

**Anglia Square
including land and buildings to the north and west**

**SUMMARY EVIDENCE
of
CHRIS WATTS MTCP MRTPI**

on town centre and retail impact matters,

on behalf of the Applicant,

Weston Homes PLC and Columbia Threadneedle Investments

December 2019

1. The expert evidence that I shall give will demonstrate that the proposed development is consistent with Chapter 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (**Framework**)¹, which sets out the Government policies for ensuring the vitality of town centres.
2. Evidence will also be presented demonstrating that the proposed development is consistent with Norwich City Council's development plan policies relating to town centres and retail, supplementary guidance and other relevant documents, including:
 - Anglia Square and surrounding area: Policy Guidance Note (**PGN**)²
 - Greater Norwich: Town Centres & Retail Study (Volume 1: Main Report) (**TCRS**)³
 - Greater Norwich: Employment, Town Centre & Retail Study (Strategic Advice) (**ETCRS**)⁴
3. My evidence will set out that:
4. **First**, the application site falls within Anglia Square/Magdalen Street Large District Centre and is therefore a 'town centre' in Framework terms. It is Government policy to ensure the vitality of town centres (as recognised in paragraphs 85-90 of the Framework).
5. **Second**, Anglia Square is a principal but declining part of the Large District Centre. The retail offer, which is focused towards discount/value retailing, lacks diversity and the site has virtually no leisure facilities.

Whilst unit take-up is high, with a mix of national and independent retailers, Anglia Square does not currently fulfil its role as the focus of the Large District Centre. It *lacks a critical mass, diversity of tenants and is influenced by the degraded physical environment* as the PGN sets out⁵.
6. **Third**, there is long-standing policy support for a major mixed use redevelopment of Anglia Square including the enhancement of its retail and leisure offer. To that end, the PGN promotes *a strong and diverse District Centre function, serving the wider suburban areas of North*

¹ CD1.1

² CD2.11

³ CD2.9(a)

⁴ CD2.9

⁵ Paragraph 5.2 [CD2.11].

*Norwich, an improved convenience offer, and enhanced leisure offer with a new cinema, cafes and restaurants...*⁶

7. **Fourth**, the set of planning conditions agreed between the Council and the Applicant⁷ will ensure the scheme comprises less floorspace dedicated to main town centre uses, and A1 retail, than currently accommodated at the site (as shown in the table below).

| | At present (sqm GEA) | Application proposals (sqm GEA) |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Retail and other town centre floorspace | 34,063 | 25,750 |
| (of which) A1 retail | 9,430 | 8,275 |

Flexibility for a range of uses at ground floor level is proposed⁸, as required to help 'future proof' the scheme and support its long-term vitality and viability. The mix of uses set out in the retail strategy⁹ will be complementary and enhance the function of the Large District Centre.

8. **Fifth**, Norwich City Centre has a significant quantum and variety of retail and leisure/cultural attractions. It is a 'Top 10' UK centre on the basis of the volume and quality of its retail offer (extending some 177,327 sqm) and has a particularly strong comparison goods offer, which accounts for almost £1 in every £2 spent on comparison goods in the region-wide catchment. There is a range of leisure/cultural facilities such as theatres, museums and entertainment venues; with no major qualitative gaps identified by the ETCRS¹⁰.

Norwich City Centre therefore functions as a regional and multi-purpose 'destination', while the application proposals will have a different and complementary function.

9. **Sixth**, the retail and leisure components of the scheme (as strictly controlled by the planning conditions agreed between the Council and the Applicant) will not result in a significant adverse impact on the vitality

⁶ Paragraph 5.4 [CD2.11].

⁷ As attached to the Council's Statement of Case.

⁸ Including Use Classes A1/A2/A3/A4/B1/D1/Sui Generis alongside a cinema (D2) and hotel (C1).

⁹ CD7.7

¹⁰ Paragraph 3.28 [CD2.9].

and viability of the City Centre, which is fulfilling a regional role and performing strongly against the 'healthcheck' indicators set out in the Planning Practice Guidance¹¹.

10. **Seventh**, the proposed development – by virtue of its relative scale, turnover and facilities – will not challenge the regional role of Norwich City Centre or alter its dominant position at the apex of Greater Norwich's hierarchy of centres.

¹¹ Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 2b-006-20190722 [CD1.2].