

CASE STUDY: Greater Norwich Local Plan

Dedicated Website hailed a success for the Greater Norwich Local Plan



Executive Summary

Greater Norwich authorities appointed JDi Solutions to build, host and maintain an intuitive and accessible dedicated Local Plan website, integrated with the software provider's specialist consultation platform OpusConsult. The aim being to establish an attractive and streamlined full digital solution to improve user experience and increase community engagement. The digital project supported the ultimate achievement, the Greater Norwich Local Plan being adopted.

The Scenario & Challenge

The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is a joint local plan produced by Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council, and South Norfolk Council working in partnership with Norfolk County Council and the Broads Authority, and it covers the period 2018 to 2038. The GNLP builds on the excellent record of partnership working in the Greater Norwich area which began with the Joint Core Strategy (adopted 2011, amendments 2014).

Carole Baker, Principal Planning Policy Officer comments:

"The Greater Norwich authorities have used OpusConsult, developed by JDi Solutions, to run digital Local Plan consultations since the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy, so we have built up a close working relationship with the company over several years. Prior to 2021, the GNLP website was hosted by another supplier and linked through to OpusConsult for public consultations. Having a separate website and consultation software worked ok, but felt a little disjointed in terms of the customer experience. So, we were eager to improve the web navigation user experience and in turn increase community engagement."

The Solution

In 2021 the GNLP team had the chance to have a Drupal website built by JDi Solutions and they felt that this was an exciting opportunity that had many advantages including providing a more attractive and streamlined customer interface. Having the website and local plan consultation software developed, hosted and maintained by the same company, provided the GNLP team with more control over the content and style of the website and it has been much easier for them to make updates when needed.

Carole Baker, Principal Planning Policy Officer comments:

“The implementation of the new Drupal dedicated Local Plan website and its integration with OpusConsult was relatively straightforward, as was maintaining and updating the website. Plus, the JDi Solutions team have always been on hand to assist where needed.

The training, customer services and support that we have received from JDi Solutions has always been excellent. Undertaking day-to-day updates is easy and particular praise must go to Nicole who has always been very friendly and approachable, plus the ‘how to’ videos are great. Tom and the team have always been happy to discuss our needs and have always been able to accommodate our deadlines, which have sometimes changed at short notice.”

The Results

The Greater Norwich Local Plan was adopted in March 2024, having been subject to various stages of public consultation and an examination in public as required by planning regulations.

Carole Baker, Principal Planning Policy Officer comments:

“Being a joint local plan on behalf of 3 authorities, the Greater Norwich Local Plan website needs to present a large amount of information in a clear and understandable way with easy digital navigation, and we feel that the Drupal website provided by JDi Solutions has achieved that for us. Overall, the OpusConsult system and dedicated Local Plan website has provided value for money.”

Case Study Conclusion

Local Plan preparation requires a huge team effort from planners with significant resource needed. Therefore, to ensure a high level of service satisfaction and engagement when presented to the public, it's crucial that the Local Plan digital content is easy to navigate and submit representations to.

A user-friendly website interface provides a positive experience for the public and in turn helps to build a positive brand reputation for the local authority. It also makes light-work for planners too, enabling them to focus on analysing and reporting on submissions rather than spending time resolving user technical/navigation website issues.

The Greater Norwich authorities successfully improved the user experience with the new dedicated Local Plan website integrated with OpusConsult, and it ultimately supported the in-depth process which led to the Greater Norwich Local Plan being adopted. An achievement to be proud of, every planner's dream after a lot of hard work preparing the plan from evidence gathering to examination!

Are you ready to do planning differently?

If you'd like to know more about how a dedicated Local Plan website and our OpusConsult consultation software could benefit your LDP programme, please get in touch. We can offer a free tailored demo of OpusConsult via Microsoft Teams - so you can get a better idea of how our digital solution would suit your specific needs.