

25 April 2025

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VICTORIA CENTRE NOTTINGHAM – REPRESENTATIONS TO GREATER NOTTINGHAM STRATEGIC PLAN CONSULTATION

INTRODUCTION

I write on behalf of VCP Nominees No.1 Ltd & VCP Nominees No.2 Ltd who are the owners of Victoria Centre, Nottingham. Extending to almost 6 hectares (15 acres), the Victoria Centre is one of the largest landholdings in Nottingham City Centre.

Victoria Centre is home to over 120 stores employing over 2,000 people and includes some of the city centre's key anchor stores such as John Lewis, House of Fraser, Next, H&M and River Island. The centre generates footfall of over 20 million people per year making it the most visited shopping centre in the East Midlands helping to anchor Nottingham's role as the largest and most popular City Centre and destination for retail in the region.

As a result, the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan ('the Plan') is of relevance to Victoria Centre and the plans for its continued development and improvement over the coming years. The representations to the Plan below are made in this context and in the interests of ensuring Victoria Centre remains a fundamental and successful part of the City Centre over the period of the Plan. The overall strategy and purpose of the plan is supported although it is considered it could be improved and made more robust and sounder through integration of the relatively minor comments identified below.

CONTEXT OF GREATER NOTTINGHAM

The section of the Plan that identifies the Future of Broxtowe, Gedling, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe in the Context of Greater Nottingham is considered to be positive and ambitious in identifying both the exiting characteristics and the context of the city alongside how it is planned to grow and improve over the period of the Plan.

It is considered however that specific reference in this part of the Plan should be made to Nottingham City Centre being the principal centre for the city region and this should also include a recognition of the importance of retail to the vitality of the City Centre and as a key part of the local economy and in underpinning the vitality of the city centre should also be made.

The importance of the regeneration of the Broad Marsh site building on the progress already made by the Council is supported, however the Plan should also provide support for the continued operation and improvement of Victoria Centre to ensure it maintains its role as a key attraction in the City Centre. Indeed, despite the centre being one of the largest land holdings in the City Centre and containing a significant proportion of the highest quality retail floorspace, there is no reference within the Plan to the centre compared to 35 references to the Broad Marsh site. It is important that the Plan therefore supports the continued vitality of existing key assets within the City Centre as well as encouraging the development of new sites.

This approach would be consistent with the Plan's evidence base in the form of the Centres Study which recognises that:

"The retail offer in the city centre is underpinned by a strong range of key national multiple comparison operators, which are generally located within the Victoria Shopping Centre and in the central part of the city centre."

And,

"The Victoria Shopping Centre is a particular focus for high-profile, anchor comparison retailers, including flagship John Lewis and House of Fraser stores and a number of other major national multiples. The midmarket fashion-based retailers are largely concentrated either in the Victoria Centre or on major routes within its vicinity."

DELIVERY STRATEGY

The Delivery Strategy section of the Plan includes the specific policies and their supporting text. Whilst these policies are supported in general, there are a number of adjustments that could be made to improve the effectiveness and soundness of the Plan. These are detailed in turn below with comments on the policies setting out the Strategic Allocations for the city covered in the following section.

Policy 2

As with the context section of the plan as set out above, it is considered that Policy 2 does not sufficiently recognise the wider role that the city centre can play in delivering housing growth and urban renaissance. Policy 2 states that sustainable development will be achieved through:

"promoting urban living through prioritising sites for development firstly within the main built up area of Nottingham, and to a lesser extent adjoining it;"

This approach does not provide any distinction between areas within the city that have poorer access to services and that are not capable of delivering sustainable development at as high densities as sites within the city centre. As a result, the Policy should be adjusted to specifically recognise the ability for the City Centre to contribute to housing delivery in Nottingham through its sustainable location and ability to deliver high density housing on accessible sites.

Policy 5

The reference Policy 5 makes to promoting the City Centre as the primary location for office floorspace is supported. This includes the reference within the supporting text that recognises the economic importance of the city centre and the benefits of encouraging further office development within the centre. Having the City Centre as the first priority for the development of office floorspace is positive as it is the most accessible location to the wider Greater Nottingham labour market. Allowing more people to work in the City Centre will help to underpin its vibrancy and automatically provide workers with access to the facilities and services the City Centre offers.

Policy 6

As Policy 6 relates specifically to Nottingham City Centre, it is of particular importance to Victoria Centre. The overall approach of Policy 6 in promoting the vitality and viability of Nottingham City Centre and its recognition of the fundamental importance the City Centre plays in underpinning the overall health and economic role of the city is strongly supported. Policy 6 seeks to maintain a prosperous, compact and accessible retail and leisure core by:

"promoting and strengthening the City Centre as the location of choice for main town centre uses."

This section of the policy should note that the Primary Shopping Area should be the focus for the provision of retail development within the City Centre to reflect national policy and recognise the importance of retail as arguably the key main town centre use attracting visitors to Nottingham City Centre.

In line with previous comments, it is considered that the supporting text to Policy 6 should specifically reference the Victoria Centre and the role it plays providing the most significant part of the City Centre's retail, supporting a large number of jobs and anchoring the whole of the city centre.

The recognition of the potential impact of out of town centre shopping and leisure developments and the resultant threat these developments can pose to the vitality and viability of the City Centre is supported. Due to the transitional period the retail market has undergone in recent years, city and town centres can sometimes be vulnerable to competition from out of centre retail developments. It is therefore welcome that the need to carefully consider such proposals to ensure they do not pose the threat of a significant adverse impact upon the City Centre is recognised.

In addition to this, the recognition of the importance of balancing the needs of shoppers and long stay users in terms of accessibility and car parking to ensure a vital and viable City Centre is also strongly supported. To maintain the attractiveness of the City Centre as a place to visit, some visitors and workers will continue to need to access the area by private car due for a variety of reasons including the distance they live from the City Centre, poor public transport accessibility in parts of the wider region and due to their limited mobility. The recognition that there is a need for the private car to remain a part of the modal share, albeit a reducing one over time as sustainable transport accessibility improves, for visitors to Nottingham City Centre is therefore supported.

Policy 7

Support is provided for Policy 7 in making clear through the retail hierarchy proposed that emphasis is placed upon the City Centre at the top of the retail hierarchy for Greater Nottingham and the resultant assistance this will provide to the promotion of the vitality and viability of centres across the city.

Policies 12 and 13

The recognition within Policy 12 that the City Centre is the most appropriate and sustainable location for a range of community facilities is supported. This will ensure that the City Centre is an attractive place to live for residents of all ages and where these community facilities serve a more than local function, will ensure that they are easily accessible to the largest number of the city's residents.

This also applies to Policy 13 that recognises the benefits of improving cultural, sporting and tourism facilities and that the preferred location for major such facilities should be the city centre to ensure these are accessible to all and that improvements to such facilities support the regeneration and vitality of the city centre.

Policies 14 and 15

Policies 14 and 15 relate to managing travel demand and transport infrastructure priorities and together seek to ensure the need to travel long distances is minimised, where this is unavoidable direct trip generating development to the most sustainable locations and identify the improvements to travel infrastructure needed to accommodate the growth envisaged through the Plan. The overall approach of these policies is supported through directing development towards the City Centre where appropriate to ensure accessibility and improving the accessibility of the city as whole through the planned infrastructure improvements, particularly those that allow more sustainable access to the City Centre such as the planned extension to the NET system, upgrades to the rail network in the East Midlands and bus priority measures across the city.

STRATEGIC ALLOCATIONS

The strategic allocations of the Plan are covered in Policies 19-32 with the Policy relating to the regeneration of the Broad Marsh site covered by Policy 25.

The Policies for strategic allocations include, in a number of instances, proposals for local and neighbourhood centres to serve the developments. This is supported to enable new residents and workers to have appropriate access to services to help these new developments be sustainable. It should be made clear, however, in the policies or their supporting text, however, that in line with national planning policy that the sequential and impact tests still apply to the retail and food and drink floorspace proposed through the allocations. This will ensure that the scale of these elements of the strategic allocations remain appropriate to principally serve the developments themselves and do not undermine the vitality of the City Centre. This approach also builds upon the advice contained within the Nottingham Centres Study that forms part of the evidence base for the plan which states at paragraph 0.35:

“it will be important for the emerging plan to clearly set out the importance of the sequential and impact tests and explain the local circumstances which frame how they will be applied in practice.”

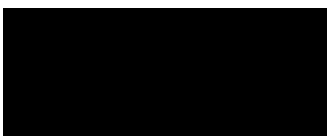
In respect of the policy dealing specifically with the Broad Marsh site, support is provided to the content of this policy and is aspirations to secure the regeneration of this key part of the City Centre building on the positive progress already made by the Council. Overall, it is considered that the policy will help to encourage the positive regeneration of the site and if the Broad Marsh site is developed as envisaged through Policy 25, it is considered that the impact upon Nottingham City Centre will be positive one helping to support its vitality and the economic role the City Centre plays in the economy of Nottingham over the plan period.

SUMMARY

As one of the largest landholdings and providers of employment in Nottingham City Centre, it is clear that the Victoria Centre is of key importance to the overall vitality and economic success of the City Centre. The owners of the centre have plans to develop and improve the centre over the coming years and it is considered that whilst the draft version of the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan being consulted on is positive overall, improvements can be made to facilitate a thriving and productive Nottingham City Centre over the plan period. These improvements as outlined in this letter will ensure the plan is robust and sound and provides a positive basis for a vital and viable City Centre into the future.

It is trusted that these representations will be taken into account in progressing the next version of the Greater Nottingham Local Plan. If you have any questions in relation to these, please feel free to contact me using the details below.

Yours faithfully



Steve Renshaw

Director