



News Release

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COMPLETED ACQUISITION BY WOOLWORTHS GROUP PLC OF BERTRAM GROUP LIMITED

Statement of issues

The Competition Commission (CC) has today published an issues statement as part of its inquiry into the completed acquisition by Woolworths Group plc of Bertram Group Limited.

The CC has been asked to decide whether the acquisition may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition in affected markets, including the wholesale supply of books to independent book retailers, and the wholesale supply of books to libraries in the UK.

The merger was referred by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) on 3 April 2007 and the CC is required to publish its final report by 17 September 2007.

The issues statement follows the initial process of gathering information, views and evidence and identifies clearly for all interested parties the specific questions and areas the inquiry is examining. This will form the basis for hearings with Woolworths/Bertram and other interested parties.

The full issues statement is available on the CC website at: www.competition-commission.org.uk.

If the inquiry group (the Group) considers that the merger may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition, it will consider whether and, if so, what remedies might be appropriate, taking into account any customer benefits that might arise from the acquisition, and will issue a remedies statement, should this be required, at about the time it publishes its provisional findings.

The issues statement should not be seen as implying that the Group has identified any competition concerns—the CC has yet to reach any conclusions on this inquiry. The purpose of making the statement of issues public is to inform all interested parties and give them an opportunity to raise any further points with the CC.

Anyone wishing to comment further on any of the issues raised is requested to do so by 18 May 2007 by email to Tony.Gooch@cc.gsi.gov.uk or in writing to:

Inquiry Secretary (Woolworths/Bertram inquiry)
Competition Commission
Victoria House
Southampton Row
LONDON
WC1B 4AD

The CC will now continue to gather evidence in this inquiry and will publish its provisional findings according to the administrative timetable available on the CC website.

Notes for editors

1. The Enterprise Act 2002 empowers the OFT to refer to the CC completed or proposed mergers for investigation and report which create or enhance a 25 per cent share of supply in the UK (or a substantial part thereof) or where the UK turnover associated with the enterprise being acquired is over £70 million.
2. The CC has a 24-week period in which it is required to publish its report, which may be extended by no more than eight weeks if it considers that there are special reasons why the report cannot be published within that period.
3. The members of the Woolworths/Bertram inquiry group are: Diana Guy (Group Chairman), Ivar Grey, Richard Taylor and Professor Michael Waterson.
4. Further information on the CC and its procedures, including its policy on the provision of information and the disclosure of evidence, can be obtained from its website at: www.competition-commission.org.uk.
5. Enquiries should be directed to Siobhan Allen on 020 7271 0242 (email siobhan.allen@cc.gsi.gov.uk).