

WHY WE OPPOSE THE ANGLIA SQUARE PROPOSALS

The Norwich Society has registered to be a full participant in the three-week public inquiry into the plans for the redevelopment of Anglia Square.

While fully supporting the need for the site to be developed, the Society believes that the current proposals are out-of-scale with the surrounding area which, combined with the uninspiring architectural quality of the proposed buildings, would severely damage the character and economy of the City.

With more than 1200 units on 4.51 hectares, the density will be around 275 dwellings per hectare. Assuming two people per home, Anglia Square would have a density of around 550 people per hectare; this compares with an average of 44 in the City centre Mancroft ward.

Under the London Plan, the recommended density for an urban area is 70-60 dwellings per hectare. Leeds – a city considerably larger than Norwich – has a housing policy that stipulates a maximum of 65 dwellings per hectare for the edge of the City centre, less than a quarter of what is proposed for Anglia Square.

The density for Anglia Square is therefore well in excess of the maximum for a well-serviced urban area in London and demonstrably totally out of line with an Anglia Square development that is intended to be a local centre in Norwich.

The proposal also offers a very poor mix and quality of homes, with very few units large enough for families and fewer than 10 per cent being affordable. Most of the homes are very small; many have entrances from long internal corridors with no windows; those overlooking the flyover are likely to suffer from health-damaging air pollution; and, being mostly built to minimum building regulation standards, will be energy inefficient, thus undermining the City Council's objective for the City becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

We share the view of Historic England that 'The massing and height of the proposed buildings will have an extensive and severe impact on the character and significance of Norwich as an historic place, on key and highly important landmark historic buildings, important parts of the Norwich city centre conservation area and historic parks beyond it'.

At the public inquiry, the Norwich Society will be highlighting the fact that the decision by the City planning committee to approve the proposals was highly marginal: the report of the planning officers described their recommendation for approval as 'finely balanced' and ultimately planning committee by only gave its consent by seven votes to five.

When Design South East was asked to review an earlier pre-application version of the scheme it expressed concern that proposal constitutes overdevelopment and suggested that it would not be possible to sensitively resolve a scheme at this level of density in this location.



The Society does not accept the developer's argument that a scheme of this density is the only viable option. We will point to the plans for other brownfield sites adjacent to the city centre that are far more appropriate to Norwich, including those for St Mary's Works and the Jarrolds site in Barrack Street.

The proposals would also damage the Norwich economy. There is an array of international research that clearly demonstrates that the quality of place has an impact on the local economy, primarily by its influence on the ability of businesses to recruit essential specialist and professional staff. Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg summarised the importance of the ability to attract key staff when he wrote in the *Financial Times* that 'Talent attracts capital far more effectively and consistently than capital attracts talent'.

This is backed by research such as that published in 2019 by Matthew Carmona, Professor of Planning and Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Planning UCL, that examined 271 case studies from the UK, USA and various European countries and concluded that strong private and public economic benefits result from place quality – including increased retail viability, making investment more attractive, and even improving productivity.

Maintaining and enhancing the city's quality of place rather than turning it into an 'anywhere' environment is crucial to attracting staff and businesses from elsewhere, as well as sustaining the important tourism and visitor sectors. And, of course, it is this quality of place that is so treasured by the people who live and work here.



Join the Norwich Society and help us fight these proposals

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