

13. KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 Norwich City, Broadland District and South Norfolk District Councils, together with Norfolk County Council, commissioned GVA Grimley LLP to carry out this study to inform retail planning in the Norwich sub-region, in accordance with guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6): *Planning for Town Centres*. The key findings and recommendations of this study provide robust and sound baseline evidence to inform the preparation of a Joint Core Strategy for the three local authority areas as part of the forthcoming Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 13.2 This study has covered both the strategic role of Norwich as a major Regional Centre in the East of England region, as well as the more local issues facing the main centres in the Broadland and South Norfolk areas. It specifically identifies the current role, attraction and performance of each main centre and shopping location. It also assesses the broad quantitative and qualitative need for new retail (comparison and convenience goods) and commercial leisure floorspace up to 2011, 2016 and 2021. However, for the reasons set out in Section 12, we advise that forecasts over more than five years (i.e. post-2011) can only provide a broad indication of potential growth and need. Our commentary therefore concentrates on the more robust capacity forecasts to 2011 and 2016 only.
- 13.3 This section draws together and reviews the main strands of our research and findings. It also sets out our recommendations for robust, flexible and commercially realistic planning policies and new town centre development as part of the LDF process.

The Context for Growth and Development

- 13.4 The following briefly summarises the planning policy and market context for the potential growth and location of new retail and leisure development in the sub-region's main centres, based on the more detailed commentary in Sections 2-4 of this study.

Planning Policy Context

- 13.5 Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning the Government's planning policy guidance. PPS1 specifically sets out a range of overarching policies aimed at facilitating sustainable patterns of urban and rural development. PPS6 further strengthens the Government's commitment to promoting, maintaining and enhancing town centres as the first choice for new development and investment.

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- 13.6 PPS6 requires that local planning authorities should work in conjunction with stakeholders and the community to, amongst other considerations, assess the need for new floorspace; identify existing deficiencies in provision; identify those centres where new development should be focussed; identify and allocate appropriate sites in accordance with the sequential 'test'; and develop spatial policies and proposals to promote and secure investment in deprived areas. Where growth cannot be accommodated in identified existing centres, local planning authorities are encouraged to plan for an extension to primary shopping areas and/or town centre boundaries. In certain cases, where it is not possible to reverse the decline in centres, local planning authorities are also required to consider reclassifying centres to a more appropriate level in the retail hierarchy.
- 13.7 In allocating sites as part of the development plan process, as well as assessing applications for new retail, leisure and town development, PPS6 sets out a number of key considerations that should be assessed. These include an assessment of the need for new floorspace; whether the scale of development relates to the role and function of the centre; the application of the sequential approach to site selection; and assessment of the potential negative (and positive) impacts of new development. Other material considerations, depending on particular local circumstances, include whether the new development would have additional benefits in terms of physical regeneration, employment, economic growth and social inclusion.
- 13.8 Regional Planning Policy, as set out in the emerging East of England Plan, identifies Norwich as one of twenty-one '*Key Centres for Development and Change*' (KCDC). The RSS also identifies Norwich as a '*New Growth Point*', which means that it is an area which provides the opportunity for sustainable growth. The RSS reinforces national guidance and specifically states that thriving, vibrant and attractive town centres are fundamental to the sustainable development of the East of England and should therefore be the focus for investment, environmental enhancement and regeneration (Policy SS6).
- 13.9 Norwich is defined as a 'Regional Centre'. Policy E5 states that major new retail development and complementary town centre uses should primarily be located in the centres identified in the hierarchy and be consistent with the size and character of the centres and their roles in the regional structure. The role of Norwich as a retail, leisure, cultural and education centre is clearly promoted by the emerging RSS, with particular emphasis on developing the role of the city centre in order that it can continue to compete. The plan also supports the enhancement of other town centres in the sub-region and recognises the important role of smaller market towns and villages.
- 13.10 With regard to out-of-centre development, the RSS (Policy E6) states that no need has been identified for additional out-of-centre regional/sub-regional shopping centres, or for the extension of retailing at such centres during the plan period.

- 13.11 The relevant adopted local plans for the City of Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils are broadly consistent with national and regional planning policy statements. The Broadland and South Norfolk Local Plans recognise the influence of Norwich in the sub-region, whilst also highlighting the importance of maintaining and enhancing retail provision in the network of smaller market towns and large villages which surround Norwich City. All of the plans promote the town centres 'first' policy and the need to ensure that development is consistent with the scale, size and function of the centre.

Retail and Leisure Trends

- 13.12 This study has also identified some of the broad trends and key drivers of change and growth in both the retail and leisure property market sectors (see Sections 4 and 11). It highlights the fact that both sectors have experienced significant growth and development over the last 25 years. This, in turn, has fundamentally altered the way we shop and carry out our leisure activities.
- 13.13 One of the key drivers of new development and the changing location of new provision over the last 25 years has been increased car ownership, which has resulted in greater household mobility. As a result the consumer has more choices of places to visit, rather than being constrained to their 'local' centres. In turn, the average distances travelled for shopping and other activities is generally much greater.
- 13.14 This growth in mobility has been matched by the strong and sustained growth in incomes and expenditure. This has largely been underpinned by a strong and relatively stable economy (e.g. low inflation and interest rates) and house price increases, which has resulted in increased consumer confidence and spend. The retail and leisure sectors have particularly benefited from the significant year-on-year growth in spend that has, in turn, fuelled new shopping centre and leisure development. This expenditure growth is forecast to continue, albeit probably not at such strong levels as achieved in the last 15-20 years. Significantly, for the assessment of quantitative need, the strongest growth in retail expenditure is focused on comparison goods, with more limited growth forecast for convenience goods retailing. This largely explains the move by the major foodstore operators into non-food retailing, as described below.
- 13.15 One of the potential drivers of change over the next 5-10 years could be the take-up and growth of Internet shopping. The recent strong growth looks set to continue, albeit from a very small percentage of overall retail spending. The impact on certain retail sectors is already evident (such as, for example, books, records, travel agents, electrical goods, etc.) and will continue. However, we consider that the stronger and more attractive town centres, which provide a wide variety of uses and activities, and have good accessibility by all modes of travel, will continue to remain vital and viable over the longer term.

- 13.16 The decentralisation of new forms (or 'waves') of retail development has been a key trend since the 1980s. Until recently these out-of-centre schemes represented the highest proportion of new floorspace development in the UK and freestanding regional shopping centres, superstores, factory outlet centres and retail warehouse parks are now a feature of the retail and urban landscape. However there has been a significant slowdown in new out-of-centre applications and development over the last 5 years in particular as new policy "bites", resulting in a growth in town centre development and regeneration.
- 13.17 Both foodstore and non-food operators have also evolved their formats and offer in the context of the revised planning system. The restrictions on out-of-centre retailing, combined with the town centres 'first' policy and changing socio-economic trends, have resulted in several large operators returning to the high street with new formats. For example, the leading foodstore operators are opening smaller convenience store formats (such as, for example, Tesco Metro and Sainsbury's Local) in a wide range of primary and secondary locations and centres. The major foodstore operators are also extending the comparison goods offer in their new and existing stores (through applications for extensions and/or mezzanines) in order to benefit from the stronger growth in non-food spend. As a result many of the larger foodstores have evolved into quasi variety or department stores. This could potentially represent a threat to smaller less viable centres, where the large out-of-centre stores are becoming one-stop shopping destinations, possibly negating the need to shop in local centres.
- 13.18 Other key trends over the last decade or more have included the increased requirements for larger store formats from high street retailers. This demand has resulted in significant new retail and mixed use development in Britain's larger 'top 50-70' centres. In turn, this has placed increasing competitive pressures on smaller and medium-sized centres that lie within the catchment areas of these larger shopping centres. Where smaller centres have been unable to diversify their offer or create niche markets they have generally suffered. This explains the reason behind the Government's commitment to promote new development and investment in Britain's smaller and medium-sized centres as part of the sustainable communities agenda, in order to achieve a better 'balance' of provision.
- 13.19 These trends present significant challenges for the Norwich Sub-Region and its main centres. We consider the potential opportunities and responses to these challenges in more detail below.

The Norwich Sub-Region

- 13.20 The following provides a broad overview of shopping patterns across the defined Norwich Sub-Region and highlights the potential increased competition from neighbouring centres and shopping locations on the future vitality and viability of the main study centres (see Section 5). It also provides a summary of the forecast capacity for new retail and leisure uses and floorspace across the wider sub-region, based on the quantitative need assessment (see Sections 11 and 12).
- 13.21 We also set out our initial findings and recommendations with regard to the scale and type of floorspace that could be needed to meet the different options for growth across the sub-region, based on the potential distribution and allocation of new dwellings provided by the client team as part of the emerging RSS (see Appendix 12).

Current Shopping Patterns

- 13.22 Norwich City Centre is drawing shoppers and trade from an extensive catchment area, covering Norfolk and the wider East of England region (see Plans 4 and 10). According to the household survey results, the critical mass and quality of the city centre's offer means that it is achieving a c.44% market share of available comparison goods expenditure from across the defined survey area (see Plan 2). It is therefore having a significant influence on the role and function of other centres within its primary catchment area.
- 13.23 In our judgment the strength of Norwich's retail offer means that it is unlikely to lose significant market share from its catchment area over the forthcoming LDF period, provided that there is continued investment and renewal of its retail and leisure offer. Nevertheless, centres such as Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich all have proposals to increase and strengthen their retail floorspace and town centre offer, which could increase their draw from Norwich's wider Sub-Regional catchment. At the same time, the smaller market towns in Broadland and South Norfolk District could also be impacted by growth in neighbouring centres, such as Lowestoft, Great Yarmouth, Dereham, Thetford and King's Lynn.
- 13.24 It is therefore important for Norwich to maintain and enhance its position and role as a Regional centre. However, any future town centre development and investment will need protect and enhance its historic environment, tourist attractions and specialist retail offer. This is because shoppers and visitors come to Norwich for a variety of reasons, not just shopping, and therefore the city needs to retain its unique identity and character.

- 13.25 It is also important that the smaller market towns of Harleston, Diss, Aylsham and Wymondham maintain and enhance their roles in the face of the increased competition from Norwich City Centre, out-of-centre locations and new investment in centres outside the sub-region, such as Cambridge, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. As we highlight later in this section, these centres cannot compete with the critical mass and quality of offer in Norwich City and larger shopping locations in the region. These smaller market towns therefore need to identify opportunities to maintain and enhance their provision and range of retail, leisure and service uses, which serve the day-to-day needs of their local resident and rural catchment populations. At the same time, where possible, these centres need to identify and build on their unique attractions to draw a greater proportion of tourist and year-round visitor spend to help underpin their overall vitality and viability. The key to their success in the future will therefore be to provide a complementary offer to other centres in the sub-region and beyond.
- 13.26 In this context, the potential residential growth options identified by the RSS for new residential development across the sub-region could provide a significant opportunity to strengthen and extend the shopping and wider town centre offer of some of these smaller market towns over the forecast period by increasing their catchment populations and available spend (such as Wymondham for example). These growth options could help to strengthen the viability of existing town centre businesses, with potential benefits for daytime and evening economies. It will also increase the potential demand for new shops and facilities to serve the population growth. However, the potential capacity for new floorspace will be dependent on the local planning authorities identifying and bringing forward either town centre and/or edge-of-centre sequential sites for new development in accordance with PPS6.
- 13.27 We consider the potential implications of the 'high level' residential growth options and the potential economic and physical capacity to extend the retail and wider offer of the smaller market towns in more detail in the rest of this section.

Sub-Regional Retail Capacity

- 13.28 Our assessment of the potential capacity for new retail floorspace (comparison and convenience goods) over the LDF period draws on the results of the household and in-centre surveys, which provide the baseline evidence to help establish and inform current market share and trade draw patterns (see Section 12). As stated above, our commentary concentrates on growth and capacity up to 2016 only, as we consider that forecasts over a longer time period can be less robust.
- 13.29 As Table 13.1 shows, we have projected a potential increase in the total survey area population from 795,674 to 841,518 between 2006 and 2016, which represents a growth of +5.8% .

Table 13.1: Norwich Survey Area: Potential Population and Expenditure Growth

	2006	2011	2016	2021
TOTAL POPULATION:	795,674	819,420	841,518	863,781
TOTAL CONVENIENCE GOODS SPEND(£000's):	£1,263	£1,330	£1,413	£1,502
TOTAL COMPARISON GOODS SPEND(£000's):				
- Assuming +3.8% per annum growth:	£2,154	£2,544	£3,134	£3,877
- Assuming +4.3% per annum growth:	£2,165	£2,618	£3,304	£4,187

¹ Derived from Appendices 8 & 9, Tables 1/2/3.

- 13.30 For the purpose of our quantitative assessment we have used different spend and floorspace 'productivity' growth scenarios for comparison goods retailing in order to test the overall sensitivity of the capacity forecasts to changes in the key inputs. Assuming annual growth rates for comparison goods spend per capita levels across the sub-Region of +3.8%, our projections indicate a total growth in available comparison goods spend of +45.5% between 2006 – 2016 (rising to +80% for the period 2006 – 2021). The higher spend growth assumption of +4.3% per annum, results in stronger projected growth of +52.6% to 2016 (and +93.4% to 2021).
- 13.31 For convenience goods, we have assumed a growth in spend per capita of +0.7% per annum. This produces a projected growth in total available spend of c.12% to 2016 (and c.19% to 2021). This lower forecast growth in convenience goods spending benchmarked against comparison goods clearly has implications for the quantum of new retail floorspace that can be supported in economic terms across the sub-Region and the three study areas. This is summarised by Table 13.2 below (also see Section 12, Tables 12.11 and 12.12).

Table 13.2: Norwich Sub-Region: 'Global' Retail Floorspace Capacity Forecasts (sqm net)

	2011	2016	2021
CONVENIENCE GOODS:			
- Trading @£4,000/sqm	4,604	10,790	17,437
- Trading @£12,000/sqm	1,534	3,597	5,812
COMPARISON GOODS:			
SCENARIO 2: +3.8% Spend Growth / 2% efficiency	14,125	43,352	77,484
SCENARIO 3: +4.3% Spend Growth / 2% efficiency	20,354	57,429	101,450

¹ Derived from Appendix 8 (Tables 15) and Appendix 9 (Table 36)

- 13.32 For convenience goods retailing we have assumed a baseline average sales density for smaller convenience and discount operators of c.£4,000 per sqm. For larger superstore operators we assume that this new floorspace will trade at a benchmark company average of c.£12,000 per sqm. As the table shows, this results in the potential capacity in 2016 for between 3,597 sqm

and 10,790 sqm net of new convenience goods floorspace across the sub-Region, depending on the different retailing formats.

- 13.33 For comparison goods retailing we have also tested different scenarios to assess the sensitivity of the capacity outputs to changes in key expenditure and floorspace efficiency growth rates. As Table 13.2 shows, the 'lower' (Scenario 2) and 'higher' (Scenario 3) growth scenarios result in the potential 'global' capacity for between 43,352 - 57,429 sqm net by 2016. As we state in Section 12 to this study, we consider that the 'lower' growth scenario is the most appropriate in this case.
- 13.34 These headline forecasts should be treated as indicative and can only provide a broad guide as to the potential 'theoretical' economic capacity for new retail floorspace over the LDF period. We therefore strongly recommend that the key inputs to the model, specifically population and expenditure growth, be continually monitored and tested as and when new projections are published.

Commercial Leisure Need Assessment

- 13.35 Our leisure expenditure projections have identified growth across the sub-Region of c.23% up to 2016. Given that the Government's objective is to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of city and town centres, we recommend that the strong growth in leisure expenditure should be directed to town centres first
- 13.36 Our assessment of the sub-Region's commercial leisure sector has demonstrated that there is generally a good provision and choice of facilities (including cinemas, bingo, ten-pin bowling, bars, restaurants, and health & fitness clubs). It is apparent that much of this provision is in Norwich City Centre. Neither Broadland nor South Norfolk Districts have significant commercial leisure facilities. This is to be expected given Norwich's role as a Regional Centre and the more limited scale, offer and catchments of the smaller market towns in the rural district areas.
- 13.37 In terms of cinemas, the provision in the sub-Region is concentrated in Norwich city where there are 26-screens. We consider that this provision is above what would be expected given the size of the population. We therefore advise that there is no demonstrable quantitative need for additional cinemas up to the year 2016.
- 13.38 In terms of A3/A4 uses (i.e. restaurants, cafés and drinking establishments), the household survey results confirm that Norwich City Centre achieves a strong market penetration across the whole of the sub-Region, both during the daytime and evenings. The town centres of Wymondham, Diss, Harleston and Aylsham also attract a good market share of trips from within their more local catchments, which reflects the quality and character of their offer.

- 13.39 Our broad need assessment in Section 11 assumes that cafés, restaurants and bars generally comprise a minimum of 15% of floorspace in new mixed use developments, over and above the capacity forecast for new comparison goods retailing. In this context, Table 13.3 sets out the potential need for new A3/A4 floorspace based on the 'lower' and 'higher' capacity forecasts for comparison goods retailing. Of this 'global' forecast, we advise that the vast majority of this new floorspace (c.90%+) should be accommodated in the Norwich Urban Area.

Table 13.3: Norwich Sub-Region: A3/A4 Capacity Floorspace Forecasts (sqm net)

	2011	2016	2021
<i>SCENARIO 2: +3.8% Spend Growth / 2% efficiency</i>	2,199	6,503	11,623
<i>SCENARIO 3: +4.3% Spend Growth / 2% efficiency</i>	3,053	8,614	15,218

- 13.40 A relatively high proportion of respondents to the household survey also identified an under-provision of private leisure facilities and/or swimming pools within a "reasonable distance" of their home. Although this does vary widely across the sub-Region, we recommend that additional facilities should be provided in town centres first as part of new mixed use retail/residential schemes, where market demand and suitable sites exist.
- 13.41 In conclusion, we consider that it is important that the City Centre and smaller centres in the rural district areas maintain and enhance their provision of cafés, pubs, restaurants and commercial leisure facilities. This will help to encourage and promote healthy and diverse daytime and evening economies, and meet the needs of resident and wider catchment populations. Given the relative size and role of the smaller market towns, they will clearly not be able to compete directly with the city centre as locations for major commercial leisure facilities. There may, however, be opportunities to develop and/or expand their specialist/niche eating, drinking and commercial leisure offer, to complement the city centre's role and attraction within the wider study area, as well as to maintain and grow tourist and visitor trips and spin-off spend.
- 13.42 Having assessed the broad shopping/leisure patterns and need for new retail and commercial leisure floorspace and uses across the sub-Region, the following provides a more detailed assessment of the need and physical capacity for new floorspace in the three identified geographic areas – namely the 'Norwich Urban Area', 'Rural Broadland' and 'Rural South Norfolk'.

Norwich Urban Area (NUA)

- 13.43 The following sets out our key findings and recommendations as to the quantitative and qualitative need for new retail and leisure provision in the main centres and shopping locations

which form part of the defined 'Norwich Urban Area' (NUA). The NUA principally comprises Norwich City Centre, but also includes Anglia Square, a number of district centres and out-of-centre shopping locations (see Plan 2).

- 13.44 The quantitative need assessment set out in Section 12 (Table 12.11) identified the potential capacity for between 39,395 sqm – 52,186 sqm net of new comparison goods floorspace in the NUA at 2016, based on the 'lower' (+3.8%) and 'higher' (+4.3%) annual spend growth projections. For convenience goods retailing, there is a projected capacity for 15,694 sqm net of new floorspace based on the average turnover for a smaller convenience/discount store, or 5,231 sqm net assuming a larger superstore format.

Norwich City Centre

- 13.45 Norwich City Centre has an attractive, mainly pedestrianised, shopping environment, with architecture dating back to the medieval period. It is dominated by its Cathedral and Medieval Castle, and the River Wensum. Its unique historic identity and character attracts tourists and visitors throughout the year.
- 13.46 The city fulfils an important role and function as a Regional Centre, as defined by the emerging East of England Plan. As Sections 5 and 6 of this study demonstrate, the critical mass and quality of the city centre's retail and leisure offer means that it is drawing shoppers and trade from an extensive catchment area, spreading across Norfolk and the wider East of England region.

Qualitative Need

- 13.47 Our qualitative assessment of the City Centre (see Section 6) has identified a significant strength and depth to its shopping and leisure offer, and environment. Some of the main strengths identified include the following:
- It is currently placed 5th in the national ranking of shopping locations.
 - Norwich's total estimated retail, leisure and service business floorspace is significantly greater than for Ipswich and Cambridge.
 - Its retail offer is anchored by six department store operators, including major nationals (such as House of Fraser and John Lewis), along with local independent operator Jarrolds.
 - It has two large managed shopping centres - Castle Mall (opened in 1993) and Chapelfield (opened in 2005).
 - Its offer is balanced by a number of smaller specialist shopping arcades (e.g. Royal Arcade) and streets (e.g. 'Norwich Lanes' area).

- It has a good mix of comparison goods and fashion retailers, and independent/ specialist and national multiple retailers.
 - Norwich Market is an important generator of trips and also comprises a number of convenience/food stalls. The market place has recently benefited from significant new investment and modernisation.
 - The city centre has a good leisure offer and strong evening economy. There are national and independent bars, restaurants and cafés located across the centre, with a particular concentration of uses and activity along St Benedict's Street and Orford Hill
 - The city centre also has a strong commercial leisure offer, comprising a bingo hall, bowling alley and four cinemas. The largest 14-screen Odeon Cinema is located adjacent to Riverside Retail Park, and also comprises a strong mix of commercial leisure uses.
 - Vacancy levels in the centre are currently below the national average.
 - Market demand from retailer and leisure operators for space in the City Centre remains relatively strong, even since the opening of Chapelfield.
 - According to published figures Norwich has recorded requirements from 90 retail and leisure operators, which is higher than for Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, but lower than for Cambridge (with 175 requirements).
 - Prime Zone A Rental Levels are currently estimated to be c.£2,260 per sqm and yields currently stand at 5.5%. There was an uplift in rental values from c.£2,150 per sqm in 2005/06 following the opening of Chapelfield
- 13.48 Market confidence and interest in Norwich as a location for new investment and development appears to be strong. This is a positive indication of the relative strength and attraction of the city centre as a shopping and leisure location, and the extent of its catchment area. This is also confirmed by the generally positive responses to the in-centre survey, in which a relatively high proportion of people rated the city's range and choice of shops and services as being "good".
- 13.49 The strong level of current market interest and demand for representation in the city centre also needs to be considered in the context of the recent opening of Chapelfield. This major new scheme has inevitably resulted in a period of readjustment in shopping patterns, footfall and retail activity across the city centre. Nevertheless, despite this period of readjustment, our healthcheck did not identify any significant clusters of vacant units across the city centre to indicate that certain shopping streets/areas are failing in terms of their overall vitality and viability.
- 13.50 However we did identify some ten vacant units in Castle Mall and our research shows that the number of vacant units has increased from five in 2005. This is partly explained by the opening

of Chapelfield which resulted in the relocation of a number of retailers from Castle Mall (including The Pier and Officers Club). Nevertheless, the proactive management and letting of this shopping centre will help to limit any significant increase in vacancies over time, particularly if smaller units can be reconfigured to provide the larger space that modern retailers require. We recommend that the Council closely monitor the potential changes in vacancy levels and footfall across the city centre as a whole, and in specific shopping streets/areas, to help identify and respond to the potential impact of existing and new retail development and investment over time.

13.51 Although Norwich City Centre is clearly a strong shopping and leisure destination, we have also identified a number of apparent weaknesses and threats to the city's retail and leisure offer which we recommend should be addressed over the LDF period. For example:

- The pedestrian linkages and integration between Chapelfield and the rest of the city centre's shopping areas could be improved
- Riverside Retail Park is located close to the railway station. It comprises A1 retail uses (although it is conditioned to exclude "bulky goods" retailing) and a large Morrisons foodstore. However the scheme is a considerable walking distance from the city centre and 'essentially functions as a car-based shopping destination with limited 'linked trips' between the two shopping locations. For example, the in-centre survey confirms that only 8% of visitors to the retail park regularly combine their trip to Riverside with the rest of the city centre and 43% never carry out 'linked trips'. We therefore recommend that the Council examines the potential to strengthen the linkages between the two shopping locations, by promoting (where possible) safer, more attractive pedestrian linkages and stronger public transport connections.
- The in-centre survey also highlighted that some people are discouraged from visiting the city centre in the evening as they "feel unsafe". Steps should therefore be taken to improve and publicise/market the improved the safety, security and policing of the city centre in the evenings. The City Council should also consider the potential for identifying and creating specific evening leisure 'quarters' that cater for different age groups, ranging from the youth market, through to families and over-50's. This should be incorporated into a wider vision and strategy for the City Centre as part of a recommended Area Action Plan and/or masterplan.
- Although the quality of the city centre's environment is generally good and rated highly by respondents to the in-centre survey, there are areas which would benefit from investment. For example, St Stephens Street is not pedestrianised and suffers from significant pedestrian-traffic conflict, as well as tired and dated shop frontages. The more run-down areas of the city centre should therefore be priorities for new investment.

- 13.52 Nevertheless, the low vacancy rates benchmarked against the relatively strong demand for representation in the city centre indicates that there is still the potential to strengthen and increase the quantum and quality of Norwich's retail and leisure floorspace and offer.

Quantitative Need

- 13.53 The quantitative need assessment set out in Section 12 (see Table 12.9) identified the potential capacity for 16,147 sqm net of new comparison goods floorspace for the city centre (this includes Anglia Square which we consider in more detail below) by 2011. This city centre capacity is forecast to increase to 40,001 sqm net by 2016 (and 67,918 sqm net at 2021). This represents a substantial quantum of floorspace capacity. However, it is important to restate that these capacity forecasts are not prescriptive and should not be considered as a definitive figure or threshold for future allocations and/or development.
- 13.54 For convenience goods, our forecasts indicate the potential capacity for new modern superstore floorspace (trading at an average sales density equivalent to a Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Waitrose) in the Norwich Urban Area (NUA) of 3,567 sqm net in 2011, rising to 5,199 sqm net in 2016 and 6,981 sqm net in 2021. Given the qualitative need identified for new convenience goods floorspace in the City Centre, we recommend that new foodstore development should be concentrated in Norwich City Centre first, in accordance with PPS6.
- 13.55 Currently, Anglia Square represents the most suitable, viable and available sequential opportunity to meet the identified need for new convenience and comparison goods floorspace in the City Centre. We consider the potential for redevelopment in more detail below.

Potential Opportunity Sites

- 13.56 Working with the City Council we have carried out a high level assessment of potential sequentially preferable sites in the city centre. This has highlighted a number of potential opportunities that could be suitable for new retail, leisure and mixed use floorspace over the LDF period to help meet some of the identified capacity. These potential development sites are described in more detail in Appendix 10 and we consider that the following provide the most suitable and viable locations for new retail and leisure floorspace at the present time (in addition to Anglia Square):
- (i) Norwich Union Offices (Appendix 10, Site 2)
 - (ii) Westlegate (Appendix 10, Site 3).
 - (iii) Ber Street / Rouen Road (Appendix 10, Site 4).

- 13.57 Clearly more detailed appraisals are required to test the viability, suitability and availability of these sites for new development, and their 'physical capacity' to accommodate new retail floorspace and a mix of other uses (including, leisure, residential, cultural and office floorspace). Amongst other issues, this would need to cover financial appraisals, traffic and highways assessments, land assembly and the potential need for the City Council to use its Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to provide any new development with greater street frontage.
- 13.58 In this context we recommend a more joined-up approach to the redevelopment of the three sites, as we consider that they could (in combination) go some way to meeting the identified need for new retail and leisure floorspace in the city centre up to 2016. This is in addition to the emerging proposals for the redevelopment of Anglia Square (which we consider in more detail below) and other identified schemes in and around the city centre (such as Hall Road District Centre). In our view the potential redevelopment of Westlegate in particular also provides the opportunity to strengthen the retail circuit in the Primary Retail Area between Castle Mall and Chapelfield.
- 13.59 We have not as part of this study carried out an assessment of the physical capacity of the three potential development areas to accommodate new retail-led mixed use development, or identified the scale of development that could be appropriate and feasible on each site area. We recommend that this should be carried out as part of a more detailed AAP and/or planning and development brief for the three sites. Nevertheless, if these sites are suitable, viable and available for new development then they would clearly go some way to meeting the identified capacity for new comparison goods retailing in the city centre over the LDF period, in addition to the proposed Anglia Square redevelopment.

Anglia Square

- 13.60 The Anglia Square/ Magdalen Street / St Augustines Street area is located to the north of the City Centre and is identified as a large District Centre by the adopted Local Plan (see Section 7). The Northern City Area is one of the most deprived areas in the City and is the Council's prime target for regeneration. The Council is preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the Northern City Centre Area to help to stimulate and coordinate the expected large scale change in the area and help the area realise its potential. The proposed redevelopment of Anglia Square is therefore integral to the regeneration of this area.
- 13.61 This shopping location currently functions as a secondary retail area and is separated from the city centre in terms of its character, offer and environment, although it does benefit from good accessibility by bus, car and foot. The centre currently comprises a mix of low order value retailers and is anchored by Roys of Wroxham - an independently operated regional store - along

with Poundstretcher, Iceland and a mix of smaller independent and ethnic retailers. The shopping and built environment is poor and dated, despite recent investment in the public realm, and the centre is failing to fulfil its role as an important District Centre. For example, vacancy levels in the centre (estimated to be 17.2% of total floorspace), are significantly higher than the national average (10.5%) and it also has a significant quantum of vacant office space.

- 13.62 The centre is clearly in need of significant new investment and development to help maintain and enhance its overall vitality and viability as a place to live, work, shop and visit for a mix of uses and activities. This need is confirmed by the responses to the in-centre survey. The centre is currently designated in the Local Plan for significant mixed use development and a threshold for additional retail floorspace of 4,900 sqm net has been identified. The framework for the redevelopment of Anglia Square will be provided by the AAP currently being prepared by the Council for the regeneration of the Northern City Centre area.
- 13.63 In our judgement Anglia Square represents a priority sequential area for new retail development. It will help to extend scale and quality of the city centre's overall retail offer, and to promote the pedestrian linkages to St Augustine's Street. The attraction, catchment and commercial viability of a new retail-led mixed use development in this area will depend on the provision of a modern foodstore to anchor the scheme's wider retail, leisure and service offer. We consider that a large foodstore will provide the necessary critical mass of floorspace and offer to help generate significant frequent trips, footfall and spend to help underpin the vitality and viability of the centre as a whole.
- 13.64 Our capacity assessment has identified the potential for 3,567 sqm net of new convenience goods floorspace in the Norwich Urban Area (NUA) in 2011, rising to 5,199 sqm net in 2016 and 6,981 sqm net in 2021. In our judgement there is both a qualitative and quantitative need for a large foodstore at Anglia Square to help anchor its redevelopment. In the context of the forecast need up to 2011 and 2016, there would appear to be the potential for a store with a critical mass of convenience goods retailing of circa 3,000 – 4,000 sqm net. To place this in context, this quantum of floorspace, in a sequentially preferable location, would be comparable to the Morrisons store at Riverside Retail Park (3,670 sqm net) and the Sainsbury's at Longwater (3,202 sqm net).

Other District Centres

- 13.65 Section 8 sets out our detailed qualitative assessment of the relative role, performance and attraction of the main district centres in the NUA (excluding Anglia Square). Those centres in the City Council's area, ranked in terms of their total floorspace, are Bowthorpe, Distillery

Square/Dereham Road, Eaton, Plumstead Road, Earlham House, Larkman, Drayton Road and Aylsham Road (also see Plan 3).

- 13.66 In general we found that the NUA's District Centres are performing well and appear to be vital and viable based on a range of key performance indicators. For example, there were no vacant units in six out of eight of the centres we audited and only one vacancy in the other two centres (i.e. Plumstead Road and Earlham House).
- 13.67 The District Centres vary considerably in terms of the scale and quality of their retail offer and environments, and the catchments they serve. They predominantly meet the everyday convenience ('top-up'), service, leisure and community needs of their local resident populations. However, those centres which have larger foodstores as anchors to their retail offer - namely Eaton (Waitrose), Bowthorpe (Roys) and Aylsham Road (Lidl) - are drawing shoppers from a much wider catchment for 'main food' shopping purchases than those centres with smaller convenience foodstores – namely Aylsham Road (Co-Op), Plumstead Road (Somerfield) and Plumstead Road (Tesco Express).
- 13.68 Although the NUA's District Centres appear to be vital and viable, we consider that some of them would, to varying degrees, benefit from investment and qualitative improvements to their overall offer and environments. For example, the potential 'gaps' in their offer include:
- **Environment** - The centres are generally well maintained, but we consider that some would benefit from improvements and investment in the public realm (including for example, Aylsham Road, Drayton Road, Plumstead Road, Larkman and Earlham House). This could include, for example, hard and soft landscaping, updated shop fascias, better street furniture and signage.
 - **Financial Services** - Distillery Square/Dereham Road, Drayton Road and Larkman would all benefit from the provision of additional financial services, such as banks.
 - **Community Uses** - All of the centres could be improved by the provision of more community uses, such as health centres, libraries, job centres and one-stop shops. This would enable residents to use these services locally, rather than having to travel to Norwich city centre.
 - **Accessibility** – It is also important that all the District Centres are accessible by a choice of transport modes and that pedestrian linkages to surrounding residential areas are maintained and enhanced. Pedestrian crossings are particularly important for some centres (such as Alysham Road and Drayton Road) where stand-alone anchor foodstores are separated from the rest of the centre by busy roads. In this context there may be potential to improve the attraction and safety of the linkages between the main shopping areas.

- **Parking** - We recommend that short-term car parking is maintained and enhanced in the NUA's District Centres to encourage passing car-borne trade to stop and use the local shops and facilities. We consider that Drayton Road, Larkman and Plumstead Road are particularly reliant on passing car-borne trade to help underpin their overall vitality and viability.
- 13.69 Overall, although the District Centres are vital and viable, we recommend that the respective Councils regularly monitor their relative health and performance to help identify an early warning signs of decline where intervention (either in terms of policy or investment) may be needed.
- 13.70 In terms of new development and/or expansion of Norwich District Centres in the NUA, we are only currently aware of the opportunity to extend Aylsham Road District Centre and proposals for a new District Centre to the south of the City Centre to serve the needs of the local resident population. Both of these opportunities are identified by the adopted Local Plan (Policies SH012 and SH013).
- 13.71 It is proposed that the new Hall Road District Centre (see Appendix 10, Site 10), on the former Bally Shoes site at the junction of Sandy Lane and Hall Road, will comprise of a foodstore and least three smaller units of not more than 500 sqm net providing local services. We understand that the landowners are currently drawing up plans for the site and are working with the Council at the pre-application stage. We consider that there could be an opportunity to link the proposed scheme with the Hall Road Retail Park to the north, which has the potential for future extension (see Appendix 10, Site 9).
- 13.72 Three of Broadland's district centres also fall within the NUA, as follows:
- **Old Catton** provides essential convenience and service offer to its local population and is easily accessible from neighbouring residential areas by a range of transport modes. The Somerfield supermarket is an important anchor to the centre. Overall the centre is vital and viable but we consider it would benefit from investment in its environment and public realm.
 - **Dussindale** is dominated by a Sainsbury's foodstore. There are also several smaller units with retailers including Choices Video, Barnados Charity Shop and Sharps Bedrooms. These uses are supplemented by a NHS Health Centre and a Community Centre.
 - **Blue Boar Lane (Sprowston)** is designated as a potential district centre in the Broadland Local Plan, as it does not currently fulfil the role of a district centre. Its retail offer essentially consists of a Tesco Extra superstore, although there are several additional retail units within the store including Johnsons Dry Cleaners, Timpsons, Going Places and The Hair Shop.

- 13.73 If Dussindale and Blue Boar Lane are to perform the role of district centres then they need to continue to provide a range of shops and services for the local community. It should be ensured that these additional smaller units are maintained, so that these centres do not evolve as freestanding out-of-centre supermarkets.

Out-of-Centre Retailing

- 13.74 The main out-of-centre retailing in the sub-Region is concentrated in the Norwich Urban Area (NUA), as illustrated by Plans 6 and 7. It includes all the major retail parks – namely Hall Road, Sprowston, Sweet Briar and Longwater retail parks. Of these Sprowston RP and a small part of Sweet Briar RP are located in Broadland District and Longwater is the only retail park in South Norfolk.
- 13.75 We estimate that the comparison goods floorspace in stand-alone retail warehouses and retail parks in the NUA comprises c.63,634 sqm net (see Appendix 8, Table 13). This compares with the c.197,834 sqm net of non-food space estimated for all the major centres in the NUA (see Appendix 8, Table 12), of which the city centre accounts for the majority of this floorspace (180,713 sqm net).
- 13.76 Based on the existing permission for new mezzanine floors at Longwater Retail Park, which would add 12,906 sqm net to the scheme's existing sales area, and the B&Q at Hall Road for 7,610 sqm net, we do not consider that there is capacity up to 2016 for new out-of-centre retailing in the sub-region and NUA.

NUA: Overview

- 13.77 The scale of new development and investment in the City Centre over the last 10-15 years, including the major schemes of Castle Mall and Chapelfield, has clearly helped to maintain and strengthen Norwich's important role as a Regional Centre.
- 13.78 Looking forward, there is significant forecast capacity for new retail and leisure floorspace up to 2011 and 2016 in the NUA and Norwich City Centre in particular. At the same time, the new development in the city centre has not significantly 'dampened' the demand from retailers and leisure operators for representation in the city and the wider NUA.
- 13.79 The need to 'marry up' the forecast economic capacity for growth with the potential physical capacity for new development in the city centre therefore represents a significant challenge for the City Council over the LDF period.

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- 13.80 In this context, the planned redevelopment of Anglia Square and the proposed Hall Road District Centre represent priorities for new investment and development in the NUA up to 2011, in accordance with policy. Anglia Square is located in the Northern City Area, which is one of the most deprived areas in the City and is the Council's prime target for regeneration. The Northern City Centre AAP has specifically been prepared by the Council to help to stimulate and coordinate the expected large-scale change in the area and help the Northern City Centre realise its potential.
- 13.81 The potential emerging development opportunities identified in the City Centre also represent priorities for new investment up to 2016. However, more detailed work is clearly required to assess the availability and deliverability of these sites for new (potentially joined-up) retail-led mixed use development, as well as the scale and quality of new retail and leisure space that could potentially be accommodated. There are a number of options available to the City Council to help co-ordinate and bring forward existing and new development opportunities in the City Centre. These include an Area Action Plan for the Southern City Area, similar to that being prepared for the Northern City Area (including Anglia Square), and/or a planning and development brief that covers the three identified opportunity sites.
- 13.82 In the absence of this more detailed analysis, we nevertheless consider that the emerging schemes and opportunity sites identified above could, in combination, have the potential to meet a significant (although unspecified) quantum of the forecast capacity for new comparison and convenience goods floorspace in the NUA up to 2016. However, if new city centre sites are not suitable and viable for new retail and mixed use development up to 2016, then the City Council will need to consider alternative options to accommodate the forecast floorspace capacity. In the context of PPS6 these options could include, for example, the potential for:
- The extension of the primary shopping area or city centre to help bring forward other potential development sites to accommodate the capacity for new retail floorspace and other main town centre uses;
 - Changes to the role and status of lower level centres; and/or
 - The expansion of existing edge and out-of-centre retail schemes and/or the identification of new edge and out-of-centre locations for development.
- 13.83 Although the consolidation of the City Centre's retail offer up to 2016 is a priority, we consider that the redevelopment of Anglia Square represents an early opportunity to provide a greater quantum of new comparison and convenience goods floorspace to help meet the forecast capacity over the short to medium term, dependent on the level of market interest. The centre is currently designated in the Local Plan for significant mixed use development and a threshold for

additional retail floorspace of 4.900 sqm net has been identified. However, for the reasons set out above, we consider that there could be potential to increase the scale of additional new retail floorspace, provided that it does not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the city centre as a whole, in accordance with PPS6.

- 13.84 In the context of the proposed Anglia Square redevelopment, and the more detailed appraisal of the other potential identified and emerging sequential sites in the City Centre, we do not consider that (at this stage) there is a need to consider changes to the role and status of lower level centres; the expansion of existing out-of-centre retail schemes; and/or the identification of new out-of-centre locations for development.

Broadland Rural Area

- 13.85 The 'Broadland Rural Area' defined for the purpose of the quantitative need assessment comprises Acle, Aylsham and Reepham town centres. The District Centres of Old Catton, Dussindale and Sprowston have been classified as being part of the 'Norwich Urban Area'.
- 13.86 According to the quantitative need assessment (see Section 12, Table 12.11) there is limited forecast potential capacity for between 209 sqm – 278 sqm net of new comparison goods floorspace up to 2011, based on the 'lower' (+3.8%) and 'higher' (+4.3%) annual spend growth assumptions. This capacity increases to 555 sqm – 712 sqm net by 2016 (and 956 sqm – 1,226 sqm net by 2021). For convenience goods retailing, there is a no projected capacity for new floorspace up to 2021, due to the new Tesco commitment in Aylsham of c.1,421 sqm net (see below) and the limited forecast growth in convenience goods spend over the forecast period.
- 13.87 The following briefly sets out our main findings and recommendations as to the current role, attraction and performance of these centres, and specifically their vitality and viability as shopping and leisure locations.

Aylsham Town Centre

- 13.88 Aylsham town centre is located some 25km north of Norwich on the A140 in the Bure Valley. It is a historic market town and is identified as a Town Centre in the adopted Broadland Local Plan (May 2006). It mainly serves the convenience and service needs of its local resident population and wider rural hinterland, as well as performing an important role as an attractive and popular tourist attraction in Broadland District
- 13.89 The centre is characterised by its historic buildings, with the attractive Market Place at its heart. It comprises some 67 units trading from c.5,274 sqm net of retail and leisure floorspace, with only

a 4% vacancy level. It also hosts a popular twice-weekly market and a monthly farmers' market. These are significant attractions and should be maintained and promoted, as they help to underpin the centre's overall vitality and viability.

13.90 Aylsham has a relatively good convenience offer which is currently anchored by Budgens and Somerfield, along with a number of smaller independent and specialist convenience stores. The centre's important role and function as a food shopping destination will be further strengthened by the opening of a new Tesco supermarket of 1,672 sqm net in 2008 opposite the train station, on an edge-of-centre site. We understand from the local planning authority that this new store is also intended to help promote the use of the station car park and promote stronger linkages with the rest of the town centre, particularly on market days when parking is not possible in Market Place. There is no identified capacity for additional convenience goods retailing over and above the Tesco commitment (see Table 12.13).

13.91 This historic town centre is largely covered by a Conservation Area and comprises over 200 Listed Buildings. This limits the potential for new development and investment in the heart of the centre, and has resulted in new applications and permissions (such as the Tesco store) in edge-of-centre locations. This should be considered in the context of the forecast capacity for new comparison goods floorspace in the town centre of 181 sqm net in 2011, rising to 481 sqm net by 2016 (and 829 sqm net at 2021) as set out in Table 12.9.

13.92 We advise the Council to monitor the potential implications of this new edge-of-centre development on the overall vitality and viability of Aylsham town centre (particularly in terms of footfall, linked trips and spend) before considering the merits of any potential new applications for edge-of-centre retailing over the LDF period.

Acle Town Centre

13.93 Acle town centre is located to the east of Norwich on the A47 and is identified as a District Centre in the adopted Broadland Local Plan (May 2006). It comprises 15 retail and service businesses trading from a total floorspace of c.2,100 sqm. It has a strong service provision, but a limited retail offer. Its shopping is anchored by a small Co-Op store in the centre, along with an edge-of-centre Budgens supermarket. It mainly functions as a shopping and service destination for its local residents, as well as catering for passing car-borne shoppers and tourists. The centre benefits from good accessibility, parking and a quality "village" environment that should be maintained and enhanced.

Reepham Town Centre

- 13.94 Reepham is an attractive and historic town serving a rural population to the north west of Norwich. It comprises a total sales area of 1,706 sqm net and provides a range of everyday convenience retailers to meet the frequent 'top-up' shopping needs of its local population. However the larger Spar store in the centre is small and outdated by modern standards, and there could therefore be the potential to improve and/or extend the centre's core convenience goods offer.
- 13.95 The centre also comprises a range of service and financial businesses, along with several specialist comparison retailers, including a bridal boutique, antiques and gift shops. Reepham also has a good provision of community services including a library and community police station, and its overall attraction is further underpinned by a mid-week market.
- 13.96 Reepham's town centre is covered by a Conservation Area and the majority of the buildings and shop fronts are well maintained and in-keeping with the historic environment. As for Aylsham, there are limited opportunities for new investment and development in the town centre, due to its historic character, and there is also minimal forecast capacity for additional new retail floorspace up to 2016. Nevertheless we recommend that the local planning authority examine in more detail the potential to modernise and strengthen the quality of the town's everyday convenience and service offer, whilst building on its more specialist comparison goods offer. However, any potential improvement in its foodstore offer would need to be balanced by the need to protect the centre's unique environment and character. In this context, we recommend the preparation of an Area Action Plan for the town centre as part of the LDF process.

South Norfolk Rural Area

- 13.97 The South Norfolk Rural Area essentially comprises all the main town centres in South Norfolk District, namely Diss, Wymondham and Harleston. Please note that we were not commissioned to assess the smaller centres of Loddon, Long Stratton and Hingham, as these are covered in some detail by the 2004 South Norfolk Study.
- 13.98 According to our quantitative need assessment (see Section 12) there is the potential 'theoretical' capacity for between 969 sqm – 1,468 sqm net of new comparison goods floorspace in 2011, based on the 'lower' (+3.8%) and 'higher' (+4.3%) annual spend growth assumptions. This capacity is forecast to increase to 3,400 sqm – 4,530 sqm net by 2016 and 6,170 sqm – 8,090 sqm net at 2021.

- 13.99 As for the Broadland Rural Area, there is a no projected capacity for new convenience goods floorspace up to 2021. For the South Norfolk Rural Area this is explained by the limited forecast growth in convenience goods spend over the forecast period and the fact that existing floorspace appears to be under-trading benchmarked against company averages. There are also a small quantum of convenience goods floorspace (602 sqm net) with planning permission, namely a Co-op extension at Costessey and small supermarket at Mulbarton.
- 13.100 Table 13.4 below sets out the forecast capacity for new comparison and convenience goods floorspace in the main (defined) centres in the South Norfolk Rural Area up to 2021.

Table 13.4: Floorspace Capacity in the Main Centres of South Norfolk Rural Area (sqm net)

Centre		2011	2016	2021
DISS:	Comparison Goods:	982	2,361	4,492
	Convenience Goods:	-948 / -2,845	-712 / -2,136	-481 / -1,444
WYMONDHAM:	Comparison Goods:	326	860	1,478
	Convenience Goods:	102 / 305	118 / 355	136 / 407
HARLESTON	Comparison Goods:	149	398	682
	Convenience Goods:	221 / 664	247 / 741	273 / 820

Notes: The floorspace ranges for convenience goods reflect the use of a higher average sales density for a major foodstore operator (resulting in lower forecast capacity) and a lower sales density for smaller supermarkets/discount foodstores (resulting in a higher floorspace capacity)

- 13.101 Please note that our capacity forecasts for the three defined town centres are lower than those set out in the 2004 South Norfolk Retail Study. This is partly explained by the different methodologies and assumptions used by the 2004 study compared with our approach. For example, we have assumed a higher sales efficiency growth rate of +2% per annum, compared with the +1.5% growth tested in the 2004 study. It is also explained by new developments and commitments across the wider study area since 2004, which will have further reduced the headroom capacity for new comparison and convenience goods floorspace. For example, Chapelfield has reinforced Norwich City Centre's share of comparison goods spend since it opened in 2005.
- 13.102 The following briefly sets out our main findings and recommendations as to the current role, attraction and performance of the main centres in the South Norfolk Rural Area, along with our assessment of their future vitality and viability as shopping and leisure destinations.

Diss

- 13.103 Diss is located some 32 km to the south of Norwich and is the main commercial centre in South Norfolk District. With a total of 140 units trading from c.15,576 sqm net in the town centre alone,

including service businesses and vacant premises, it is also the largest centre in South Norfolk, and benefits from relatively good accessibility and parking provision. Its retail offer is further supplemented by some thirty non-food retailers and service businesses located outside of the town centre boundary, comprising an estimated 6,000 sqm net, and including DIY, furniture stores and a florist. The town centre also has a popular weekly Friday market and auction.

- 13.104 The new Tesco store (2,825 sqm net) and recently extended Morrisons foodstore (3,433 sqm net) to the south of the shopping area anchor the store's convenience and food offer. These two stores comprise a total net convenience goods floorspace of 6,258 sqm, which is equivalent to over one-third of the town's total sales area. There is no forecast capacity for new convenience goods retailing up to 2021.
- 13.105 Diss also has an important role as a comparison goods shopping destination for its local catchment population. Based on our qualitative assessment we consider that there is a need to improve the range and depth of its non-food offer. There could be sufficient market interest to support new development and investment in the town centre, if larger more modern units can be provided. The 'gap' in the centre's fashion and A3/A4 offer is specifically highlighted by the findings of the in-centre survey.
- 13.106 In our judgement any improvement to the centre's overall non-food and eating/drinking offer would help to maintain and enhance its market share of shoppers and spend over the LDF period, as well as strengthen its overall vitality and viability as a shopping and leisure location. This should also be considered in the context of increasing provision in Norwich and planned improvements to other centres in the region.
- 13.107 As Table 13.4 shows, our quantitative assessment has identified the potential capacity for c.982 sqm net of additional comparison goods retail floorspace in 2011, rising to 2,631 sqm net by 2016 (and 4,492 sqm net in 2021).
- 13.108 The identification and allocation of development sites to meet this forecast capacity would normally be constrained by the fact that the town centre is largely covered by a Conservation Area and there are a number of attractive historic and Listed Buildings. However in this case the South Norfolk Local Plan (Policy DIS 6) allocates an area of 4.14 ha south of Park Road for the development of a combination of small-scale food / discount retailing (of between 743 – 929 sqm gross), non food 'bulky goods' retailing and leisure uses.
- 13.109 The policy states that the site should be developed in a comprehensive manner rather than incrementally. The eastern part of the allocated site has since been developed as part of the Morrison's foodstore extension and the undeveloped site amounts to circa 1.6 hectares. In our

judgement the remainder of the allocated site would help to meet the broad quantum of new floorspace identified for the town centre up to 2016.

Wymondham

- 13.110 Wymondham is located some 16 km to the south west of Norwich City Centre and is the second largest shopping centre in South Norfolk. Like Diss, it is also a very attractive and popular historic market town, characterised by small independent retailers and services, along with a popular Friday market and monthly farmer's market.
- 13.111 The defined town centre has a total estimated floorspace of 8,471 sqm net, comprising 102 units. The centre has low and falling vacancy levels and there are no obvious signs of decline. Service businesses account for c.36% of this total floorspace, which is significantly higher than the national average of some 21.5%. These facilities help to underpin the role and function of the centre, which predominantly serves the day-to-day needs to its local resident and rural catchment population.
- 13.112 We estimate that there is also some 3,773 sqm net of retail floorspace located outside of the town centre boundary. The majority of this floorspace comprises the out-of-centre Waitrose. The remainder includes the Budgens and Spar stores, along with a number of other comparison and service units.
- 13.113 Based on our qualitative need assessment (see Section 10), we consider that Wymondham has an under-provision of convenience floorspace. The existing Somerfield store of 300 sqm net is small by modern standards and does not act as a strong anchor and generator of trips. However, the qualitative need for a stronger convenience goods offer in the town centre needs to be considered in the context of the larger modern out-of-centre Waitrose store and the fact that there is only a moderate forecast quantitative need for between 118 – 355 sqm net of new floorspace by 2016, depending on the format and sales performance of the new convenience goods space.
- 13.114 We therefore recommend that a more detailed assessment be carried out to determine the market 'appetite' from other foodstore operators for representation in the town centre and, more significantly, whether there is a suitable and viable development site that could sensitively accommodate a new foodstore in Wymondham. As part of this, there is also an identified quantitative need for 860 sqm net of new comparison goods retailing in 2016. This could be provided as part of a small-scale mixed use development in the town centre, along with the food retailing, if a suitable site can be identified. Alternatively, an edge or out-of-centre location may be appropriate, provided that new development does not undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre. In this context we recommend that the local planning authority investigates the

potential allocation of a suitable site or sites through the production of the forthcoming Local Development Framework Site Specific Policies development plan document.

- 13.115 The potential capacity and need for new retailing in Wymondham town centre also has to be considered in the context of the different options for new residential development across the sub-region. As far as we understand, the different options could result in up to 3,000 – 8,000 new homes around Wymondham. This would benefit existing shops, businesses and uses in the town centre as a whole, as well as potentially generating capacity for new shops and facilities. We consider the implications of the potential new residential development growth options in more detail below.

Harleston

- 13.116 Harleston is an historic town and comprises some 82 units trading from a total net floorspace of 5,045 sqm. The town's convenience goods offer is anchored by a Budgens supermarket of 743 sqm net, which is an important generator of frequent trips to the centre and 'spin-off' trade. This anchor store is supplemented by a range of high quality independent convenience retailers and service businesses, which also mainly serve the day-to-day needs of the centre's local resident catchment, along with a Wednesday market and monthly farmer's market. Outside of the town centre boundary there are also five retail units including a bath and tile showroom, a factory shop, a kitchen store and a motorcycle shop. These units total 1,276 sqm of comparison goods floorspace.
- 13.117 The town's service business offer (both personal services and eating/drinking uses) play an important role in Harleston's overall role and function. It is therefore important that the centre maintains and enhances its non-food and service provision in order to fulfil its current role in South Norfolk's network of centres.
- 13.118 Our capacity assessment has identified the potential quantitative need for 398 sqm net of new comparison goods retailing by 2016. There is also a forecast capacity for between 247 - 741 sqm net of convenience goods floorspace, depending on the format and sales performance of the new floorspace. In the context of this forecast growth, we consider that the centre, and Budgens in particular, would benefit from the modernisation and extension of its existing convenience goods offer, if possible.
- 13.119 Overall we recommend that, in the context of PPS6, the identified need for new floorspace up to 2016 be accommodated in the town centre first. This could be achieved through the potential expansion of existing retail units, or through infill development. If the expansion of existing retailers is not viable, then it may be necessary for the local planning authority to identify and

allocate potential sites to accommodate the identified need as part of the LDF process. Given the town's historic character and the potential constraints to new development, it may also be necessary to consider the options for new development on edge-of-centre or existing out-of-centre locations, provided that it does not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole.

Retail Capacity – RSS Housing Allocation Growth Options

- 13.120 In addition to our 'global' and centre capacity assessments, we have also carried out a high level assessment of the potential scale and type of "local" facilities could be needed to serve the various residential growth options identified by the RSS.
- 13.121 The Plan and Table in Appendix 12 set out the different options and the potential locations of the new residential allocation that the client team has identified for high level testing. These allocations are **not** in addition to the populations set out in the modelling exercise and are merely different options for the allocation of growth. Figures discussed below are therefore not in addition to the capacity figures set out in Section 12.
- 13.122 All the growth options are expressed in terms of dwellings and we have converted this to potential new population levels based on appropriate average household size, as agreed with the client team and their demographic unit.
- 13.123 We have then estimated the potential average spend per capita levels and total available expenditure at 2021 only, as we do not have detailed information on the likely phasing of new development over the period 2011 to 2021. All our projections are in line with the quantitative need assessment carried out in Section 12 of this study.
- 13.124 We have modelled the potential need for new convenience and comparison goods floorspace to serve the different residential options. However we do not consider at this stage that the potential population growth arising from the different allocations would be of a size to support significant new comparison goods retailing, as the main need and market demand for this will still be focussed in the sub-region's main centres, specifically Norwich City Centre. Nevertheless, as the growth options are progressed, we recommend that more detailed capacity, market and viability testing be carried out to assess the economic and commercial capacity for new floorspace. Specifically we recommend that the potential development options identified below are tested with developers, retailers and leisure operators to assess their commercial viability.
- 13.125 Based on the growth options provided by the client team it is our understanding that the highest potential allocations could be c.8,000 – 10,000 dwellings. Assuming that these dwellings are

- provided in the same location, then our broad quantitative assessment set out in Appendix 12 indicates that the estimated resultant population of c.18,640 people could generate c.£33m of convenience goods expenditure in 2021 and c.£85-90m of comparison goods expenditure.
- 13.126 If this residual expenditure is converted pro rata into the capacity for new convenience goods floorspace, based on an average sales density of £13,000 per sqm for a large modern foodstore in 2021, then it would be equivalent to c.2,500 sqm net. For comparison goods retailing, based on an average sales density for new floorspace of £7,500 per sqm, we forecast that the potential spend generated by c.8,000 new homes could support up to 11,000 sqm net of new comparison goods retail floorspace.
- 13.127 However, we advise that these headline capacity figures should be treated with caution. Clearly not all the generated expenditure from the new population growth would be directly available to support new floorspace, as a significant proportion of this new spend would go to existing city and town centres, as well as larger foodstores in the main centres and out-of-centre locations in the NUA and, to a lesser extent, the rural areas.
- 13.128 The provision of any new shopping, leisure, community and health uses to serve the different residential growth options will clearly be determined by the location of the proposed growth areas and specifically their proximity to existing city, town and shopping locations. At this 'high level' of analysis we do not consider that it is appropriate to specifically identify an appropriate scale, mix or type of retail uses and floorspace to serve the residential growth areas, as this will evolve as the potential options are defined in more detail.
- 13.129 Nevertheless, based on our high level assessment of the potential location of the different residential growth areas, it is clear that there is potential for a number of the options to strengthen the overall vitality and viability of the sub-region's existing centres and shopping locations. For example, new residential allocations of up to 8,000 new homes around Wymondham could help to support the potential for a new or extended convenience goods offer in the town centre, as discussed above. Furthermore, our analysis indicates that the Waitrose store is currently under-trading and there is, therefore, existing capacity to absorb the spend growth arising from the growth option for Wymondham. In this case, the potential for new convenience and/or comparison goods retailing would be limited in our judgement. Furthermore, we consider that providing new retail floorspace as part of any new residential development could have an adverse impact on the overall vitality and viability of Wymondham town centre.
- 13.130 In our judgement, the other larger residential growth options of circa 8,000 – 10,000 new homes to the South-West, South and North-East of the City Centre (see the Plan in Appendix 12) represent urban extensions. The residual spend and capacity for new floorspace generated by

the resultant population growth should, in our view, be accommodated by the City Centre and existing district centres and shopping locations first, to help underpin their overall vitality and viability. For example, the 'North-East' growth option could be served by Blue Boar Lane, Sprowston. Similarly the option for new homes to the South of the city centre could be served by the proposed Hall Road District Centre, along with the Tesco at Harford Bridge and Waitrose at Eaton. Although more detailed analysis is required, we also consider that the main comparison goods spend generated by these growth options should also be accommodated by existing centres first.

13.131 Nevertheless we also recognise that, to create sustainable communities, there is an option for new shopping, leisure, health, community and other facilities to serve the residential allocations identified. The options for circa 8,000 – 10,000 new homes could, we consider, support a foodstore of circa 1,000 – 1,500 sqm net. This would, in turn, underpin the commercial viability of other uses and facilities as part of a wider development. As a minimum requirement we consider that a range of additional shops, services and activities would be required to meet the day-to-day needs of the local residential population and help promote “sustainable communities”. This could include, for example, newsagents, dry cleaners, banks/financial services, A3/A4/A5 uses, hairdressers, dry cleaners/laundrettes, pharmacies and other convenience retailers, such as bakers and butchers. At this stage we do not, however, consider that the new residential allocations could or should accommodate larger non-food shops, as this could have a detrimental impact on neighbouring centres.

13.132 The different models for new development, with a foodstore as anchor, could take the form of the following:

- A traditional high street;
- A district shopping centre; or
- A foodstore and larger comparison goods units.

13.133 We consider that the second option is probably the most realistic and viable model for new development as part of the “sustainable communities” agenda. The third development model, comprising a foodstore and larger shop units, would represent an attractive commercial option for the market. However, we do not consider that such a development would best meet the aims and objectives of national and regional policy.