

Paul: opening summary submission

The Norwich Society has more than 600 members, including some businesses.

Our key objections to the proposed development are:

The density is far too high and completely out of character with the rest of the City;

Norwich has no maximum dwellings density policy, unlike Leeds. If the Leeds policy applied to this site, it would limit the density to around a quarter of what is proposed here;

How out of scale the plans are is exemplified by the proposed 12 storey hotel on the frontage of Saint Crispin's roundabout; this is twice as high as the current tallest building near the roundabout;

The height and bulk of the development will overwhelm the nationally-recognised mediaeval gem of the St Augustine's cottages – possibly the best preserved row of mediaeval cottages anywhere in the UK;

The applicant's expert on heritage, townscape and design has described the 20 storey tower as an 'attractive new feature' and suggested that it will serve as a landmark for people to use to find their way around the city.

We would argue that the tower is far from attractive – especially when compared with the slender Cathedral spire with which it competes for visual attention.

And the idea that it will provide a landmark to help people find their way is absurd. First, unless someone already knows where it is, such a landmark is useless.

Second, in an age when people use their phones to navigate their way around cities, ugly landmarks are simply an unnecessary intrusion.

The 'anywhere' architecture does nothing to enhance the attractiveness of Norwich as a place to live and work and compares very poorly with such 21st-century developments as the Stirling Prize-winning Goldsmith Street development, the Cathedral Hostry or even the Rose Lane car park;

As a result of the high density, the variety of homes that will be provided offers very little genuine family accommodation and may well attract a fairly transient population that will inhibit community development;

There is little evidence that the development will adopt the better-than-building energy efficiency regulations that would support the City Council's declared objective of becoming carbon neutral;

An independent survey commissioned by the Norwich Society in 2017 found that local businesses were being inhibited from growing by the difficulty of attracting professional and skilled staff from elsewhere but that two of the prime attractions for those who had chosen to move to the City were its unique environment and its heritage.

So the poor quality of the development will clearly damage the attractiveness of Norwich as a place to come to work and live.

We are also concerned that the construction costs of such a high density development may mean that only the more easily-built parts will be completed and that, just like the 1969 development, part of the site will remain a brownfield eyesore.

We, of course, want Anglia Square to be developed.

It has been a blot on the Norwich landscape for far too long and is a huge waste of an opportunity to provide much-needed homes.

However, this cannot be an excuse for a development that is so out of keeping with the City as a whole and the surroundings of this site in particular.

It is perhaps worth noting that the Council's planning officers did describe their decision to recommend approval of the application as 'finely balanced' and that the committee only voted by 7 to 5 to approve it.