

Greater Norwich
Development Partnership

**Greater Norwich
Employment Sites and
Premises Study**

Appendix 2: Norwich City
Centre

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May 2008

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Job number

Job title	Greater Norwich Employment Sites and Premises Study	Job number
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Document title	Appendix 2:Norwich City Centre	File reference
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Document ref

Revision	Date	Filename	Report on Norwich Sites 12.02.08 version 2.doc		
Draft 1	30/05/08	Description	First draft		
			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
		Name	Christopher Tunnell		
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Final Report	01.05.08	Filename	Final Report		
		Description			
			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
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		Filename			
		Description			
			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
		Name			
		Signature			
		Filename			
		Description			
			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
		Name			
		Signature			

Issue Document Verification with Document

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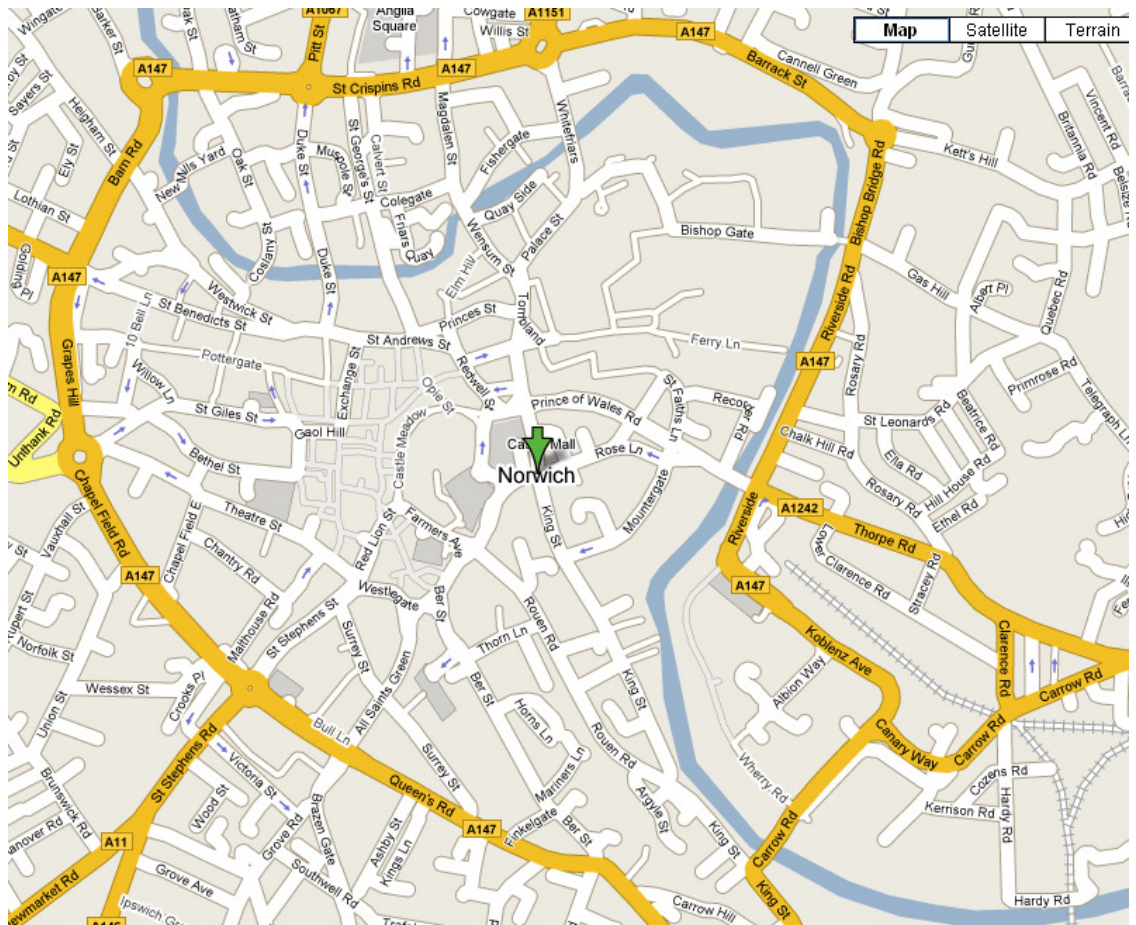
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1 City Centre

1.1 Overview

This comprises sites within Norwich City Centre as designated in the existing City of Norwich local plan. Our defined area comprises the city centre and areas adjacent to the Inner Ring Road and includes the riverside and station area.

Figure 1: Norwich City Centre



The area is the most widely accessible and in national policy (e.g. PPS 6 and PPG 13) and sustainability terms, is the preferred, prime location for a range of mixed uses including offices.

The city centre represents a challenging planning environment because of the combination of development pressures particularly from housing, the constraints of heritage – which is of course also a major asset, the compact nature of the centre and the overall small scale of buildings, blocks and streets. Moreover, while the potential compactness of the city encourages walking, there are also issues of permeability and local access. Most of the recent development has met this challenge well, although much of the 1960s and 1970s developments are less successful.

The City Centre and the wider central area is by definition a mixed use area, but it is possible to identify a number of key current and future office locations, each with specific issues.

For employment uses, the city centre now comprises mostly office uses and some strategically significant industrial users. Locating employment in the city centre is the sequentially preferable option, particularly as the city centre is the most universally accessible location to the largest numbers of residents of Greater Norwich. It also offers the highest level of accessibility by public transport and for walk and cycling modes and employment in the city centre contributes to its overall vitality in line with PPS6. Significant increases in city centre living in the past few years have also led the way in terms of re-establishing the attractiveness of the centre as a convenient place to work, particularly for the growing number of smaller households. The main employment challenges of the centre are to provide modern office accommodation that is competitive with the space recently provided on business parks, especially Broadland. The distribution also needs to be spatially balanced in order to maximise opportunities for all residents.

The attractiveness of the city centre to office occupiers is dependent on the continuing supply of good quality space, including Grade A space. Fortunately Norwich is able to offer sites of the right quality, notably at Whitefriars and Duke Street in the short term where good quality space has already been provided recently. There is some quality older stock and a commitment to this stock by major occupiers such as Norwich Union and Marsh. However, without significant refurbishment, much of the older stock is likely to be on short lets and much is already vacant.

All of the current strategic office locations should be subject to strategic masterplanning exercises to facilitate an appropriate mix of uses, as an element of housing and retail may be appropriate. The key issues are to avoid piecemeal development of these areas for housing and retail uses only and to provide a robust planning framework, using Area Action Plans and Supplementary Planning Guidance as appropriate.

Only a limited proportion of the existing city centre office space can be considered of good quality and there are limited supplies of Grade A space. Relatively little of the existing space contributes much to the city centre environment or is now particularly prestigious for new or existing occupiers. Occupiers are typically looking for modern efficient space which means space that is characterised by larger floorplates, good floor to ceiling heights, effective heating and cooling and external building forms that reflect and make the statement of them as modern, innovative users. They are looking for good access by car and public transport in locations that also characterised by a good pedestrian and walk environment and that offers local amenities and services.

The City Centre contains a wider variety of existing older office buildings many of which appear not to meet modern user requirements, although some are of reasonable quality or have undergone refurbishment. Given the over supply occupiers appear to be consolidating into fewer buildings, although the choice of buildings depends on a range of factors including landlord behaviour and scope for redevelopment and it is difficult to predict which will be retained.

The recent past has however witnessed a resurgence in the attractiveness of the city centre as an office location, with new development and proposals at Whitefriars, Duke Street and Palace Street.

Our judgement is that the future of office employment in the city centre rests on the further provision of modern space in attractive locations, together with the retention of the best of the rest of existing provision. Under a market-led scenario, the following are now the primary office locations:

- The southern office quarter including St Stephens, Surrey Street, Queen's Road including the offices of Norwich Union, Marsh, etc.
- The Cathedral Quarter
- The northern office area in and around Whitefriars, Palace Street, Duke Street and St Crispins

Dependent on the decision on the current Anglia "Calvert" Square proposals the Pitt Street/Botolph Street can be seen as part of the northern area.

The city centre if, of course, very mixed use in character and as suggested by the review there are a large number of areas where office development is appropriate. This includes especially Rose Lane, Prince of Wales Road, Rouen Road, Ber Street and Upper King Street.

We also see a continuing role for smaller scale workshops, offices and incubator space throughout the centre, but especially in the former "industrial" locations such as King Street, Colegate, Ber Street as well as some of the former office areas such Rose Lane and Mountergate.

1.2 Existing Policy

The City of Norwich Local Plan 2004 indicates that major office development will be encouraged anywhere within the City Centre, although the defined Commercial Office sub-area is the key part of the centre at the time. Three sites for possible office development are identified in Policy EMP16 where major office development (over 2,000 square metres gross) will be permitted:

- Botolph Street/Pitt Street (0.6 ha)
- Greyfriars Road/Rose Lane (0.6 ha)
- Whitefriars/Barrack Street (Part NJP) (2.8 ha)

Larger offices are also permitted on other sites within and adjacent to the City Centre and outside the City Centre, in the prime employment areas identified under Policy EMP4, subject to the developer being able to demonstrate an essential operational requirement which cannot be met by development on sites within or on the edge of the City Centre.

Smaller scale office development (under 2,000 square metres gross) are permitted in the City centre, in all employment areas defined in policy and in other locations where it is associated with existing firms already in the area which are expanding or adapting their own activities.

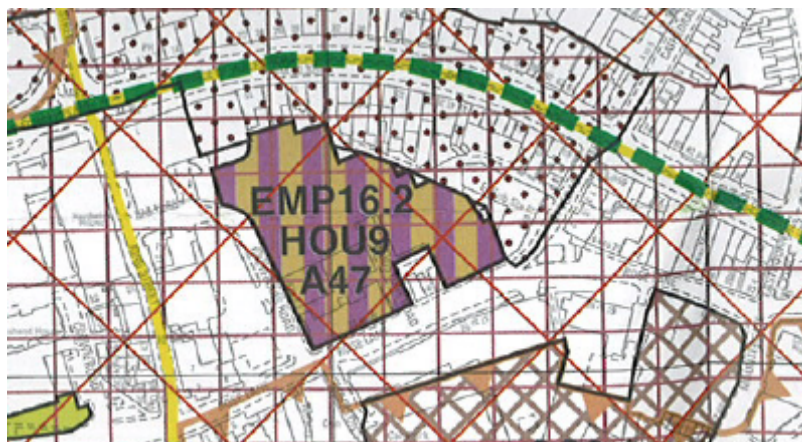
Office development of whatever scale accepted under the above criteria is only permitted where: the office development forms part of an appropriate mix of uses on the site (particularly in the Centre); the development is of a suitable design, scale, height and mass to be compatible with its surroundings; the developer submits a green transport plan, provides an appropriate contribution to meeting the transport requirements of the area and provides for easy pedestrian and cycle access; and provision is made for access for employees and members of the public who are disabled.

City Centre Policy defines a commercial Office Area. This lies to the south of the St Stephens/ Market Place area extending from Rose Lane in the north to Queens Road in the south. It is a densely developed area with numerous office blocks, including the main headquarters offices of Norwich Union, Marsh and Anglia TV. In addition there are pockets of housing and, on the edge of the retail area, the occasional shop unit, public house etc. The historical character of the area was mixed, with considerable domestic scale building but redevelopment means that many of the buildings are now modern and large in scale.

The Plan seeks to maintain this area as the main office employment centre of the City. This objective is a key one in maintaining the City's status as the Regional capital. In addition the Plan envisages some diversification into related service uses and in that context recognises the possible expansion of shopping uses on the edge of the Primary Retail Area.

The main provision for new employment development in the area is, therefore, expressed in policy EMP16, which states that permission for major office development will be granted. It also earmarks one site in this sub-area for possible future office development – at Greyfriars Road/Rose Lane. This site provides for development under the sequential test for major office development requirements, but was also considered appropriate for a mixed use development with housing on the upper floors above a commercial use.

Figure 1: Greyfriars Road/Rose Lane (EMP16.2)



The policy anticipated that the main change sites in the area are likely to be those on Ber Street. Two of the sites identified as potential housing sites are within this area and have potential for a mixed use scheme with office use or other appropriate uses. In addition, it is understood that Archant Print are likely at some stage to vacate their building on Rouen Road and this site is identified as

a potential hotel site, since it would be in a prime location to serve business customers visiting employers in the area.

Realisation of the plan has been as follows:

- Whitefriars has emerged as a major office location.
- Greyfriars Road/Rose Lane has seen significant housing development, but little new significant office space.
- Botolph Street/Pitt Street is subject to current proposals as part of Anglia Square that do not include any firm commitment to office space.
- There has been no new proposals in St Stephens, but the existing buildings remain largely in use.
- An additional major office site has been proposed at Duke Street.

As the plan also anticipated some existing office sites have been re-occupied and refurbished as part of a general consolidation of existing space use – although these depend on specific circumstances and it would have been difficult to predict which these would have been. Some larger buildings, especially in the Rose Lane/Mountergate area have also changes from single large users to smaller office suites and incubator space.

In order to identify further context for these findings we provide an area by area analysis of the existing context of the city, based on a number of defined areas.

2 South West: Queens Road, St Stephens/Red Lion Street to Ber Street, King Street and the River

2.1 St Stephen' Area

As the continuation of the A11 Newmarket Road, St Stephens has formed a major route into the City. It suffered heavy bombing during the war and the street was realigned and widened in the early 1960s to dual carriageway and more recently back to a single carriageway with wider pavements. Overall, the consequences of these events is that this is one of the few areas of central Norwich that could be appropriate for larger scale development.

The immediate area comprises a number of office areas. The southern side of **Queen's Road** includes the rather monolithic Victoria House, occupied by Marsh (Insurance Brokers) and its predecessor companies Sedgwick and Bland Payne since construction in the mid 1970s. It is on the site of the former Victoria Station. The northern side includes the new bus station and Travelodge, together with a number of underused older buildings, through to All Saints Green.

Norwich Union Triangle (Surrey Street, Westlegate, All Saints Green) This comprises the main headquarters of the Norwich Union and is often known as the Island site. Aside from the original Edwardian baroque headquarters fronting Surrey Street, it is mostly built from the 1950s onwards with later phases in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. It is characterised by big functional office space, each typical of its era, rising to about 8 storeys. Much of the space has been recently refurbished by the Norwich Union to Grade A-type standards, suggesting commitment to this area.

Westlegate includes the City's first tower block, known locally as the "Glass Tower" or Westlegate House, dating from the early 1960s, with an adjoining lower podium block fronting Westlegate, all having mostly glass curtain walling. The block has been vacant for some time and is apparently awaiting redevelopment or may be capable of refurbishment. The site also offers potential for improving pedestrian links between Chapelfield and Castle Mall, e.g. through a retail arcade at ground floor level.

Surrey Street also contains further Norwich Union offices, notably in a very large Georgian former house at No 9.

The area of **Surrey Street** from All Saints Green to Queens Road includes number of smaller scale offices, together with the Norfolk Tower and further Norwich Union offices. Norfolk Tower dating from the early 1970s has a three storey block fronting the street and a ten storey block behind, all of reinforced concrete. It continues to provide functional, if rather dated space on small floorplates. It is probably best suited to providing small lower cost space for a mix of users. The Norwich Union Offices between Surrey Street and Queens Road were completed in 1990 and of reinforced concrete, brick and fake stone comprise in excess of 10,000m³ on large floorplates are of better quality than much of their earlier space and provide typical Grade A space.

St Stephens itself comprises two 1970s office towers, above an early 1960s podium level comprising shops and occupied by the Norwich Union. The space offered by these blocks is probably of reasonable quality, although the format, access and rather functional format is not likely to be attractive to other occupiers. Norwich Union is believed to be vacating these blocks and the whole eastern side of St Stephens is a major opportunity for partial or full redevelopment.

2.2 Ber Street to the River

Ber Street is a wide street on a ridge falling to the river and the largely parallel King Street and with shopping and residential uses to the south west including the John Lewis department store. The area between Ber Street and King Street seems to have been developed from the mid 19th century. Employment space includes Elliot House, built in the mid 1970s of four storeys, well designed and providing good quality space. The remainder of the south eastern side of the street comprises a range of poor quality buildings, with some recent infill of housing

Rouen Road was constructed as part of post war redevelopment in the 1960s to relieve King Street from through traffic. It is mostly housing of poor external design. At the north end at the junction of Golden Ball Street is the landmark Prospect House, offices of Archant Media and former printing works, the latter having moved to Broadland Business Park in the immediate past. Built in the mid 1960s, Prospect House comprises concrete panels over a steel frame with some limited flint vernacular and a bronze golden balls sculpture. It is all very dated and believed likely to be redeveloped, although potentially capable of refurbishment.

King Street is one of the City's most historic streets, including many important buildings. It contains a number of smaller, unique employment premises, as well as the former Norwich Brewery offices used in recent years by Norwich Union and others. The area has seen substantial new housing development notably on the river frontage, including former industrial and mill buildings.

Cattlemarket Street includes some small scale offices, notably St Peter's House of good quality and built in the 1970s. It seems to have benefited from having entrances to the Castle Mall, tying the street into the centre. The bottom end of the street on the western side are the offices of Anglia TV. Built in the early 1980s and of good quality these adjoin the former late 19th century Agricultural Hall, also used by Anglia TV.

Rose Lane includes the substantial former offices of Norwich Winterthur, now let in smaller units as the Rose Lane business centre as well as some more Norwich Union offices. To the rear is a sizeable surface car park capable of development, perhaps including the business centre. In the wider area are a number of other office buildings including the 1980s Temple House and on the corner with King Street the 1960s St John's House. Most of these buildings are occupied and of reasonable quality, although dated in appearance and may fall vacant in the next few years.



Rose Lane Car Park and Rose Lane Business Centre

Mountergate includes some Government Offices and offers some redevelopment opportunities, notably adjoining the Rose Lane car park, potentially offering a larger redevelopment site. Mountergate has seen some significant housing development, although one historic building has been converted to incubator space. There is also the former brewery distribution site in Mountergate (St Anne's Wharf), as shown below which has planning permission for redevelopment for housing and commercial uses.



This area has substantial opportunities for redevelopment/refurbishment of surplus space sites, probably as part of wider mixed used development. St Stephens/Surrey Street can also be seen as part of a wider area for future office development extending from **Rose Lane in the north to Queens Road** in the south, including the offices of Norwich Union in St Stephens, Marsh, Archant and Anglia TV and as such as the main office employment centre of Norwich. The main change area are likely to be those in and around Ber Street and Rouen Road creating

a larger site linking through with **King Street/Riverside** including the old Norwich Brewery site and the potential new focus for office development around Mountergate and Rose Lane. As such it can be seen as the next major central development area and deserves a comprehensive approach. The scale of opportunity means that the area might benefit from a specific Area Action Plan or SPD distinguishing sites and expected uses and anticipating change in existing occupiers. The area also feels rather remote from the centre and needs both services and clear activity hubs which could be identified through such an exercise including hotels, secondary and local retailing, leisure workshops and creative industry and housing use. There is a long-standing commitment within the Local Plan to connect the area (via a new pedestrian footbridge from the brewery distribution site) more directly with Riverside, which offers scope for intensification of existing uses and/or redevelopment in the longer term.

The precise scale of the opportunity is difficult to estimate, as more detailed work is required to determine

3 Cathedral Quarter

In our definition this comprises the area from Prince of Wales Road in the south, through to Barrack Street and Whitefriars

3.1 St Andrews, Upper King Street, southern Cathedral Close, Prince of Wales Road.

This area largely in an around the cathedral close remains a prime area for smaller scale offices especially for traditional business services including solicitors, accountants and property consultants that require client access and face to face contact. Much of the existing property are conversions of historic or small scale infill, although there is some larger scale (>2,000m²) existing offices in St Faith's Lane dating from the 1960s and 1970s which are vacant and awaiting redevelopment (Wales House) or in temporary use (De Vere House). Some former employment sites are being redeveloped for housing (e.g. the former John Menzies site). Generally, offices closer to the cathedral close appear to be more favoured, and are occupied. There is also evidence of consolidation into certain key buildings such as Grosvenor House, (the former British Rail offices) on Prince of Wales Road and in smaller high quality buildings with a good surrounding environment or street frontage.

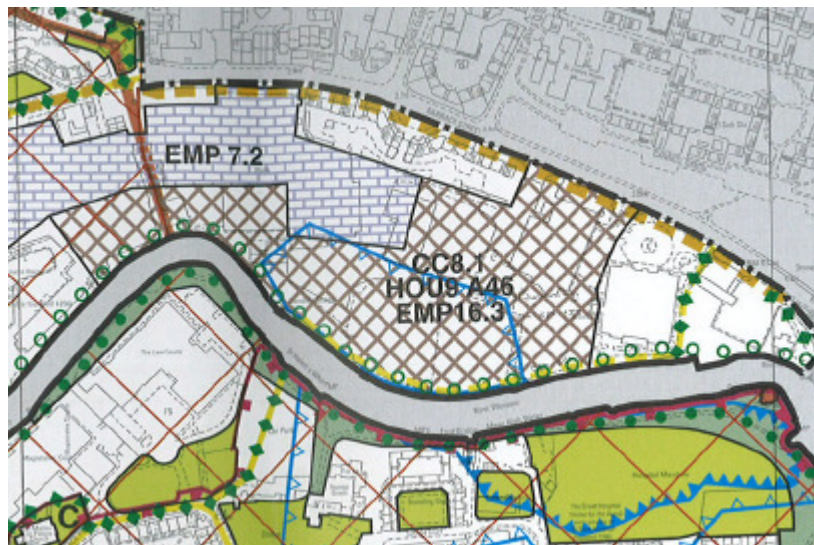
Although some areas are distant from the core city centre, access is supported by both private car parking, parking in the cathedral close and public car parks. Although the area is under threat as leases expire, it remains remarkably resilient (even in the face of the youth-orientated evening economy) probably due to the quality of the environment and the past and future growth prospects and the possibility of living and working in the area. Nevertheless there have been some relocations, notably out of town, but it is not clear that these have been wholly successful. The area would generally benefit from stronger identity and branding as the professional services quarter, and provision for better quality restaurants and hotels, as well as some broadening of uses perhaps to include professional education, private health clubs, etc.

3.2 Whitefriars

The Whitefriars area is quite densely developed and includes many historic properties. There may be smaller scale redevelopment or conversion opportunities across the area but the principal identifiable capacity at present is on the former Jarrold Printing Works site at Whitefriars. As anticipated by the 2004 Local Plan this provides capacity for natural expansion of the office sector and is the most important strategic site, particularly given the proposed new pedestrian bridge linking the former printing site with the cathedral close, overcoming the barrier of the river. It offers the space for larger floorplate and prestigious buildings and locations of a quality that exceeds that being provided in location such as Broadland business park. The site has enjoyed success in terms of pre-lets and occupiers and a further phase of development is anticipated. This side of the close has benefited from the relocation of the courts (from the Guildhall and Shirehall) in the 1990s and a major firm of solicitors (Mills and Reeve) has relocated here from St Andrew's Hill/Upper King Street. The development of this area in

particular can take advantage of the unrivalled tranquil and historic environment of the cathedral close and river

Figure 2: Whitefriars/Barrack Street (Part NJP) (EMP16.3)



Over the past ten years development has included the refurbishment/conversion of the historic St James Mill and part of the rest of the site at to provide high quality Grade A office accommodation for leading local businesses and other organisations. Mills and Reeve solicitors which relocated from St Andrews Hill and occupy approximately 3,000m².

**Whitefriars: New Mills and Reeve Offices and St James' Mill**

Jarrold has now embarked on further landmark developments on this large riverside site near to the centre of Norwich. DEFRA and Birketts Solicitors are the most recent organizations to commit to the site. The buildings under construction for them will be available for occupation from Autumn 2008. It is understood that further development of purpose built offices is likely to proceed on the basis of pre-lets. The eventual capacity of the site depends on the design and density, but we broadly estimate potential for at least 20,000m² floorspace.

Palace Street, adjoining Whitefriars has recently seen development of a new, good quality office block which fronts on to Palace Street and the conversion of 1-2 St Martin at Palace Plain to offices. There are also proposals for further phase involving a 3-storey extension down Bedding Lane, with a front 2-storey 'glazed curtain wall'.

Fishergate, runs off Magdalen Street just to the north of Fye Bridge and runs through to Whitefriars. Ajoining Whitefriars is the Smurfit Kappa sheetfeeding plant, a manufacturer of corrugated packaging. It occupies relatively modern premises, but is slightly incongruous in the area given the demise of Jarrold printing. The existing unit comprises of a factory building generally well served by good road access and parking areas to the rear and front (the rear being accessed via a public car park). The original building dates from the 1950s, with a newer building added to the rear and modern offices to the front. Building styles vary from reinforced concrete frame and profiled steel cladding to modern brick construction. It is in good condition. Although the existing occupiers appear committed to the site, it is identified in the emerging Northern City Centre Area Action Plan for longer term development providing for a mix of residential, office and retail uses The total site area of approximately 1.3 hectares. In terms of this exercise and the nature of the local market its future is thus likely to be seen as part of the wider Whitefriars office location. There are other potential office windfall sites in the Fishergate area.





4 Northern City Centre

This largely comprises the area north of the river stretching in terms of commercial activity from the north side through to Magpie Road and Bull Close, including **Colegate** and **Duke Street** to the west. It immediately adjoins Whitefriars. It includes Anglia Square a rather monolithic and incomplete redevelopment in the 1970s associated with the inner ring road together with finer grain mixed use area overall including large scale vacant office buildings, a district centre and various leisure and commercial and studio uses, as well as smaller scale workspace, shops and residential uses which are highly appropriate to the character of the area.

4.1 Anglia Square/Pitt Street

While many of the older buildings are of heritage value, the overall environment of Anglia square is now rather dated and poorly maintained. The major office building is Sovereign House, now vacant and increasingly derelict, the huge office building erected when HMSO first moved from London in 1968. This building is unlikely to be used as offices, though could offer potential for residential conversion, although is overall rather out of scale.

Botolph Street, which bends away to the north past Sovereign House is largely a wasteland, as to some extent is **Pitt Street**. Pre HMSO both streets contained important historic buildings. This is the area designated for major office development in the 2004 Local Plan.

Figure 3: Botolph Street/Pitt Street (EMP16.1)



Around **St Crispins Road** to the south of the Magdalen Street flyover the situation is rather better and there are a number of occupied existing office buildings. The best and most recent are Cavell House and Austin House, completed as recently as 1994 with a brick cladding including a corner turrett and offering good quality grade A space and representing one of the few large office buildings

of the 1990s. West of this is St Crispins House dating from 1975 and dominating the junction with Duke Street and of reasonable quality. St Mary's House on the opposite corner built in the 1970s but only occupied some years later with some external refurbishment is also currently occupied although is of lesser quality. All these buildings link well with the new office development at Whitefriars and on the former Busseys Garage site in Palace Street. All of which can be seen as part of a major employment area, including the Pitt Street/St Botolph Streets designated area.

The major challenge is thus the **Anglia Square/Pitt Street/Botolph Street area**. Overall the local service functions are well used but the major market issue concerns the high levels of vacant and probably obsolescent office space. In theory there are two future options, one involving comprehensive redevelopment (perhaps even addressing the Magdalen Street flyover which tends to rather cut the area off from the south) and another would involve more piecemeal redevelopment but ideally based on a comprehensive framework. The latter is probably more realistic, and the basis for current proposals. In theory the scale of potential employment that could be accommodated is substantial, but given shorter term opportunities in the city centre such as Whitefriars or Duke Street, it is difficult to see large amounts of floorspace being taken up in this location in the short or medium term. Some change of use, e.g. to residential is thus probably appropriate together with an interim use strategy – both of which could improve vibrancy and image.

Interim uses could include much needed small business space, perhaps linked to media and the former Anglia TV studios known as EPIC which has recently received a grant from EEDA to allow updating of the facility. The area plays a major role in providing essential employment on the north side of the city. Recent proposals have emerged to redevelop the area predominantly for housing and retail uses with the rather vague possibility of offices in later phases. While the scheme represents a proficient response to the challenges of the site, the strategic importance of the site demands a rather stronger commitment to offices and employment, even if it is in later phases. The area would benefit from better connectivity with the city centre, which to some extent is in hand through environmental and pedestrian improvements in St Georges, improving links through to St Andrews. Links also exist from Tombland via Magdalen Street. The area offers potential for rather stronger boundaries and identity, perhaps as "Northbank", making better use of the considerable environmental asset of the river.

4.2 Duke Street and Heigham Street

This area south of the river and to the west potentially offers interesting opportunities, and some large potential infill sites particularly at present around **Duke Street** and **Heigham Street**. The alternative retail facilities of St Benedicts and connections to the Norwich Lanes also make this a potentially popular area for creative industries. There are significant proposals at Duke's Wharf, Duke Street, which comprises the former offices of Eastern Electricity and the surface car park to the rear. The site has substantial frontages to Duke Street (opposite the St Andrews car park) and to Charing Cross/St Benedicts.. This site enjoys good links to the City Centre.

As a major development it is able to offer large office floor plates not otherwise available in Norwich.



Former Eastern Electricity Offices, Dukes Wharf

Pottergate includes a number of office buildings including the 1960s Vantage House, the former BT headquarters on the corner of Pottergate and Fishers Lane recently refurbished into a modern air-conditioned open-plan office development on six levels. Kiln House is located on the north side of Pottergate which is a prominent six storey office building built in the early 1980s and in the past accommodating mostly government offices and BT.

4.3 The Civic Core

The present form of the market place and City Hall is a consequence of 20th century planning although incorporates significant historic buildings. Norwich differs from most British cities in that it missed out on the 19th century municipal building boom. The design of the **City Hall** was selected following a competition in 1931 and completed in 1938. It combines elements of the then fashionable Scandinavian style, derived from various buildings in Stockholm, with neo-classical and art deco styles. It enjoys a prominence and architectural quality that has led to its recent Grade 2 star listing reflecting its status as one of the best inter-war public buildings in the UK. The overall plan was never completed, although the building was extended in the mid 1960s on the Bethel Street side to incorporate a new police station and two storey car park to the rear. The car park has recently been removed due to structural problems. Overall the site offers scope for sensitive expansion to the rear and along the St Giles frontage for at least 10,000 square metres of new (office) space, the most likely user being the City Council in expanded or relocated form, or the realisation of value to support restoration and refurbishment of the existing building. This opportunity has been reflected in several outline proposals since the 1960s.

The existing but soon to be vacated fire station site on **Bethel Street** also offers scope for employment or mixed use redevelopment

St Giles includes St Giles House completed in the 1970s and housing offices of Norwich City Council.