



How the East Norwich Masterplan fits in

Everybody understands the pressure for housebuilding in Norwich. Central government has imposed a requirement for a certain number of new homes here, and our local planners have responded with their preferred solution called the Greater Norwich Local Plan. This is currently going through a process of official examination.

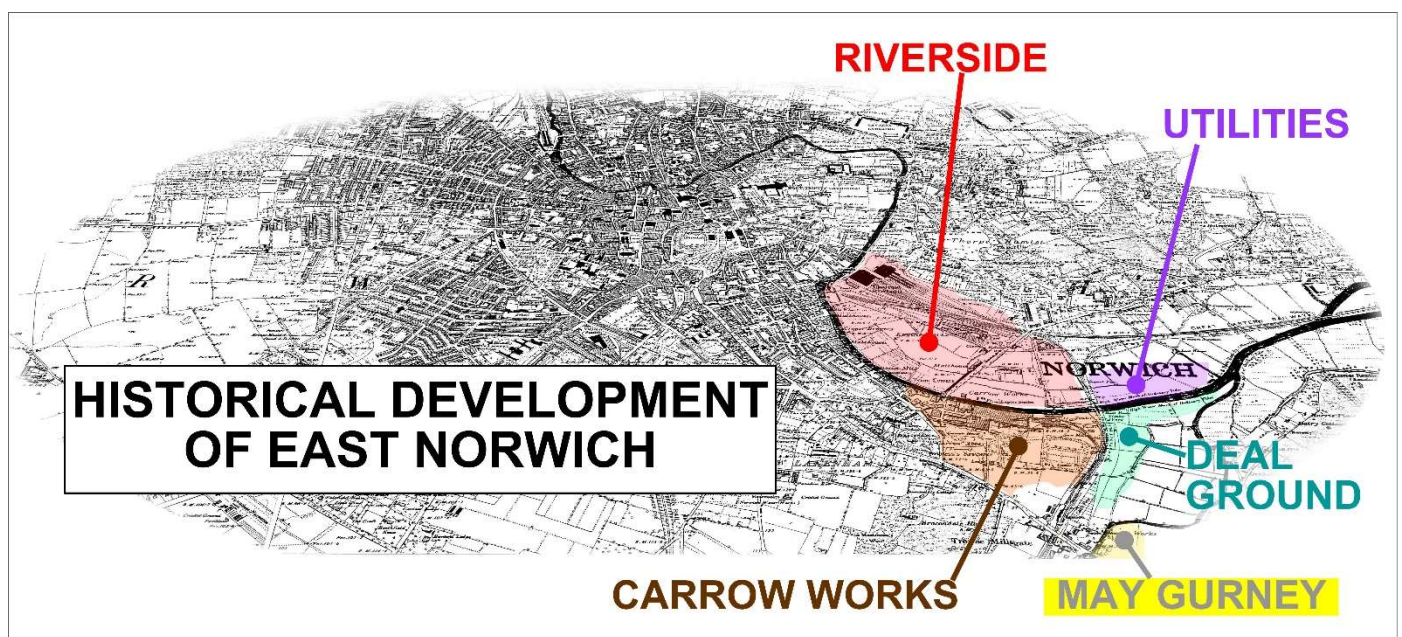
Sensibly, the intention is to put a large chunk of the new housing on available 'brownfield' sites such as Anglia Square and Carrow Works – in preference to having to concrete over even more 'greenfield' agricultural land out of the city.

The dilemma is how many homes these sites can take and the costs in making them work – before getting into the nitty-gritty of how they'd actually look.

In the case of Anglia Square, that question will soon be put to the test when the city council decides on the latest planning application by Weston Homes – an amended scheme which the Norwich Society still regards as some way short of acceptable.

As for the former Colman's site at Carrow Works, proposals have recently been put forward by the owners, and that sizeable site is actually just part of a wider segment of the city known as the **East Norwich Masterplan** area – which includes the Deal Ground, May Gurney and Utilities sites.

Last month, the city council has given approval to the latest version of the masterplan, a joint approach by consultants on behalf of all of the landowners. It has come up a comprehensive strategy for development that is now in the public domain, and this will be put out to public consultation in due course.



History of the masterplan area

By the start of the twentieth century, Norwich had grown well beyond its medieval core to a roughly circular shape, largely contained within what is now the outer ring road, with the radial roads arranged like the spokes of a wheel or the face of a clock.

For centuries there had always been a 'missing' segment to the clock between 3 and 4 o'clock – it extended almost to the centre, until what is now the Riverside and Carrow Road area was developed just a few decades ago. The reason? That segment was marshland alongside the river, labelled on older maps as 'liable to floods'. Since the arrival of the railway in the nineteenth century, virtually all of that land has now been raised and built over.

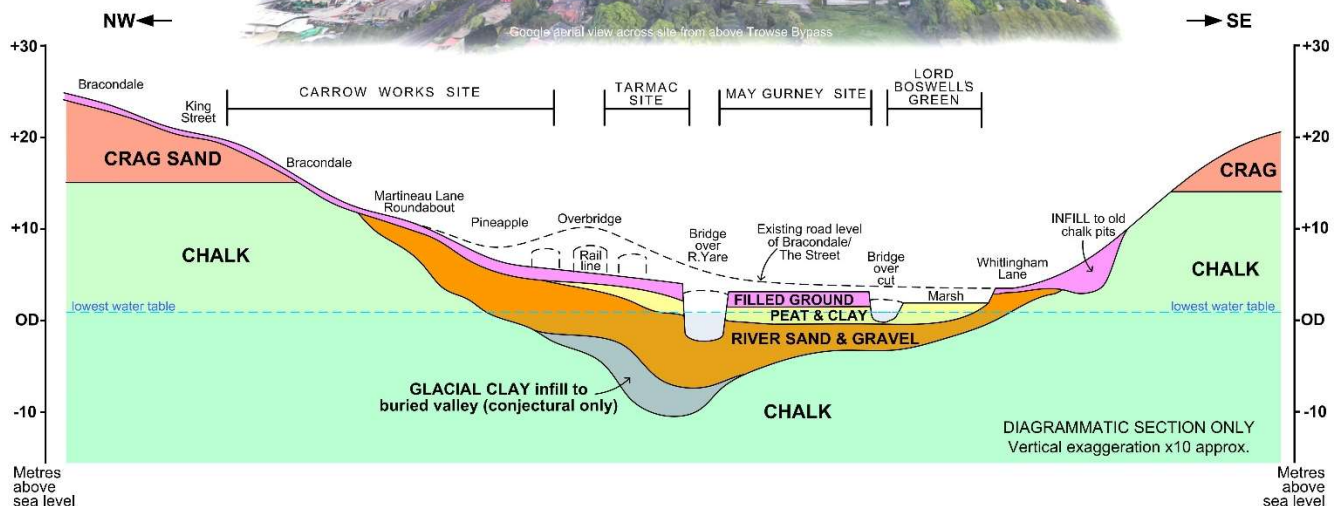
Further out towards Whitlingham and Trowse, the thicker end of the wedge is still largely vacant today, except where it was exploited to thread the Victorian railway lines through - inadvertently chopping the area into bits, each with compromised access. Some of the marshes (notably the Deal Ground and May Gurney sites) were later 'reclaimed' by tipping and used as yards, albeit with constrained road access.

By contrast, the prime valley-side site had already been commandeered by Jeremiah Colman back in 1850, standing as it does on firm ground proud of the rest of the masterplan area, becoming Carrow Works.

The Norwich Society's thoughts on the East Norwich Masterplan

The Society seeks to offer the long view of these new opportunities within the context of Norwich's long and dynamic history.

- We are **genuinely excited** by the prospect of a twenty-first century expansion of the city in East Norwich. Its close proximity to the centre with largely level access makes for a truly unique opportunity to make a sustainable modern place to live and work. That sets it apart from the alternative greenfield sites being considered on distant outskirts.
- Our appreciation of the history and the 'lie of the land' make it impossible to overlook **major technical challenges** presented in building successfully on the lower-lying parts of the site – arising from the increased flood risk and additional construction costs whilst maintaining a decent social mix of housing.



Geological cross section through the East Norwich Masterplan area



East Norwich Masterplan proposals superimposed over published geological map, with approximate line of cross section in **red**

- Most of the documents in the published strategic plan show the area in birds-eye view, but there is much to be gained from a **sideways view** – to illustrate the difference in ground level between Carrow Works and the remaining land. We have specially drawn a cross-section to help emphasise its significance.
- We see this as Norwich’s one-off opportunity to think outside the traditional box and come up with an **innovative and inspiring new quarter**. Please, no more of the boring high-stacked rectangular apartment blocks of indifferent quality. Instead, let’s challenge designers to come up with interesting tiered, solar-heated, green-roofed buildings to be really proud about.
- Developments generate **transportation** headaches only when we cannot see beyond personal car dependency. There cannot be a better site than this to prove that it is possible to have modern residential development without individual car ownership. The top priority must be for non-motorised walking/cycling/wheeling routes and green corridors connecting to the west, north and east, supplemented by a light tram and electric vehicle-share scheme. The scheme could also literally ‘push the boat out’ by designing in a permanent river-based public transport system.
- All the parties must carry through their present laudable commitment to working together, so that **holistic development** guarantees the vital infrastructure needed, including several new bridges. We must avoid a situation in which only the ‘easier’ brownfield site (Carrow Works) is built on, leaving the remaining allocated homes having to be spread over fields somewhere north of the city.
- We urge all members and other Norwich residents to watch out for the official **consultation** when it arrives, and have your say.