



NORTHUMBERLAND & NEWCASTLE SOCIETY

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Planning Department
Newcastle City Council
Civic Centre
Newcastle upon Tyne
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5 February 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

East Pilgrim Street Proposed Tower Block.

It was with some disbelief that we saw in The Journal (January 16) that a scheme for a 14 storey office block on the former site of the Bank of England at the foot of Pilgrim Street is shortly to become a planning application after having been prepared in discussion with the city planners. It seems to us that this development in breach of two of the council's important design policies.

First, the East Pilgrim Street Preferred Option which was approved in 2008 after public consultation shows the site as part of the southern area. The policy for this area is that it will become "a new urban quarter taking its lead from the fine grain and historic nature of the listed Worswick Chambers and Pilgrim Street properties, burgage plots and other historic buildings in lower Pilgrim Street"; that the new buildings will "reflect the scale and character of those on the west side of lower Pilgrim Street"; that it will "interpret the burgage plots, create new courtyards and public open spaces; that it will capitalise on the gateway potential of the site and introduce higher density uses on underused sites. The imposition of a freestanding fourteen storey block on the site is totally incompatible with these approved policy objectives.

The second policy is that for tall buildings which was approved in 2006 and appears to be still operative. Briefly stated this development fits the given definition of a tall building. The policy at 2.5 states that tall buildings should be sited to have minimal visual impact on sensitive historic environments and applicants are required to show how this is being achieved. In our view it is simply impossible for the architects to comply with this requirement.

There is the usual talk of this being a "landmark" (as if one is needed here) and a "gateway" to the city (not that one will be able to pass through it), of bringing thousands of jobs and prestige offices. But its effect will be to negate the stated aims of the East Pilgrim Street plan. As a free standing building it will prevent the recreation of a street frontage along Pilgrim Street, open up and destroy the remaining historic grain of the area, including the burgage plots, and leave disconnected and isolated the few remaining historic and listed buildings in the area.

It is not necessary to build high to produce a "landmark building" here. The late Bank of England building did this with its strong and original character, which also maintained the street line and general building height, contributing something positive yet modern. What is being proposed is a statement of the developers' power using architects whose reputation is

for this style of building. The challenge is surely to build something modern but in line with the brief that is implicit in the stated aims of the East Pilgrim Street Preferred Option for the site.

We would appreciate a reply stating how you see this complies with the approved policies or if these no longer apply. If this comes to an application the Society will feel obliged to register the strongest possible objection.

Your sincerely

Mr B Bagnall
Tyneside Committee, Northumberland & Newcastle Society