



Town and Country Planning Act 1990 - Section 77
Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) (England) Rules
2000

Summary Proof of Evidence – Economic Development Matters

Site:	Anglia Square including land and buildings to the north and west
Applicant:	Weston Homes PLC and Columbia Threadneedle Investments
Local Planning Authority:	Norwich City Council
Name of witness:	Ellen Tilney
PINS reference:	APP/G2625/V/19/3225505
LPA reference:	18/00330/F
Reference:	NCC4/2

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Ellen Tilney, I am Economic Development Manager at Norwich City Council and have been in post since August 2005.
- 1.2 The economic development team has been involved in providing comments and feedback on the original planning application to inform the officers' report to the Planning applications committee. This included a general overview of the potential demand for the scheme and economic benefit of the project, alongside detailed examination of the anticipated job numbers etc. using industry standard multipliers to confirm the employment figures quoted by the applicant.
- 1.3 We had discussions with the applicant to assess suitable mechanisms for engaging local residents and businesses in employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

2 OVERVIEW OF THE NORWICH ECONOMY

- 2.1 Norwich is a major regional service centre, a locus for a large rural hinterland providing employment, retail, health, education, cultural and leisure services.
- 2.2 For the past decade Norwich has seen significant and sustained growth in its population, which is projected to continue for at least the next two decades. At the same time, the city has seen a steady reduction in jobs density because of slower employment growth. Added to that, a movement of jobs away from the Norwich local authority area to the urban fringe has led to some hollowing-out of the city centre, including the Anglia Square area.
- 2.3 Almost 40% of businesses are knowledge intensive firms. The largest sector in employment terms is financial and business services, followed by retail and education.
- 2.4 Norwich has high levels of deprivation; wages are relatively low and unemployment is creeping up.

- 2.5 Norwich's economic performance has been mediocre, and it could be significantly improved. To address deprivation and to foster sustainable growth Norwich must support the growth of its business base and the increased economic participation and wellbeing of its residents.
- 2.6 This will be achieved by increasing the number of jobs available and by delivering an appropriate modern housing offer and sufficient local amenities in vibrant city centre locations.
- 2.7 Norwich must attract investment and businesses to redevelop redundant brownfield sites and buildings, revitalising the city centre and presenting an attractive and successful city in which to live, work and study.

3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE SITE IN ITS PRESENT FORM

- 3.1 Anglia Square in its present state does not fulfil the potential of the site, and, indeed, has a negative impact on surrounding areas.
- 3.2 Quality of place is undoubtedly a factor in economic success, however quality of place is highly subjective and this is a much more complex issue involving many other factors that are key determinants in investment and career development decisions.
- 3.3 Very few people outside the world of property development can understand why Anglia Square was not redeveloped long ago. When trying to promote the city as a business destination or an investment/development destination it is hard to justify why this site remains undeveloped; it sends out a signal that Norwich has its challenges.
- 3.4 It is extremely testing to the viability of almost any business to be in an area with such low footfall and poor image. The site in its current state has a negative impact across a much wider area. It is significant that the Magdalen Street Traders Association has welcomed the proposals for Anglia Square, in anticipation of increased footfall and the spending power of additional residents and shoppers, which will bring renewed vibrancy to the local area.

4 RELEVANT POLICY AND STRATEGY

- 4.1 The relevant policies in the context of the Development Plan are JCS 5: The Economy; JCS 9: Strategy for growth in the Norwich Policy Area; JCS 11: Norwich City Centre; DM16: Supporting the needs of business; DM17: Supporting small businesses; DM19 Encouraging and promoting major office growth; DM 20 Promoting and supporting city centre shopping.
- 4.2 The relevant section of the Norwich Economic Strategy 2019 -2024 (CD11.26) is Objective 2: Skills and employment which defines the following priorities with which the creation of construction jobs fits. Priority 2 – to support lifelong learning and skills provision that enables people to progress in the labour market and access new opportunities; Priority 3 – to build strong relationships with and between education and businesses to stimulate aspiration and performance.

5 IMPACT OF THE SCHEME

- 5.1 The effect of the scheme - essentially the redevelopment of this large, urban mixed-use brownfield site will be good news for residents, visitors and local businesses.
- 5.2 It has the potential to put Norwich on the map as an investment location which will attract further investment, knowledge businesses and high-skilled jobs. Well-paid workers in city centres increase footfall and customer spending power. This creates a market for retailers, bars and restaurants to sell to – which leads to a stronger retail, hospitality and leisure offer and a virtuous circle of job creation.

- 5.3 The developer has actively engaged with city council's economic development team and agreed to develop mechanisms which will provide employment, skills and training opportunities to local residents - an estimated 8-10% increase in construction (direct) jobs and in addition, 275 FTE¹ jobs may be created as part of this induced demand. This is particularly important given the low skills base in the Local Impact Area and increasing levels of unemployment in the local authority area as a whole.
- 5.4 These opportunities can impact positively on the career aspirations and life choices of Norwich's young people, who currently face one of the lowest levels of social mobility in the country. Also, in the long run the redevelopment could result in increased levels of economic participation for the local population which would bolster inclusive economic growth.
- 5.5 In making my assessment I have considered the impact of the scheme on those who currently occupy the site. However, in my view the positive economic aspects of the scheme far outweigh any negative impacts.

6 CONSEQUENCES OF THE SCHEME NOT PROCEEDING

- 6.1 If this redevelopment of Anglia Square does not take place it will signal to potential investors that Norwich is not "open for business"; indeed it is likely to signal a level of difficulty towards modern redevelopment projects which is likely to deter investors.
- 6.2 Under these circumstances Norwich would be viewed as outdated and opposed to change rather than a modern, contemporary city which successfully fuses the old and the new. Anglia Square will be cited as a high-profile failure which sends a negative message about the city to owners/developers of other sites and to prospective purchasers.
- 6.3 Semi-derelict, empty buildings and undeveloped brownfield sites send a message of neglect, under-investment and deprivation; they do not demonstrate a vibrant, successful city with a great lifestyle offer that will attract new businesses and talented workers.

¹ Full Time Equivalent

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 In conclusion, the economic rationale for the redevelopment of Anglia Square has been laid out in this proof of evidence.
- 7.2 The one area in which there appears to be almost universal agreement is that Anglia Square in its current form is a blight upon the beautiful city of Norwich.
- 7.3 The current scheme will create much-needed local employment for Norwich residents including construction jobs with apprenticeship opportunities and skills training in the eight-year building development stage.
- 7.4 Norwich must attract new business relocations to increase graduate level employment to retain graduates from the city's two universities and to draw in highly skilled people from outside the area.
- 7.5 Progression of the proposed development will signal to the investor market that Norwich is open for business, this is especially important given the number of brownfield sites currently awaiting redevelopment in the city. The proposed redevelopment of Anglia Square could supply a much-needed stimulus to rejuvenate other neglected or derelict sites.