

Anglia Square, Norwich

Environmental Statement

Chapter 3: Description of Site and Background

Iceni Projects on behalf of Weston
Homes Plc and Columbia
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CHAPTER 3 - DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter sets out a summary of the existing site which provides a background and context for evaluating the existing baseline environmental conditions and for assessing the Development proposals.
- 3.2 Individual technical chapters of the ES provide separate summaries of the existing site with reference to specific features of interest to the assessment topic and in relation to relevant existing environmental resources and receptors.

Site Description

- 3.3 The Site measures approximately 4.51 hectares and comprises the existing Anglia Square Shopping Centre, and adjoining and adjacent land described below, located in the northern part of Norwich City Centre, a short walk from the centre of the City and adjacent to the inner ring road (St Crispin's Road), as identified on the Site location plan at **Appendix 1.1**.
- 3.4 The main site area, known as Anglia Square, is bounded by New Botolph Street and Pitt Street to the west, Edward Street to the north, Magdalen Street to the east and St Crispin's Road to the south. The Site comprises the entirety of the land within this area, except for the existing retail units within the south-eastern corner of the site adjacent to the flyover and a convenience food store (the former Barclays Bank) site within the north-eastern corner of the site (which is in separate ownership). In addition, the Site comprises a parcel of land to the northwest of New Botolph Street/ west of Edward Street, and an area of land to the north of Edward Street and west of Beckham Place, both currently used for surface level car parking.
- 3.5 The Site currently comprises the Anglia Square Shopping Centre and its associated public realm, and adjoining land. Anglia Square was extensively redeveloped during the 1960s following the construction of St Crispin's Road. On the eastern part of the Site, is the existing Anglia Square public space and surrounding retail units, the Hollywood Cinema above, and the retail units fronting Magdalen Street.
- 3.6 The northern part of the Site includes the vacant and structurally unsound multi-storey car park, whilst the central and southern part of the Site is dominated by the vacant office building Sovereign House (part seven, part eight storeys in height). To the west of the main structures of Anglia Square can be found 'Anglia Square Shoppers Car Park' (land south of Upper Green Lane) together with a second area of surface level car parking, 'RCP Parking LTD' (land west of Botolph Street). The south-western section of the Site, between Pitt Street and Botolph Street, consists of a cluster of buildings of varying design and layout, comprising of Surrey Chapel, Norwich Men's Shed, Norwich Farmshare, and other

vacant commercial premises. The south-eastern part of the Site includes Gildengate House, a seven storey office building (which is occupied in part by artists' studios but is otherwise vacant), and a large rectangular two storey building accommodating a discount retailer, which fronts Anglia Square public space.

- 3.7 The Site is currently served by vehicular access points from New Botolph Street to the west, Edward Street to the north and St Crispin's Road to the south. Upper Green Lane provides vehicular access internally from the flyover to the south to the upper parts of the site (including the cinema and the entrance to the vacant multi-storey car park), above the pedestrianised shopping area below. Pedestrian access to the shopping centre is predominantly facilitated by two pedestrian routes (Sovereign Way and Anne's Walk) from Magdalen Street to the east, and from Botolph Street to the west. The Site currently suffers from poor legibility, with the layout providing limited connections within the Site and to its surroundings.
- 3.8 Sovereign House was built in the late 1960s and the shopping centre, Gildengate House, multi-storey car park and cinema were constructed in the early 1970s. Since then, the physical fabric and infrastructure throughout the Site has deteriorated, and the area is in need of significant investment in order to replace existing vacant buildings, make more efficient use of the Site and provide new retail and employment space to meet the needs of modern retailers and businesses.

The Site Context

Magdalen Street

- 3.9 The eastern part of the Site is bounded by Magdalen Street, which is a relatively narrow road, fronted by predominantly two and three storey buildings with retail units at ground floor level. Opposite is a large four storey building which is home to Roy's department store, a post office and Rileys Sports Bar. Magdalen Street is a key route taking vehicular and pedestrian traffic from the north into the City Centre, under the St Crispin's Road flyover. A number of bus stops are located on Magdalen Street adjacent to the flyover. Adjacent to the northeastern corner of the site, at the junction of Edward Street and Magdalen Street, is a doctor's surgery (The Gurney Surgery) and a pharmacy.

Edward Street

- 3.10 Edward Street to the north of the Site and the area surrounding the land west of Beckham Place includes a variety of generally large scale buildings. The buildings vary between 3 and 4 storeys, including Dalymond Court, a pair of four storey residential apartment buildings to the west, and the three storey Epic Studios building to the east. To the north of the existing surface level car park which forms a separate parcel within the Site, planning permission was granted in May 2017 for "the erection of 7 No. dwellings and a block of 12 No. flats and either a terrace of 8 No. dwellings or 18 No. flats associated with the Norfolk & Norwich Association for the Blind" (application reference 17/01391/F). We understand

that the applicant is currently in the process of discharging the conditions to enable development to commence.

Pitt Street / St Augustine Street

- 3.11 The area to the northwest of the Site along Pitt Street is largely residential in character, comprising predominantly two storey terraced properties. These back on to the other separate parcel of land, west of Edward Street, which forms part of the Site. To the northwest of the junction of New Botolph Street and St Augustine's Street is St Augustine's Church (Grade I Listed) and the adjacent Grade II Listed properties at 2-12 Gildencroft. To the south of these properties is Gildencroft Park, which includes a children's play area, and to its south is a collection of commercial properties fronting Pitt Street, located towards the roundabout to the south.

St Crispin's Road and beyond

- 3.12 To the south of Anglia Square, the buildings are generally of a larger scale (up to approximately 6 storeys) and commercial in nature. Planning applications have recently been approved for the conversion, enlargement and upwards extension of St Crispin's House to form student accommodation, and the redevelopment for mixed uses of St Mary's Works to the southeast and southwest of the roundabout on St Crispin's Road respectively. Further to the south lies the core of Norwich City Centre, providing a significant range of department stores, other comparison retail and local shops, services and facilities within a short walk of the application Site. St Crispin's Road currently presents a barrier, both physically and psychologically, creating a certain degree of separation between Anglia Square and the rest of the City Centre to the south. However a new surface level pedestrian and cycle crossing is due to be constructed shortly between St George's Street to the south and Botolph Street within the Site, to provide a more effective link across this main road and into the City Centre beyond than the pedestrian underpass that it will replace. Additionally, plans are being developed separately by Columbia Threadneedle in consultation with NCC for opportunities to improve the environment under the St Crispin's Road flyover, and to introduce a range of commercial activities in removable structures. This is intended to create an attractive and vibrant area where currently there is a psychological barrier for shoppers on Magdalen Street to continue northwards under the flyover.

- 3.13 Within the wider Norwich context, the Site is located within the northern part of the City Centre, within an area characterised as a transition zone between the historic and commercial core of the City to the south and the largely residential area to the north. The site is designated as part of a Large District Centre and thus plays an important role in the City's retail hierarchy.

- 3.14 The site is well served by a range of sustainable transport options, as detailed further within the Transport Assessment submitted in support of this application. In particular, Magdalen Street acts as a main public transport corridor into the City Centre from the north of Norwich, whilst the facilities and services located within the core of the City Centre are located a convenient walk or cycle ride to the south.

Public Transport

- 3.15 The Site is ideally located in the northern part of Norwich City Centre, making it highly accessible by public transport and on foot, with four bus stops adjacent to the Site. Norwich train station is approximately 1.3km south east of the Site. This station provides services to and from main towns such as Peterborough in approximately an hour and a half, Bury St Edmunds in 55 minutes and Ipswich in 38. The latter route continues to London Liverpool Street. There is also an extensive park and ride scheme within Norwich, with Anglia Square served by routes A140 and A1151, thus providing ease of access from the P and R car parks at Hareford and Sporwton, Thickthorn and Norwich airport.

Designation/ Constraints

- 3.16 The Site is situated within the City Centre Conservation Areas. The nearest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is approximately 0.6 miles east of the Site; however the Site does not fall within this SSSI impact zone.
- 3.17 As set out above, immediately to the east of the Site is 75 Magdalen Street, a Grade II Listed Building. Within the Site, 43-45 Pitt Street are locally listed buildings. There are additional listed buildings slightly further from the Site, which lies within their setting, as detailed and described in the Built Heritage Assessment, which forms a technical appendix to the Heritage chapter of this ES.
- 3.18 There are no sites of international importance such as SPAs, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Ramsar sites within the Application Site boundary.
- 3.19 The Site falls within Flood Zone 1, it has a low probability of flooding. The River Wensum flows approximately 500m south of the Site. However the Site does experience some surface water run-off from the higher ground to the north and west. This is described and addressed in the Flood Risk Assessment that accompanies this application

Local Plan Position

- 3.20 A detailed appraisal of the current planning policy position is contained in the Planning Statement that is submitted in support of the application. Each technical chapter provides a summary of the planning policy relevant to its topic. The summary below provides a brief overview of the policies relevant to the Development.
- 3.21 Norwich City Council's Development Plan currently consist of:
- Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (January 2011), with amendments January 2014;

- Norwich Development Management Policies Plan (December 2014);
- Norwich Site Allocations and Site Specific Policies Plan (December 2014),

3.22 These are supported by various supplementary documents, including:

- Landscape and Trees: Supplementary Planning Document (June 2016);
- Heritage Interpretations: Supplementary Planning Document (December 2015);
- Open Space and Play: Supplementary Planning Document (October 2015);
- Affordable Housing: Supplementary Planning Document (2015);
- Main Town Centre Uses and Retail Frontages: Supplementary Planning Document (December 2014); and
- Anglia Square Policy Guidance Note (March 2017);
- Internal Space Standards Note (March 2015);
- Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings Standards Note (March 2016).

3.23 In addition to the Development Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) represents the Government's statement of national planning policy. As such, it constitutes guidance for decision makers as a material consideration in determining applications.

3.24 Norwich City Council is currently working in conjunction with Broadland District Council, South Norfolk Council and Norfolk County Council to prepare the new Greater Norwich Local Plan which will eventually replace the Joint Core Strategy and plan for development until 2036. This document is currently at an early stage of preparation, with an initial (Regulation 18 stage) draft published for consultation in January 2018.

3.25 Of particular relevance is the Joint Core Strategy Policy 11, which seeks to address years of decline by identifying the northern City Centre for comprehensive redevelopment to achieve physical and social regeneration and utilise significant redevelopment opportunities. Anglia Square is identified as an area of change within the Joint Core Strategy. This policy encourages diversification of the retail offer, the enhancement of an early evening economy and a greater quantum of leisure and hospitality uses, and an expansion of the employment function within the City Centre. It also indicates that residential development will be expected as part of mixed use developments wherever possible, alongside improvements to the public realm.

Planning History

- 3.26 The Site has been the subject of a number of planning applications leading to permissions. A full description of the planning history can be found in the Planning Statement, however, the planning history relevant to the preparation of the EIA is set out at Chapter 4, under the alternatives section.