

## Anglia Square, Norwich

**Planning Inspectorate Reference: APP/G2625/V/19/3225505**

**Planning Inquiry Reference (Norwich City Council): 19/00007/CALLIN**

**Overview Statement by Councillor Denise Carlo on behalf of the Norwich Green Party Group of City Councillors (January 2020) covering:**

### 1. Qualifications

My name is Denise Carlo. I have been a Green Party City Councillor for Nelson ward in the City of Norwich, since 2011. I hold a BA Hons in British History and Landscape Archaeology (UEA); PG Dip in the Conservation of Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens (Architectural Association), and PG Dip in Urban Planning (Oxford Brookes).

### 2. Overview

The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) in the 1960s categorised Norwich as one of the 51 'gem towns'. These were considered to be 'so splendid and so precious that ultimate responsibility should be a national concern'. Recognition of Norwich's historic importance had followed the CBA's survey of 324 British towns and cities for their historic quality in response to local authorities' plans for major urban redevelopment.. Criteria examined included ancient street plans, bridge crossings, waterfronts, town walls, castle sites, major ecclesiastical sites and numbers of buildings worthy of preservation. Norwich scored in every category. <sup>1</sup>

In spite of some disfiguring modern redevelopment, the historical integrity of Norwich is still evident in its rich collection of historic buildings and open spaces, the city walls which define the medieval core, the continuing importance of the river and above all in the survival of the medieval street pattern, apart from the north city.

Here in the oldest part of Norwich, the obliteration of Botolph Street, Stump Cross and other chunks of medieval streets along with an panoply of domestic vernacular buildings was a national tragedy from which the area has never recovered.

This calamitous error will be repeated if the proposed scheme is approved. A 20 storey tower and layers of massive blocks of between 1 and 12 storeys in height,

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<sup>1</sup> The Erosion of History: Archaeology and Planning in Towns: A study of historic towns affected by modern development in England, Wales and Scotland, CBA Urban Research Committee, May 1972.

wrapped around an inner core of car parking, might be appropriate for a metropolitan conurbation but not a historic city centre.

Anglia Square also swept away a close-knit community, the area around which many 'Strangers' from the Low Countries, invited in 1565 by the City authorities to revive the local cloth industry had settled in the C16th. As late as 1903 a substantial cloth factory, described as a building by Pevsner in glowing terms, was built on Botolph Street. In published reports on the Norwich Survey conducted between 1971-78, one archaeologist described Botolph Street undergoing demolition as,

“this intermingling of domestic housing, public buildings and industrial premises (which) preserves something of a medieval flavour”.<sup>2</sup>

Described as a landmark building, the tower is intended to signpost the new centre to outside spenders. But what are its special attractions? The high rise tower would contain expensive apartments, but not for people on the housing waiting list and nothing of interest for visitors. We would see another shopping centre for national chains facing an uncertain future. Commercial retail, a cinema, a hotel and car park; these are nothing out of the ordinary unlike a unique historic city centre.

Above the commercial district on the ground floor will live several thousand residents, housed in anonymous blocks. They will mingle with their neighbours on roof podium gardens where their children will have to play as the ground is regarded as commercially valuable for car parking but not for green spaces for residents to relax and children to play.

Norwich's historic core has accommodated change, but not destruction on the scale of Anglia Square nor St Stephens widening. Anglia Square's damage can be mitigated to a degree by redeveloping in sympathy with the character of neighbouring historic streets and community and the city centre conservation area but this development does not do this.

The local community and Green Party councillors want to see a development where housing, shops, employment, pubs and cafes and green spaces are inter-mingled on the ground to create a strong community designed to fit with the surrounding pattern of development.

We also want to see a community built to high environmental standards including carbon neutral. The high cost of constructing high rise blocks using unsustainable steel, concrete and glass, serviced by lifts would be better spent. The Government

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<sup>2</sup> General Introduction from Excavations in North-East Norwich, by Malcolm Atkin and DH Evans in Excavations in Norwich 1971 – 78 Part III, East Anglian Archaeology Report No. 100, 2002.

has legislated for net-zero carbon by 2050. New residential and commercial properties built today will still be in use in 2050. They must be ready for net zero carbon, otherwise they will require costly retro-fitting. We regret that the Planning Inquiry has not chosen to make climate change and energy a matter for discussion.

### **3. Grounds of Objection**

The Norwich Green Party objects to the planning application as follows.

#### **i) Supply of Homes**

The proposed scheme would over-deliver on market housing and under-deliver on affordable housing which Norwich so badly needs.

#### **ii) Vitality of Magdalen Street and the Local Community**

Commercial retail would threaten the distinctive retail offer of Anglia Square and Magdalen Street which serve the local community. It would harm the thriving artistic community based here. The proposed development would not create a diverse, strong integrated community with a sense of place. Councillor Martin Schmierer will give a statement about the impacts on the local community he represents.

#### **iii) Conserving and enhancing the historic environment**

The scale, bulk, height and design of the proposed development would have a harmful visual impact on the settings of numerous heritage assets and on the character and special qualities of the city centre conservation area and its setting. The applicant has not considered the significance of the medieval street pattern which reflects the legacy of the pre-Conquest town and has shaped the historic core we enjoy today. In my heritage statement, I focus on the route between Tombland and the junction of Colegate/Magdalen Street. I consider that the cumulative degree of harm on important heritages assets (medieval street plan, ancient river crossings, medieval churches, Grade 1, Grade 2\* and Grade 2 buildings) would lead to less than substantial harm at the high end of the scale. The degree of impacts on this set of townscapes is, in my view, sufficient on its own to merit refusal of planning permission. This is apart from the cumulative harm from visual impacts on the wider settings of many other heritage assets. The high rise tower is intended to be viewed as a 'wayfinder' building from many points and its impact would be felt across the historic city. Overall, in my view the applicant has consistently underestimated the impacts on the significance of heritage assets and I conclude that the proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm at the high end of the scale on the significance of heritage assets.

#### **iv) Parking**

Plans for 940 private residential and 600 public car parking spaces has resulted in bulky blocks and large building footprints, with residential, commercial and hotel uses wrapped around private car parking. A further 400 private parking spaces and 600 public parking spaces would be housed in a multi storey car park.

Notwithstanding the ample provision of parking, the applicant anticipates that many of the cars belonging to residents will remain stationary during peak hours.

As well as wasting valuable land, the additional traffic generated by the car parking would increase community severance, air pollution and carbon emissions.

#### **v) Air Quality**

Air pollution would increase due to traffic generated by the proposed development. Dr Andrew Boswell will present evidence on behalf of the Nch Cycling Campaign.

#### **vi) Climate Change and Energy**

The proposed development is not climate change fit for the future on many fronts: building construction and fabric, overall energy efficiency, gas heating systems, limited on-site renewable energy and climate resilience. As a starter, the 1200 homes planned will be gas heated when the Government has announced a ban on gas installations in new builds after 2025. Further information about energy matters is provided in in separate statement by Dr Andrew Boswell.

#### **Vii) Open Spaces, Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**

The landscape design for the proposed development lacks informal playspace for children and green space for residents to relax in at ground level due to the commercial demands taking precedence over quality of life for residents. Excessive levels of hard surfaces and inadequate levels of greenery would contribute to urban over-heating and not contribute to a net biodiversity gain. Anglia Square's hard grey environment would be replaced by a different kind of hard environment.

#### **In conclusion,**

Green Party councillors consider that overall that **the** benefits of the proposed development would be considerably outweighed by the disbenefits. **We** wish to see a new development proposal come forward than see the proposed development go ahead. We have in Norwich a recent example of building a community to the highest environmental standards. Goldsmith Street won the 2019 Stirling Prize for a community of 100 social houses built to passivehaus standards and based around a network of streets in place of former high rise blocks. Similar imagination can be applied to Anglia Square, as the design by Ash Sakula architects for Historic England has shown, if the proposed development is refused.