



THE
NORWICH
SOCIETY

Reference: NS2

**Planning Application 18/00330/F
PINS reference PCY/RTI/G2625/3216532
Land at Anglia Square, Norwich**

Proof of evidence: Paul Burall

I am Chair of the Norwich Society. I work as a freelance journalist specialising on the links between planning, design and the economy. I was a coordinating editor for the book *Planning for a Sustainable Environment* and have written extensively about the links between the quality of place and local economies.

I am a previous vice-chairman of the Town & Country Planning Association and served on the TCPA's Policy Committee for twenty years. I was a Board member of the East of England Development Agency from 2004 until 2012 with special responsibility for the quality of places and sustainability and also chaired Inspire East – the regional champion for quality development – from 2007 until 2011.

Earlier in my career I worked for the Design Council where, among other things, I was responsible for the Council's work on planning, the environment and design.

Proof of Evidence

This proof deals with the extent to which the proposed development is consistent with the Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy and the extent to which it is consistent with the Government policies for ensuring the vitality of town centres

The proposed development is not consistent with the Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy as required by the NPPF which states that 'The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'. The extremely high density, height, bulk and lack of design quality are alien to the attractiveness of Magdalen Street as a lively and varied retail area, to the internationally-recognised quality of Elm Hill and the Cathedral and its environs, and to the quality of the overall City centre., From maintaining a strong sense of place, as called for in the NPPF, the proposals will create an 'anywhere' environment.

The report submitted to the planning committee claimed that the economic benefits were:

- The creation of around 400-480 jobs during the eight-year construction period;
- An uplift of between 286 – 563 jobs from the new development, including a hotel, retail, cafes, restaurants and bars, offices, leisure and community uses;
- An additional 60-118 jobs in the shops, services and other businesses within the local area and wider district centre generated by the increased footfall and vitality of the area;
- Total gross spend of between £23.2-40.7 million each year by the 1250 new households within the development.
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- **Weston Homes Colombia Threadneedle Statement of Case 2 August 2019**
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- ix) The creation of up to 300 direct and 480 indirect construction jobs, and an uplift on existing employment of between 286 - 563 direct and 60 – 118 indirect operational jobs, compared to the position at the time of submission of the Application, which has since deteriorated as further closures of businesses (eg the cinema) have taken place ...

Most of these benefits would also be achieved by a better-designed less dense development. Indeed, it could be argued that a higher quality development might attract more well- residents who would spend at least as much, even if they were fewer in number. The ONS estimated average household expenditure in 2018 at just under £30,000 a year, which would give a figure of around £37 million for the Anglia Square households: this is near the top end of the Council's estimate and it seems likely that the lower figure suggested by the Council is likely to be more accurate in view of the type of home that is being proposed.

More crucially, the disbenefits of a poorly designed scheme that is totally out of character with the surrounding area are likely to cause considerable damage to the overall economy of the Norwich and, in particular, will damage the vitality of the city centre by making Norwich a less attractive place to visit.

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 'I have long believed that talent attracts capital far more effectively and consistently than capital attracts talent'.

Some of the research that supports Bloomberg's view includes:

A study published in 2016 in *Urban Affairs Review* looked at a range of international studies and found that 'Ultimately, these suggest that quality of place is a useful and important element in attracting talent and building healthier, happier, and more prosperous communities'.

In 2017, the Scottish Council for Development Industry published a report titled *Productive places: creating spaces for the new economy to thrive* that noted that 'As the knowledge economy takes hold, the cities that are

able to adapt to the new economic requirements will also be able to capitalise on their local distinctiveness, as localisation (increasing importance of city distinctiveness, authenticity and identity) becomes as important as processes of globalisation. In a world that is becoming increasingly more integrated, cities must rely more on their specific local characteristics – expressed by some as authenticity. Cities, as in the past, compete for the favours of future inhabitants, companies and visitors... Small details, such as the city's image, can be decisive in decisions taken by companies or individuals looking for a place to settle or to visit.'

In 2018, Matthew Carmona, Professor of Planning and Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Planning UCL, published a report titled *Place value: place quality and its impact on health, social, economic and environmental outcomes* which found 'A growing body of work suggests strong private as well as public benefits from place quality, and that this is, again, overwhelming given the richness of the available evidence. Desirable qualities include: visual permeability; sense of place (distinctiveness); and perceived architectural quality and beauty generally in the built environment.'

And in 2019 a further report by Matthew Carmona – *The Ladder of Place Quality* – examined 271 case studies from the UK, USA and various European countries. It concluded that strong private and public economic benefits result from place quality – including increased retail viability, making investment more attractive, and even improving productivity –while poor quality damages not just health and quality of life but the economy as well.

Regionally, in 2011 the East of England Development Agency identified quality of place as being a major factor in the difficulties faced by businesses in Basildon. As one Italian company – Finmeccanica (*now Leonardo*) that manufactured military radios in the town pointed out, it was difficult to persuade its own engineers to move even just for a year to Basildon when the alternative was Bologna.

More locally, one small creative company that moved to Norwich has commented that it had chosen the city to get away from the kind of environment proposed for Anglia Square.

Norwich businesses already have a major problem recruiting specialist and professional staff. A study carried out for the Norwich Society in 2017 showed 73% of the companies who responded had problems recruiting staff to come to Norwich to work and live and a fifth of the companies listed skills shortage as one of the prime impediments to growth. On the positive side, almost all of those who had actually moved to Norwich joined living here, with more than a third mentioning its beauty and heritage as one of the city's most positive features.

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.

For these reasons the proposed development is clearly not consistent with the Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy (NPPF Chapter 6).