



*Postwick hub marked out across the fields. 27 April 2010 Picture: Mike Page*

## **Norwich bypass plans could be shelved**

By Shaun Lowthorpe, Public affairs correspondent  
Saturday, 30 October, 2010  
11:00 AM

Long cherished plans for a Norwich northern bypass could be shelved if the public indicates it should be scrapped as part of plans by Norfolk County Council to save £155m.

County Hall unveiled massive cuts in staff and services on Tuesday. Those detailed plans make no specific mention of the road which this week was placed on a list of 21 schemes eligible for a slice of £600m of government funding, adding at least a 12-month delay to any prospect of work going ahead.

But they do include the possible closure of some of the Norwich park-and-ride sites, reducing the 'core bus network' with a shift towards more dial-a-ride schemes and proposals to save £14m through a "strategic review" which could see closer working with Suffolk County Council.

The county council has so far spent more than £10m drawing up the up a detailed proposal which would stretch from the A47 at Postwick to Norwich International Airport (NIA).

Businesses have also pushed hard for the scheme, and it was seen as key to cutting rat-running in the north of the city, and helping to deliver thousands of new jobs and homes in the greater Norwich area.

But in a hint of a change of direction for the road scheme, Graham Plant, the new cabinet member for transport and travel at County Hall, said he was "neutral" on the northern

distributor road (NDR) and suggested the council would consider a U-turn as part of its “Big Conversation” if it was demanded by the public.

Asked if the NDR could be culled as part of the cuts, he said: “That’s all part of the Big Conversation. What we need to know is what are residents’ priorities. We have looked at all the arguments for and against the NDR and the Postwick Hub. But I am well aware there are people who that doesn’t affect at all living in the rural hinterland, who need a bus service.

“We have to look at the priorities. That’s the interesting part of the conversation. Some people will say yes. Some will say no. Some say if you have the NDR you’ve got room for growth in the bus infrastructure.

“What we need is for these things to be part of the conversation. I am taking a neutral stance on that. We have pushed and pushed for this for many years. We have reduced budgets. We are not in a position to look at major infrastructure unless we are being helped by central government.

“We thought we had the funding for it and it has been taken away. Nothing can be a sacred cow anymore. I can’t say we will put it on the backburner, but all these things are all in the melting pot.”

County Hall revived plans for the road more than a decade ago under former leader Alison King after the government previously rejected plans for a bypass. Then the hope was for a link which would connect the A47 at either side of the city but a three-quarter route connected as far as the A1067 Taverham was selected after the authority was warned of the environmental impact of building over the Wensum Valley.

The council then linked the building of the road to the previous Labour government’s growth plans.

But last year when the government pledged £67.5m towards the scheme former transport minister Sadiq Khan said it would only support a 8.7 mile link to Norwich International Airport.

If the current scheme is scrapped it would represent a massive departure in transport policy and be the deathknell for the core strategy for thousands of homes and jobs in the greater Norwich area hinging on the road being built.

But it is sure to delight campaigners who have long opposed the scheme and this week renewed calls to scrap it. It also comes as the planning inspector, who is due to begin a public inquiry into the strategy next month, questioned whether the four councils involved wanted to go ahead because of continuing funding uncertainties.

Denise Carlo, from the Norwich and Norfolk Transport Action Group, welcomed the inclusion of the NDR in the Big Conversation but said proposals to slash public transport subsidies were unacceptable.

She said: “It would be political suicide to cut essential services like school transport and rural bus services while injecting millions of pounds of public money into an NDR which is going to be clogged up from day one.

Stephen Heard, chairman of Stop Norwich Urbanisation (SNUB), said: “There are many councillors, district and county, who privately believe this is all dead but politically can’t come out and say that.

“We’ve always said the NDR is the road to nowhere particularly the one going up to the airport, and we’ve always said it’s a nonsense.”

## 5 Views

- Am I not right in thinking that if the NDR were to be built, Norfolk County Council would still have to borrow sums in excess of £40m to "top up" central government funding? If so, how on earth would it propose to service and repay such an enormous debt, at a time when it is arguing that it has little choice but to cut vital frontline services? It would be years before developers' contributions came on stream, and there is no guarantee that they alone would suffice.

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John Martin

Saturday, October 30, 2010

- This is great news and halts the urbanisation of Norfolk.

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John Howson

Saturday, October 30, 2010

- Completely agree with Mr Norton. If it was going to make a ring road to travel north to south or vice versa without using the ringroads it made perfect sense, without that what's the point?

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Mark Pannell

Saturday, October 30, 2010

- At Last,it looks as if a candid & open debate will take place.There has been considerable opposition to the NDR from Parish & Town Councils.and others.Lets have the debate!

[Add your view](#) | [Report this comment](#)

Alfred Townly

Saturday, October 30, 2010

- The NDR only made sense originally when it was going to be complete and cross the Wensum valley. Once that idea had been pooh-poohed it should have been knocked on the head firmly and squarely and saved all us taxpayers a lot of money.

[Add your view](#) | [Report this comment](#)

john norton

Saturday, October 30, 2010

**Your**