



NORWICH Society

The Assembly House, Theatre Street, Norwich, NR2 1RQ
Email: admin@thenorwichsociety.org.uk Telephone: 01603 765606

Consultation response to Anglia Square revised planning submission (application number: 18/00330/F)

Our objections to the original scheme remain valid. The changes in this revised application are minor and the scheme retains the original density ambition that is far too high, resulting in a mass and scale of over-development that, combined with poor architectural design, would damage the unique character of Norwich.

The application does not meet many of the policies or aspirations set out in the 2017 Planning Guidance Note and other key planning policies adopted by the local authorities.

We note that the developers still describe the reduced-height residential tower as a 'marker' building, indicating that it has been deliberately designed to be out of scale with its surroundings in order to stand out; why Anglia Square needs a 'marker' building any more than any other development is not explained: the only 'marker' buildings in the city are the two cathedral towers and these certainly are not there to celebrate Mammon. What is more, the developers' description that the tower 'provides slim and elegant architecture' is absurd: compared with the Anglican Cathedral tower and spire, the tower in Anglia Square is obese and ugly and would bring long-term visual harm to views across Norwich.

The other changes – altering the finish to the car park, providing public toilets and minor improvements to the public realm and cycle routes – are insignificant compared with the overall damage that the development would cause to the surrounding area and to the city as a whole.

While the 20 storey tower is an unnecessary and unwelcome intrusion on the city skyline, it is the sheer bulk and height of the other blocks that would cause the most damage to Norwich's unique street scene. We again highlight the 12 storey block on the St Crispin's roundabout frontage as an example of the harm that the development would cause in terms of being so out-of-scale with buildings in the rest of the city centre.

In the long term, we suggest that allowing this development would damage the city economy. Since the previous consultation, we have heard from two people who moved their businesses to Norwich because they liked its unique environment. One – a creative industries entrepreneur – commented that he had moved from London precisely to get away from the kind of urban environment that is being proposed for Anglia Square.

This confirms the independent study that the Norwich Society commissioned 18 months ago that looked into the difficulties faced by Norwich businesses in recruiting senior professional and specialist staff from elsewhere in the UK and further afield: this found that, once such people moved here, more than 90% were extremely happy with their move, a large number particularly citing the beauty and heritage of the city. This is not a surprise: there are numerous studies from Europe and the USA demonstrating the importance of quality of place in business success, one of the most recent being that by American business location experts, Matthew Tarleton and Evan Robertson, pointing out that many workers - especially recent graduates and young professionals - are selecting a place where they would like to live before securing employment. There is international competition for these kinds of people who bring the skills and entrepreneurship essential to a thriving economy.

The Anglia Square proposal risks turning Norwich into yet another clone high-rise city, damaging its attractiveness for those who live and work here, deterring visitors, and putting off specialist and skilled staff who are considering moving to the city: all things that affect long-term prosperity.

And there are alternatives. The proposed large Barrack Street housing and commercial development is

testament to the fact it is quite possible to create a financially viable, well-designed, relatively low-rise, mixed-use development on a large brownfield site that fits appropriately into the character of Norwich.

Should, as we wish, the current application be rejected, we would suggest that the possibility of bringing together a consortium of more local investors, developers – preferably including one of the major social housing providers – and others who, with the landowner, may have a greater interest in developing this crucial site for the overall benefit of the city.

We would make one final observation. The developers' response to comments made during the previous consultation fails to answer many of the objections raised, especially those around sustainability.

We welcome the assurance that the Council will fully take into account all of the objections made to both the original and the revised application when making its decision. We would also like an assurance that any lack of comment this time round from objectors to the original scheme will not be taken as accepting the new proposals: the changes are so slight that we would expect many of the original objectors will feel that it unnecessary to comment again.