



Historic England

Ms Tracy Armitage  
Norwich City Council  
City Hall  
St Peter's Street  
NORWICH  
Norfolk  
NR2 1NH

Direct Dial: 01223 582721

Our ref: P00848070

30 October 2018

Dear Ms Armitage

T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015  
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990

**ANGLIA SQUARE INCLUDING LAND AND BUILDINGS TO THE NORTH AND WEST, NORWICH, NORFOLK**  
**Application No. 18/00330/F**

Thank you for your letter consulting Historic England on amendments to the proposed scheme for the redevelopment of Anglia Square. This letter provides a consolidated response to the application.

**1. Summary of Historic England's Position**

Norwich is one of England's – and Europe's – great historic cities. Set in the valley of the River Wensum, the historic centre of Norwich can still be read as having been defined by the longest circuit of city walls in medieval England. Containing more medieval churches than any city north of Alps, large numbers of historic buildings, many of exceptional interest, and streets and spaces rich in character, the centre of Norwich is an extraordinary historic place. The heart of the city is articulated by its major landmarks. On the hills to the south of the river, stand the castle, City Hall, the Roman Catholic cathedral, and a number of the most prominent churches, including St Peter Mancroft and St Giles. Below them, near the river, is the medieval cathedral, one of the great churches of Europe, whose spire rises to form the central landmark of the city. Norwich north of the river has its own character, the streets within the circuit of the walls still rich in historic incident, but without the landmarks of the south.

Historic England consider that the proposed redevelopment of Anglia Square would severely harm the city's extraordinary historic character, damaging people's

appreciation of both the significance of the city's great monuments –the Norman castle, the medieval cathedral, the Roman Catholic cathedral, City Hall and the numerous medieval churches which support them – and that of the rich historic cityscape, formed of streets, spaces, and the historic buildings by which they are defined. That harm would be engendered by the disparity of the scale of the development as a whole, which would be foreign to the character of the city, and by the proposed tower, which, rising to 20 stories, would radically disrupt the character of the cityscape, formed as it is by the interplay of city's topography, its great monuments and the wider pattern of streets and spaces in which the latter are set.

The reduction of the tower's height from 25 to 20 stories – the principal amendment made to the scheme since its original submission – would not materially reduce its impact on Norwich's character. While it would no longer be visible from some of the places from which the original tower would have been visible it would remain a prominent and alien feature; and an additional photomontage confirms that the tower would be visible in – and damaging to – the wonderful prospect of the cathedral as it is seen from the Lower Close.

This application therefore raises fundamental questions about the future of Norwich – and indeed, about the future of all historic cities, as if so harmful a development were permitted in so special a place what protection would any historic city have against similar treatment? These questions can be boiled down to one. What should be our vision for the future of Norwich?

Historic England's response is this. Norwich is a great historic city which provides a rich and stimulating theatre for contemporary life. We know that historic places are valued for their attractiveness, provide fertile ground for creative and innovative businesses, attract tourism (a major contributor to Norwich's economy) and are wonderful places in which to live. We also know that historic places are adaptable, that they have the capacity to accommodate growth and to add to their character with fine contemporary buildings which combine modernity and a natural respect for the grain and character of their setting. Norwich can change and grow without damaging the essential character which makes the city so special.

Implicit in this application is another vision – that Norwich should subordinate its extraordinarily rich character to the supposed imperatives of a particular type of contemporary development. The proposed development alone would severely harm that character which makes Norwich so special. Were it to be built there is little reason to believe that further development of similar character would not follow in the future.

No one disputes that the failed 1960/70s development of Anglia Square harms the city, although it does provide some facilities which are highly valued by those who use them. The applicants argue that the scale of the proposed development is necessary to make the redevelopment of Anglia Square viable. We have not independently assessed their viability assessment, but we note that they have not carried out detailed exploration of alternative approaches and are sceptical of their assessment of the approach suggested by a community group as a scheme appropriate to the character of the city. We therefore question whether they have

provided a clear and convincing justification for the approach they propose and the harm it would cause.

We understand the applicants' scheme would not be viable, and would depend for its success on public subsidy comprising a grant of £12,000,000 from Homes England via the city council and exemption from contributing to the community infrastructure levy. If public subsidy of this scale is required to redevelop the site it is reasonable to ask what it might achieve if the underlying principles of the scheme were to be changed radically. Could this level of subsidy bring about a development scheme appropriate to the character of the city? We would expect public subsidy, if required, to be used to fund a scheme which would enhance the character of the city, not harm it.

In assessing the proposed redevelopment of Anglia Square Historic England's remit is both to consider the impact of the proposed development on the historic monuments, buildings and spaces of the city, and to look at broader questions of the conservation and appreciation of the historic city as a whole, and the contribution that its historic character and significance make to Norwich's present and future vitality as a place. We consider, unequivocally, that the proposed development would severely harm Norwich's significance, and that of the city's major monuments, and that of many of the historic streets and spaces, and the historic buildings which define them, which together make up the cityscape. All are protected by what are often the highest levels of designation, and as an ensemble their importance is outstanding. We consider that the development would strike at the character that makes Norwich so special. In doing so it would also compromise the qualities that make cities such as Norwich so attractive to contemporary life.

In view of the harm the proposals would cause to so many and such important designated heritage assets, we consider that the scheme runs counter to all national and local policy concerned with the protection of the historic environment – policy set out above all in the National Planning Policy Framework and in the local plan, and buttressed by relevant legislation.

It follows that Historic England recommend that your council refuse planning permission for this scheme. Were the scheme to be approved the implications would be of national importance so should your council be minded to grant planning permission we will ask the Secretary of State to call in the scheme for his own determination.

Historic England do not believe that your council need choose between the proposals contained in this application and the further decay of Anglia Square. There is no doubt that Anglia Square presents an opportunity for development which could bring many benefits to the city, but it is one which we consider should be taken in a manner which accords with the character of the wider cityscape – one which would realise the National Planning Policy Framework's aspiration for sustainable development which reconciles social, economic and environmental benefits. We are keen to work with the City Council, the community and the owners of the site in pursuit of this goal.

## 2. Historic England Advice on the Revised Application

This application seeks planning permission for the comprehensive redevelopment of Anglia Square. It is proposed to replace the existing buildings, which date from the 1960s and 1970s, with a very substantial development which would include a hotel, cinema, shopping centre, car park and over 1,000 residential units. The proposed development would be arranged so as to reinstate something of the lost streetscape of the site, and to create a new view from within the site towards the Anglican cathedral. The amended plans contain a number of changes to the initial proposals, of which the most important is the reduction of the tower from 25 to 20 stories in height.

Historic England consider that the amendments would have no material effect on the impact of the proposed development on the character and significance of Norwich as a historic city. Whilst they would change its effect on certain areas and buildings within the city, the development as a whole would still have a severely damaging impact on Norwich as an historic place, on the significance of the city's greatest historic buildings and on that of many others, on historic spaces within the city and on historic parks beyond it. We have, however, amended our detailed assessment where appropriate in response to the revised material.

## 3. The Significance of the Designated Heritage Assets Affected

The starting point for Historic England's assessment of the impact of the proposed development is an understanding of the significance of the designated heritage assets which it would affect – whether scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered landscapes or the historic cityscape designated as a conservation area. Because of the scale of the proposed development, and in particular the height of the tower, it would have a visual impact on the wider landscape of the city, elements of the city centre conservation area and listed buildings and scheduled monuments within it, as well as a physical impact on the site in the form of demolition and construction. (We do not consider the physical impact of the scheme on the site itself; others will comment on archaeological questions to which this may give rise.) We have therefore considered the significance of heritage assets over a wide area in order to assess the impact on them. Additional detail of the significance of these heritage assets is contained in the annex attached to this letter.

The historic city of Norwich lies in the Wensum valley, with **major historic landmarks** on a series of hills on the south side, including the castle, city hall, Roman Catholic cathedral and the prominent churches of St Peter Mancroft and St Giles. The elevated position of these buildings emphasises aspects of their historic status and illustrates the historic development of Norwich. The Anglican cathedral is lower down by the river but its tall spire can be seen with this group in views from the north and east. All these buildings are listed at grade I or II\*. The castle, one of the major Norman fortifications of 12th century Europe (grade I), commands views over the valley from its motte and battlements. On the north side of the river the valley side slopes more gently and features more low-lying historic development.

Many aspects of the layout of the present city date from its dramatic expansion and redevelopment following the Norman conquest, including the **market place**, now

framed by the 1930s City Hall (grade II\*), St Peter Mancroft (grade I) and the Guildhall (grade I). There are spaces which originated in the Saxon period, such as Tombland and Palace Plain. The city walls were established between 1297 and 1334, enclosing a large area which contained extensive open land. Within the medieval city walls, parts of which survive, there are extensive areas of medieval streets with numerous medieval and post-medieval buildings, including 35 medieval parish churches, a remarkable survival in northern Europe.

The **cathedral** of the Holy and Undivided Trinity and the associated Benedictine monastery were largely complete by 1145, although the cathedral's spire was rebuilt in the 14th century. One of the great Romanesque buildings of Europe, the cathedral is a major landmark across the city and appears in views approaching the city and from the more open northern side of the river valley including the upper slopes. Views from the River Wensum and Mousehold Heath show the cathedral to best effect.

The cathedral's **Upper Close** is an intimate space defined by the precinct wall, the cathedral and a range of building associated with the monastic period of its history and a fine group of scheduled and grade II\* listed buildings around the 14th century former chapel of the Carnary College. The **Lower Close** includes a large open area of playing fields between the river bank and the cathedral. This is one of the few places in the city from where the cathedral can be seen unimpeded and in a landscape setting; and no prominent modern buildings or development intrude into or detract from this important and beautiful scene.

Beside the Lower Close is **Bishopsgate** with the scheduled 14th century Bishop's Bridge and Great Hospital, one of Britain's oldest hospitals, founded in 1249 and comprising St Helen's church, the hospital cloister, hall and master's house, all listed at grade I, and several other historic buildings including almshouses. At the western end of Bishopsgate is **Palace Plain**, a highly significant historic space surrounded by heritage assets including the cathedral precinct wall and Bishop's Gate (listed grade II\* and scheduled respectively), St Martin's church (grade I) and a range of historic houses (listed grade II\* and II).

**Tombland** is a roughly triangular open space outside the Close defined on one side by the precinct wall and buildings constructed against it, with historic buildings on the other sides, giving a remarkable consistency in form, materials and detailing which is largely undisturbed by modern development beyond the space. **Wensum Street**, leaves Tombland at its north-west corner before crossing the river to **Fye Bridge Street** and has a similarly dense pattern of historic building crowding the roadside, dating from the 17th to 19th centuries but again with considerable consistency of scale and traditional materials.

North of the River Wensum a network of historic streets converge on or border Anglia Square. **Colegate** runs parallel with the river and is lined with buildings of great historic and architectural value including a number of 18th century town houses, non-conformist chapels and St George's church, many of listed at high grades. From it **St George's and Calvert Streets** run northwards towards the application site; these are intimate in character, with small-scale red brick housing. **St. Augustine's Street** is lined with historic buildings, several listed and hiding 15th-

17th century buildings behind later facades. The parish church of St Augustine (grade I) with its early 18th century brick west tower stands in a large churchyard with a terrace of six houses, numbers 2-12 Gildencroft.

**Magdalen Street** runs along the eastern side of the application site, between Magpie Road and the Wensum, and is divided by the inner ring road overpass. In the southern part there are continuous historic buildings built close to the roadside dating from the 16th to 19th centuries. The northern part of the street has seen more modern development, but there are several buildings with 17th century work behind 18th and 19th century frontages. Some modern building is unsympathetic to this character, including Anglia Square itself, but much of it at least conforms to the height of historic building in the street.

Around St Augustine's Street and Magdalen Street are 19th century terraces of housing on **Sussex Street, Esdelle Street and Leonard Street, Cowgate, Bull Close, Willis Street and Peacock Street**. These have a modest, intimate character typical of the building type and period.

Parts of **Norwich city wall** remain standing on the northern edge of the conservation area, including a tall section on Magpie Road and smaller but longer parts set in a broad open area on Bakers Road (both are scheduled). Most of the wall along Magpie Road has been removed but Victorian terraced housing reflects its line and defines the edge of the conservation area. From these streets there is little large-scale modern development prominent in views of the walls, but some modest brick-built housing on Bakers Street which, like the Victorian terraces reinforces the former presence of the wall in a positive way.

Beyond the historic city **Waterloo Park**, a designed park of 1931-3 (registered at grade II\*), is set amongst contemporary housing development on its east and west sides, but the playing fields of an adjacent school have maintained an open aspect to the south beyond the boundary planting and with it a relationship with the city centre. At the top of the Wensum valley is **Catton Park**, the first commission for the celebrated garden designer Humphry Repton in 1788, now registered at grade II\*. The park had a deliberate relationship with the city below and the spire of the Anglican cathedral in particular. A belt of later planting screens the park from the modern outer ring road but the visual impact of features in the city beyond it remains important.

#### **4. Impact of the Proposed Development**

The aspect of the development's impact with which Historic England are principally concerned is its visual impact on Norwich, and the effect of this on the significance of the city and of its monuments, buildings and spaces, and on their appreciation. While the revised and new images produced to illustrate the visibility of the proposed development from various vantage points are helpful in indicating its possible impact we note that such images cannot be more than aides to assessment. Although produced to accepted professional standards, such images do not fully reproduce the effect of how a viewer might see a scene. We have reviewed the images on site and consider that in many instances the presence of the proposed development

would be more pronounced than the images suggest. This should be borne in mind when considering the visual impact on the appearance and character of the city.

Such is the scale of the proposed development that it would become a prominent feature in general views across the city. In views from St James' Hill on Mousehold Heath and from Kett's Heights the proposed tower and the bulk of the greater part of the development would be seen in combination with the **major landmarks** in the south of the city, including the castle, city hall, St Peter Mancroft and St Giles' churches and the Anglican and Catholic cathedrals (images 8 and 9). Despite the elevated position of several of these buildings, and the height of the Anglican cathedral, the development would appear as a competing, distracting and discordant landmark. These elevated vantage points are locations from which the Anglican cathedral with its grand 14th century spire is seen to best effect and from where the early form of the building can be appreciated. The proposed tower would detract from an appreciation of the cathedral in these views. The development would detract from an appreciation of Norwich's greatest historic buildings, and from the historic city as a whole in a way that other modern buildings do not.

From the **castle** mound and battlements the extent of the north side of the Wensum valley can be seen, as can the partly wooded ridge enclosing the valley. The development would be a prominent feature in these views, with the tower even at its reduced height exceeding any historic or modern building and compromising an appreciation of the relationship between the castle, the city and the landscape (image 12). Other substantial parts of the development would also be prominent in these views, blocking views of the ridge beyond the city.

Little of the modern building beyond the northern side of the **market place** disrupts the character and grain of the cityscape due to the falling ground level towards the Wensum. The proposed tower would appear above the roof of the Guildhall in a view flanked by the market place, St Peter Mancroft and City Hall (image 11). It would also be visible from the first floor balcony of the City Hall (image 53). The tower would form an element at odds with the character of this side of the space, and with it a measure of harm to historic significance. The views from City Hall reflect the building's physical and symbolic position overlooking the heart of Norwich.

The cathedral close is vital to Norwich's exceptional character and significance. In its original iteration the proposed tower would have been visible from the Upper Close, disrupting its remarkably uncompromised architectural and historic character. With the reduction in the height of the tower that would no longer be the case. Instead, however, it is now clear that the tower would be visible and prominent in the majestic views of the cathedral obtained from the Lower Close. Here one can appreciate the exceptional architectural character of what is one of the finest Romanesque buildings in Europe and one of England's great cathedrals, in a setting at once pastoral – characteristic of the more generous cathedral closes – and part of the historic city. New photomontages show that these views would be compromised by the appearance of the tower – unsurprisingly as the top of the existing Sovereign House is itself visible (although not prominent) in certain views. The view from the Lower Close is one of those in which we think it likely that the impact of the tower would be felt far more strongly than the image suggests. The presence of the proposed tower in this classic view of the cathedral would compromise both its

beauty and its historic character. In doing so it would mar the appreciation of one of Norwich's outstanding experiences by both citizens and tourists alike. (The relevant photomontages are images 20, 21 and 60.)

Bishopsgate is an important medieval road into the city, leading from the 14th century Bishop's Bridge (scheduled) and passing the Great Hospital, including St Helen's church, the hospital cloister, hall and master's house (all listed at grade I) and other historic buildings including almshouses. It has now been demonstrated that in views from the Bishop's Bridge the development would be hidden by existing buildings (image 59), but we remain concerned that it might be visible from, and compromise the character of, the Great Hospital.

As we previously noted, the existing buildings at Anglia Square can be seen from the first floor of St Helen's House in the historic Great Hospital; and it therefore seems possible that the proposed development could be seen from open spaces around the Hospital complex. Were this to be the case, the development would detract from the harmonious grouping of buildings and the sense of seclusion which give the grounds of the Hospital their particular character, and so from an appreciation of this remarkable historic complex and its significance.

The information produced to date does not contradict this supposition. Although the development might be hidden by buildings in views from a courtyard adjacent to the chancel of St Helen's church and the Great Hospital's medieval cloister and from a location south of St Helen's House (images 57 and 58) it is not certain that it would not be visible from the north side of St Helen's House. It is surprising that in an image, shown to us informally and taken from here, the tower would be amongst trees. It would be helpful were a verified view to be submitted.

**Tombland, Wensum Street and Fye Bridge Street** share a dense pattern of historic buildings, varied in style but with considerable commonalities of scale and traditional materials. Tombland, in origin the Saxon marketplace, forms the setting for the Erpingham Gate to the Cathedral Close, and is undisturbed by any discordant development. The proposed tower would be visible from within Tombland where Wensum Street joins the plain (image 23), and would be quite at odds with the space's historic character. Wensum Street is one of the city's principal thoroughfares, and its historic character is similarly uncompromised as it descends from Tombland towards the river. The tower would be highly prominent looking down Wensum Street towards the bridge – and indeed would be placed so as to catch and hold the eye (image 25). From Fye Bridge itself the tower would rise above the consistent historic streetscape of Magdalen Street (image 53, revised from the initial submission, is taken from a more appropriate vantage point than the original).

Another area with a streetscape of traditional character and great historic value adjoining Wensum Street is **Elm Hill** – indeed, the picturesque qualities of the street are widely celebrated. Elm Hill's consistent historic character is complemented by the scale and form of buildings at Friar's Quay across the river. In its reduced form the proposed tower would be less visible than the initial proposal would have been, but it would be glimpsed from Elm Hill and from the churchyard of St Peter Hungate (image 55). In these exceptionally characterful and undisturbed historic enclaves even glimpses of the tower would detract from their special character. This prompts a

general observation: it is difficult to predict where glimpses of the tower might be found, and the historic core of Norwich contains a number of sensitive locations whose character could be adversely affected by even partial views.

**Colegate** is lined with buildings of great historic and architectural value and St George's and Calvert Streets, with small-scale red brick housing, some historic and some suitably scaled modern additions, lead from it. The sensitivity of this area is such that even glimpses of the tower, alien in its form, scale and design, would detract from its character. Despite the reduction in the height of the tower, the proposed development would be visible from **St George's Street and Calvert Street** intensifying the impact of existing modern development in views down these streets, harming the significance of this part of the conservation area and that of the listed buildings. The development would also be visible from Doughty's Hospital, a complex of 19<sup>th</sup> century almshouses listed at grade II, and the height and massing of the proposed development would exacerbate the harmful impact of the existing modern development to the north of the Hospital courtyard. The reduced height of the tower does not appear to make any material difference to this impact (image 44).

**St. Augustine's Street** is lined with historic buildings, several concealing 15th-17th century structures behind later facades. Several are listed. The parish church of St Augustine (listed grade I), with its early 18th century brick west tower, stands in a large churchyard, with a terrace of six houses, numbers 2-12 Gildencroft, at the southern end of the street. The proposed development would dominate all this. The residential tower would rise above the hitherto consistent roofline of St Augustine's Street while the bulk of the proposed development would greatly exacerbate the already harmful effect of the existing buildings of Anglia Square (images 15 and 16). The reduced tower and the revised development overall would still be an overwhelming presence in views of and from St Augustine's Church and the adjacent cottages. A substantial block of building would face the church and cottages and the proposed tower would dominate their setting, resulting in marked harm to their historic significance (images 32 and 33).

In the southern part of **Magdalen Street** there are continuous historic buildings close to the roadside, consistent in form and scale. Unsurprisingly, the proposed development would have a much more intense impact than the existing buildings of Anglia Square (image 42). The reduction in height of the tower is unlikely to diminish this impact materially.

Around Magdalen and St Augustine's Streets are the 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces of housing on Sussex Street, Esdelle Street and Leonard Street, Cowgate, Bull Close, Willis Street and Peacock Street. These have a modest, intimate character typical of the building type and period. Although the bulk of development would be hidden by the buildings of the southern side of Sussex Street, the tower might still be visible across the open ground at the western end of the street (image 51). At the end of Cowgate Street the development would intensify the presence of large modern building out of scale with the historic buildings (image 35). As Sovereign House can already be seen on Leonards Street we consider that the proposed tower would be visible here and could also affect views from Esdelle Street. No images have been produced to corroborate or contradict this judgement, despite requests.

The proposed tower would rise above the section of scheduled **city wall** by the junction of Magpie Road and St Augustine's Street, despite the reduction in its height, in a place where no other building breaks the skyline above the wall. The appearance of the tower would detract from an appreciation of the wall as an enclosing, defensive boundary. The proposed tower could also intrude into views of the former line of the wall and the conservation area boundary which follows it along Magpie Road, where it is defined in a positive manner by terraced housing, potentially resulting in harm to the significance of the conservation area. In our previous advice we suggested an image of the view from further along Magpie Road where the ground level opposite the Victorian terraces continues to rise on Starling and Heath Roads could confirm if there would be such an affect; but this has not been produced.

Relatively little of the building beyond **Waterloo Park** is visible from inside it because of trees, but the spire of the Anglican cathedral stands out, its presence emphasised by what appears to be a managed break in the trees. The proposed tower would be visible, especially in winter when the leaves have fallen (image 48). Almost the height of the spire and greater in bulk, the tower might not simply rival the spire but could prove the more prominent 'eye-catcher' in this view, detracting from the experience of being in the park.

Also beyond the historic city is **Catton Park**, Humphry Repton's first landscape. Repton framed a view towards the spire of the cathedral, which survives. A belt of later planting screens the park from the modern outer ring road but the visual impact of features in the city beyond it remains important. When experienced in person, the view to the cathedral is a more important feature than the original image submitted seemed to suggest (image 1). Although revised images suggest that the proposed tower, and the accompanying development, would be screened by the planting along the southern edge of the park (images 61 and 62) it remains possible that the development would be visible in winter, to the detriment of the designed aesthetic character of the park

Historic England advise your Council that the impact of the proposed development would remain severe notwithstanding the revisions to the scheme since its first submission. The proposed development would continue to be of a scale and character alien to Norwich's historic character. The development as a whole would be at odds with the historic grain of the cityscape, while the tower would still rise within the northern quarter of the medieval city to vie with the great historic landmarks of the city – the castle, the two cathedrals and City Hall, St. Peter Mancroft and St. Giles. The reduced scheme would no longer be visible in some views, some of them important, but the reduction would make no material difference to the nature of its effect on Norwich. When its impacts are taken together, we consider that the proposed development would profoundly harm the character of the historic city. It would mar the richness and coherence of the cityscape, and its form and character would be radically at odds with the city's historic topography, character and grain.

## **5. Legislation, National and Local Policy and Guidance**

### **Legislation, National Policy and Guidance**

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 establishes that in considering applications for planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting local planning authorities shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting (section 66 (1)). Special attention shall also be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area in the exercise of any powers under the planning Acts (section 72). In this case several of the buildings affected by the proposed development are listed at grade I and II\* and so fall within the most important 5.5% of listed buildings nationally, while the conservation area which encompasses Norwich's medieval limits is itself one of exceptional significance, making adherence to these statutory duties especially critical in the determination of this application.

The National Planning Policy Framework ("The Framework" or "NPPF") states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development and that protection and enhancement of the historic environment is an overarching objective in this (NPPF, 7 and 8). Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (NPPF, 184).

The Framework requires local plans to contain a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment (NPPF, 185). Such strategies should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets; the wider social, cultural and economic benefits that the conservation of the historic environment can bring; the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

The Framework enjoins local planning authorities to take account of similar considerations when determining applications, namely the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets; the positive contribution that the conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including to their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (NPPF, 192).

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of designated heritage assets the Framework requires local planning authorities to give great weight to the asset's conservation, and that weight should be proportionate to the asset's significance (NPPF, 193). The more important the asset, the greater the weight accorded its conservation should be.

The Framework distinguishes between "substantial harm" to designated heritage assets, an exceptional phenomenon, and harm which by opposition is characterised as "less than substantial" (NPPF, 194-196). Harm may be caused by alteration or destruction, or by development within the setting of an asset. "Less than substantial

harm” is a term encompassing a broad range of harm from a high level to a low. Where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (NPPF, 196).

The Framework states that that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, helping to create better places in which to live and work and to make development acceptable to communities (NPPF, 124). It requires that planning policy and decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities) (NPPF, 127).

Historic Environment Good Practice in Planning Advice Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2017), provides guidance to help understand and apply law and policy in respect of setting. While in this case the impact of the proposed development is perhaps most readily understood as an impact on the character of Norwich as a historic place, it may also be understood as an impact upon the setting of the various designated heritage assets to which reference is made here (as well as an impact of that of undesignated heritage assets). The advice note’s guidance is therefore relevant.

## **Local Policy**

The positive strategy for the historic environment which the Framework requires local planning authorities to adopt can be found threaded through the local plan. Its broadest expression is in the statement of the vision and overall objectives for the plan. The latter include the protection and enhancement of the individual character and culture of the area, and the protection, management and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment (objectives 8 and 9).

Anglia Square is not specifically identified in Norwich City Council’s Adopted Local Plan (2014) but there are a number of policies in the Development Management Policies Document which guide development in the historic city. Policy DM1 (‘Sustainable Development Principles for Norwich’) states that ‘...development proposals will be expected...to...protect and enhance the ...heritage assets of the city and to safeguard the special visual and environmental qualities of Norwich...’ Policy DM3 (c) states that ‘significant weight will be given to the following design principles in assessing development proposals. Proposals should respect, enhance and respond to the character and local distinctiveness of the area. The design of all development must have regard to the character of the surrounding neighbourhood and the elements contributing to its overall sense of place, giving significant weight to the uses and activities around it, the historic context of the site, historic street patterns, plot boundaries, block sizes, height and materials.’ DM9 (‘Safeguarding Norwich’s Heritage’) states that ‘all development must have regard to the historic environment and take account of the contribution heritage assets make to the character of an area and its sense of place. Development shall maximise opportunities to preserve, enhance, or better reveal the significance of designated heritage assets...’. The Supplementary Text appended to the Plan (paragraph 9.3) reinforces this by stating that ‘all opportunities to protect, conserve or better reveal

the significance of nationally designated assets should be taken in new development.’

Anglia Square was allocated for mixed use development in the 2004 Replacement Local Plan and subsequently in the Northern City Centre Area Action Plan (2010). This Action Plan expired in March 2016 and a site specific Planning Policy Guidance Note for Anglia Square was issued by Norwich City Council in March 2017. In the absence of an adopted Supplementary Planning Document or site allocation in an Adopted Local Plan, the Policy Guidance Note is the only current Council planning policy document that specifically relates to the redevelopment of Anglia Square.

The Anglia Square Policy Guidance Note was produced in response to the particular form and nature of the present development proposals, rather than being a comprehensive options appraisal for the development of the site. It makes some general observations regarding the way development should respond to the conservation area and setting of nearby designated heritage assets but does not draw explicit conclusions about the scale of new development.

Paragraph 3.18 of the Guidance Note states that “the height and traditional character of buildings and streets to the north and east of the site, (most immediately Magdalen Street, St Augustine’s Street and Gildencroft), needs to be respected in the redevelopment to ensure the buildings, streets and their settings are not unduly dominated or harmed by the new buildings.” It goes on to say (paragraph 3.23) “the buildings surrounding the site (other than the office buildings immediately bordering the site to the south) are of a traditional character forming terraced streets of two to three storeys in height, with new four storey flats opposite Edward Street. The relationship between the buildings on St Augustine’s Street and Gildencroft, including St Augustine’s Church, needs to be carefully considered so that their setting is respected in any redevelopment”.

The Guidance Note does not consider the possible visual impact on the historic cityscape of Norwich as whole, but does comment on some specific views. Paragraph 7.88 notes that ‘the redevelopment of Anglia Square offers opportunities to reinstate and improve views from the north of the site to major city landmarks, including the Anglican cathedral.’ However, paragraph 7.87 says that ‘a future planning application would need to address how the proposals can successfully integrate and improve upon the existing townscape character’ and there is a general statement on the setting of heritage assets (paragraph 7.90): ‘new development should be sensitive to the scale of existing buildings in its vicinity and must respect the setting of historic assets.’ It is stated (paragraph 7.91) that ‘there may be scope to provide a landmark building within the site...[but] a landmark building does not necessarily need to be a landmark as a result of its height and particular attention must be paid to such proposals in view of the highly sensitive townscape of the St Augustine’s Street area...’

An additional document which relates to the application site is the Norwich Conservation Area Appraisal (Anglia Square Character Area). This also contains management policies which include respecting the scale of existing development where new development meets it along Magdalen Street (policies D1, D3, E4).

## 6. Historic England's Position

Historic England consider that the proposed redevelopment of Anglia Square would have an extensive and severe impact on the character and significance of Norwich as an historic place, on the significance of the city's greatest historic buildings and on that of many others, on the significance of important parts of the Norwich city centre conservation area and on that of historic parks beyond it, and on people's appreciation of that significance. This was our conclusion in response to the first iteration of the proposals, and having considered the revised plans, images and other details provided in support of the amended scheme we do not consider that the amendments would materially reduce the overall impact of the scheme.

The harm to Norwich's significance and to that of the significance of the many monuments, buildings, spaces and landscapes which we have identified above, would be caused essentially by the visual presence of the development in the cityscape. This harm would follow from the nature of the development, and can be restated in summary by considering both setting and character.

In respect of setting, many of the attributes of setting which the advice note suggests may contribute to the significance of a place or building are relevant, as are many of the elements of a development which it suggests might help elucidate the impact of that development (GPA 3, "Step Two" checklist, page 11, and "Step Three" checklist, page 13).

Norwich's topography means that the great royal and civic buildings – the castle and Civic Hall – overlook and dominate the city, while the scale of the cathedral in the river valley, and the great height of its spire, mean that it rises to join them in articulating and lending form to the cityscape. All this can be seen most vividly from Mousehold Heath. Although complex and continually changing, Norwich's cityscape retains the distinctive character common to many historic towns and cities (or at least those which have not undergone extensive, large-scale modern development), in which civic and religious buildings lend dignity and identity to the broader town or cityscape. As so often in such places, this is achieved in part by the scale of those buildings themselves, but equally by the landmarks which their towers, campaniles and spires create – all structures whose purpose is essentially symbolic. This historic character survives strongly in Norwich, despite its gradual erosion by the pressures of recent development. Then there is the scale and grain of the broader townscape. Norwich's great monuments articulate an exceptionally rich network of spaces and streets, some shaped by the Saxon and Norman development of the city, framed by historic buildings remarkable for their number and quality. The pattern of spaces, streets and buildings, and the scale and grain of the latter, all combine to create a remarkable ensemble. In all these ways, aspects of setting contribute to the significance not only of particular buildings – great or modest – but to the extraordinary significance of the whole.

The attributes of setting which contribute to this significance are those which the proposed redevelopment of Anglia Square would damage. From Mousehold Heath the particular relationship between Norwich's historic landmarks and the wider cityscape would be severely compromised by the intrusion of the bulk of the major part of the proposed development, and the bulk and height of the proposed tower.

The presence of the development would erode, and arguably destroy, the historic character which the city derives from the continued dominance of its great civic and religious buildings. The coherence of the exceptional ensemble of historic spaces, streets and buildings which makes up the historic cityscape of Norwich would be severely damaged by the presence of the proposed development, overwhelming in its impact on those parts of the city closest to it, but harmful to the city as a whole. The cumulative impact of the development, seen across the city, from places of exceptional importance such as the terrace on the castle's motte – or from its battlements, now to be opened to the public – and the Lower Close, but also from a host of other places, among them great spaces such as Tombland, major thoroughfares such as Wensum Street and Magdalen Street, and a host of lesser vantage points, such as Colegate or the courtyard of Doughty's Hospital, would be such as to cause profound harm to the character of the city.

This analysis has been framed with reference to the guidance in respect of setting, but as the conclusion of the previous paragraph suggests, in practice considerations of setting and character are closely intertwined in considering the impact of the proposed redevelopment of Anglia Square.

Given Historic England's assessment of the harm to designated heritage assets which this scheme would cause, the proposals would be contrary to the Framework's emphasis on the irreplaceable nature of heritage assets and its policy seeking their conservation in a manner appropriate to their significance (NPPF, 184).

The Framework enjoins local planning authorities, when determining applications, to consider the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, the positive contribution such assets can make to sustainable communities, including to their economic vitality and the desirability of such development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (NPPF, 192). The proposed development would harm the significance of designated heritage assets, would compromise the qualities which make historic Norwich so attractive a place for people to live, would compromise the qualities which contribute to its economic vitality – both in respect of tourism but also in respect of other sectors of economic activity known to thrive in historic places, and would profoundly harm, rather than contribute to, local distinctiveness.

The Framework requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets by local authorities determining applications, and that weight should be proportionate to the asset's significance (NPPF, 193). The range of designated heritage assets whose significance would be harmed by the proposed development is very large, and it includes, in the major historic buildings of the city and in the historic city as an entity, designated heritage assets of exceptional importance, of European as well as national significance. Many of the buildings whose significance would be harmed by the proposed development are listed at high grades, and therefore among the most important 5.5% of listed buildings, and some are of European importance. It follows that the weight to be accorded by the council to their conservation should be very, very high.

Any harm to such assets should require clear and convincing justification (NPPF, 194). Given the severity of the harm the proposed development would do to so large

and in some cases so significant a set of designated heritage assets, such justification should be compelling. In essence, the applicants argue that their scheme is justified because it provides the only means by which the existing buildings of Anglia Square could be demolished and the site redeveloped, with all the benefits that such redevelopment would bring.

While Historic England have not independently assessed the financial justification for the proposed development we question whether it provides such clear and compelling justification. The relevant supporting statement (Planning Viability Report by Icení dated September 2018) deals with the quantum of housing but does not demonstrate that the same quantum of development could not be achieved by displacing the accommodation within the 20 storey tower – something which would certainly reduce the harm which the proposed scheme would cause, although it would by no means eliminate it. Equally we are not persuaded that it has been established that a fundamentally different approach to the development, and a different approach to the deployment of public funding, could not provide for a scheme which would either complement or be less at odds with the grain and character of Norwich's cityscape and the topography of the city. Finally we note that although the existing buildings of Anglia Square are unsightly and in part not fit for use, the development as a whole continues to serve some economic and social purpose, and the existing buildings, although discordant in their immediate setting, cause much less harm to the wider cityscape than would the proposed scheme. Given these considerations it is not evident that there is clear and compelling justification for the harm that the proposed development would cause.

Finally the Framework requires that should proposals for development entail harm to designated heritage assets this harm should be weighed against such public benefits as the development would provide (NPPF, 196). We shall turn to this balance after first noting the relevance of the Framework's policies on design and then considering the local policies pertaining to the conservation of the historic environment.

The Framework provides broad policies about design, which are generally pertinent to consideration of this application (NPPF, section 12). One of their provisions is that both planning policies and the determination of applications should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities) (NPPF, 127). The proposed development would not be sympathetic to local character or to the surrounding built environment.

The positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, which the Framework requires local planning authorities to adopt, is to be found threaded through the local plan. It is evident, for example, in the vision and overall objectives for the plan, which include an objective to protect and enhance the individual character and culture of the area and an objective to protect, manage and enhance the natural, built and historic environment (objectives 8 and 9). Given the harm that the proposed redevelopment of Anglia Square would cause to Norwich's historic character and significance, and to that of the particular buildings, streets, spaces and landscapes considered here, this scheme must be considered to be fundamentally at odds with any positive strategy for the historic environment.

The proposed development similarly fails to meet the objectives of the relevant development management policies for the historic environment. The local plan expects proposals “to protect and enhance the physical, environmental and heritage assets of the city and to safeguard the special visual and environmental qualities of Norwich for all users” (DM1). The proposed development would do the opposite. The plan expects proposals to respect, enhance and respond to the character and local distinctiveness of the area (DM 3). The proposed development would be harmful to the character and distinctiveness of the city; and such benefit which might be achieved by the reinstatement of something of the original pattern of streets on the site itself would be overwhelmed by the scale of the development lining them, even before considering the wider effects of the scheme.

The Anglia Square Policy Guidance Note provides some guidance in respect of the impact of any development on the environs of Anglia Square, referring to the importance of respecting the height and traditional character of adjacent streets and to the relationship of any development to St. Augustine’s Street (paragraphs 3.18 and 3.23). Although a small part of the development on Edward Street might complement the scale of the adjacent streetscape, the scale of the development as a whole and that of the tower in particular would be wholly at odds with the neighbouring buildings and streets. The existing buildings of Anglia Square pay little heed to their neighbours’ scale and character: those that are proposed would pay less. The guidance does encourage consideration of how the redevelopment of Anglia Square might enable the creation of a view to the city’s major monuments, and to the Anglican cathedral in particular (paragraph 7.88). The proposed scheme does provide for such a view, as part of its reinstatement of something of the historic streetscape. It is notable that the note contains no more general provisions about the relationship between any redevelopment and the cityscape as a whole; and it is difficult to consider the creation of one view of the cathedral from within the development as providing a benefit in any way comparable to the harm that would flow from the proposed redevelopment as a whole.

While it is common for national and local planning policies relevant to different subjects to be in tension, the Anglia Square Policy Guidance Note seems to us to raise exceptional questions. Much of what the proposed development would provide is consistent with the note’s guidance, but it could only be provided by ignoring the note’s guidance about the relationship between the proposed development and the adjacent areas of the city. Nothing in the note suggests that the City Council, in producing the note, anticipated that any development which met its several functional objectives would be of such scale as not only to dominate its immediate surroundings but also radically to undermine the application to Norwich of all national and local policies for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

As stated above, the Framework requires the Council to weigh the public benefit arising from the proposed development against the harm to the historic environment (and against any other detrimental effects relating to other areas of policy) (NPPF, 196). Historic England consider such of those benefits as might be thought heritage benefits would be greatly outweighed by the harm which the proposed scheme would cause to Norwich’s significance. It is for the City Council to undertake the overall planning balance, and we do not comment on the weight to be accorded to

other public benefits arising from the scheme. Historic England do, however, remind the council of the very great weight which should be accorded to the conservation of the designated heritage assets whose significance would be harmed in this case, and of the statutory duties relating to the determination of applications affecting listed buildings and conservation areas.

We also note that in articulating the nature of sustainable development, the Framework states, 'achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives)' (NPPF, 8). One of these objectives is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our historic environment. Given the severity of the harm which the proposed development would cause to Norwich's historic significance, it is very clear that in this case the scheme before your council fails emphatically to meet this aspiration.

We are aware that an alternative approach to the redevelopment of Anglia Square has been put forwards by the Cathedral, Magdalen and St Augustine's Forum, a local group. This approach has been informed by public consultation and seeks to respond to the needs and concerns of the local community. Although the Forum's approach is only presented by simple, indicative plans, Historic England consider that it offers the prospect of realising the Framework's vision of sustainable development encompassing economic, social and environmental benefits in a way in which the proposed development could not. Certainly it offers the prospect of realising the opportunity that the redevelopment of Anglia Square presents to enhance its environs, and the perhaps the wider cityscape, rather than severely harming them. This would be, potentially, the sort of scheme consistent with the aspirations and requirements of local and national policy which it would be eminently appropriate to support with the substantial levels of public funding upon which the proposals set out in the current planning application would depend

Historic England strongly object to the granting of permission on the grounds of the harm the proposed development would cause to Norwich's historic character and to the significance of designated heritage assets, as described above. We would very much welcome the opportunity to engage with the Council, the community and the applicants to consider a revised approach to Anglia Square which would secure the site's redevelopment in a manner in accord with the character of Norwich. If the Council are minded to grant permission for the current proposals we will refer the case to the National Planning Casework Unit and ask that it be called in for determination by the Secretary of State in view of the exceptional nature and national importance of the questions to which the proposals give rise.

## **Recommendation**

Historic England strongly object to the application on heritage grounds and recommend that the City Council should refuse to grant planning permission. Despite the reduction in the height of the proposed tower the development would result in severe harm to Norwich's historic character, to the historic significance of the Norwich city centre conservation area as a whole, to several important spaces within

it and to numerous scheduled monuments, listed buildings and registered historic parks, many of them designated at a high grade and some of European significance.

We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of the Framework, and note in particular both that the Framework requires that economic, social and environmental gains should be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system, and that the great weight it accords to the conservation of designated heritage assets should be greater the more important the asset or assets (paragraphs 8 and 193). In this case, the proposed development would cause severe harm to the historic environment, while the importance of the designated heritage assets whose significance would be harmed by the development rather than conserved could scarcely be greater.

In determining this application your Council should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the buildings or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the application. If you propose to determine the application in its current form and are minded to grant consent we will refer the case to the National Planning Casework Unit and request it to be called in for determination by the Secretary of State. Please inform us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



David Eve  
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas  
e-mail: david.eve@historicengland.org.uk