and the respective delivering councils. The GNDP Directors' Group picks up weaker performance; recent examples include timely and effective delivery of the Infrastructure Funding Needs Study and the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This is in addition to scrutiny by each council of appropriate actions and delivery through their performance management frameworks and governance processes.
- 47 Performance management for the economic strategy is under-developed. A first look at monitoring of achievement against the ten points of the Action Plan was scheduled to take place in January 2010. The performance process for GNDP projects is more robust, in that it uses a 'traffic light' system to report progress. But like the arrangements for the Action Plan, the reports to GNDP policy makers lack the cost and outcome data needed to be fully robust.
- 48 The Partnership has learned from the experiences of others, but more in the development of the JCS than the Economic Strategy. During the process of drafting the JCS, a representative from the Planning Officers Society (POSE) was engaged in the role of critical friend to monitor and offer advice. Progress through the drafting phase was also compared against the approach and experiences of other authorities such as North Northants, Redcar and Cleveland, Chelmsford and more recently Breckland. On the economic side there has been much less in the way of external comparison and learning, other than the recent visit to look at 'Opportunity Peterborough'. As a result, there is a lack of comparative knowledge of economic delivery mechanisms in other growth points in England.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the partnership?

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### Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 49 The Partnership needs to be reviewed and improved to ensure it has access to the appropriate skills, tools and finances, including externally, to successfully deliver its ambitious final targets. With only limited resources, the Partnership has done well to get where it has. It has the capacity to see the current JCS process through to adoption. It has the capacity to deliver on the current array of projects, at least until the growth point funding runs out in 2011 and the contracts of GNDP staff expire. But the certainty about future delivery capacity ends there.
- 50 The Partnership has made two efforts to get to grips with the problem of delivery after 2011. But neither has got very far. The Local Government Reorganisation has caused uncertainties about the future structure of local authorities in Norfolk. The GNDP has been considering future plans and options as it moves into a delivery phase but has decided to postpone making a decision until the imminent decision on LGR is known given that this could have a significant impact on how economic and housing growth are delivered in the Norwich area. It is important that the Partnership ensures that it has the capacity and funding it needs for the next phase of actually delivering new houses and jobs.

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# The Audit Commission

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 0844 798 1212 Fax: 0844 798 2945 Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

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