

Application 20/02167/FL. Argos site. 59 Newborough. Commercial and residential development

Objection to the development in its present form.

(from Jonathan R Allison BA.oxon: M.Phil London Town Planning)

1. It is seriously damaging to the terms of the 'Scarborough Renaissance Charter' to which the Council signed up in 2002.

This stated No2 "We will work together to improve Scarborough's appearance and image, to make it a more beautiful, good looking town. We will give top priority to the quality of the environment, to heritage, the conservation of historic buildings, to architecture and planning for quality in all development, both new build and refurbishment.'

Reasons given below.

2. It is seriously damaging to the terms of the 'Scarborough Renaissance Charter' to which the Council is committed.

This stated No3 "We will insist on the best possible and reject the mediocre in terms of architecture - - - - -"

Reasons given below, as the present architectural solution is worse than mediocre in the location proposed, although in Coventry or Sheffield it could well pass the test of mediocre in the right location.

3. The proposal is a gross overdevelopment of the site.
4. The proposal is of an excessive height for this location.
5. The proposal is institutional in appearance and bulk, unsuitable for the location and for the character of the Historic town.
6. The proposal fails to respect the character of its neighbouring buildings within the Historic town by reason of its bulk, height, detailing, and institutional appearance. It is more suitable for a semi industrial town, not the historic core of a coastal town.
7. Because of its height, bulk, and architectural style, the proposed development will have a depressing effect on its immediate environment.

Clarification on the nature of this objection.

It is agreed that accommodation for essential Health workers and also for students is needed, preferably on separate sites, and that this is of substantial economic importance to the town. However it is also true that Scarborough's scenic qualities and historic townscape is of very substantial economic importance: see the Scarborough Renaissance Charter and the internationally acclaimed Consultant's report "Kissing Sleeping Beauty".

The demolition of the Argos building as proposed in this application, would be very welcome, and is in accord with the Scarborough Renaissance recommendations. (Kissing Sleeping Beauty Para 2.6 Market Square) However the proposed development is totally unsuitable for the site. It is institutional computer architecture imposed on the old town.

The Proposed Architectural solution.

The Visuals under item 4.8 are essential viewing for any serious appreciation of the effects of the proposal on the townscape of the Historic town.

View from the west down Newborough:

The elevation is as bland and boring in appearance as a row of 'Mother's Pride' bread loaves on a supermarket shelf. It could be just another Tax Office, or Accountancy HQ. Compare this with the modelling west and east of the proposed development. Nobody would expect the architect to produce a copy of its neighbour's detailing, but one does expect respect for the setting in a contemporary design.

View from the East looking west:

Appearance even more institutional. Could be a heavily disguised multi storey car park but you can't see the security bars.

Height and bulk:

The proposed replacement building will be larger, bulkier, and higher than the concrete building it is replacing. See outline overlay drawing on Page 21 of application submission. On the corner of Queen st it is 7m higher than the existing building. (23 feet in old money)

The bulk of the building diminishes and trivialises the retained buildings in St Helen's square and on Newborough and Queen st.

Instead of being so bulky and dominant, the least the new development could do would be to open up an improved vista of the Boyes building, both for townscape improvement, and for commercial reasons to strengthen the lower part of the town centre retail core, which effectively ends at Queen st.

The turn of the corner into Queen st is exceptionally badly detailed.

Why is the development so institutional and bad for the site and Scarborough

It is not the fault of the architects. They have been asked to cram far too much development in the form of small units onto the site. The problem is the brief given them by the politicians who have started with a spreadsheet, and given no consideration to the site design constraints. It has been all maths and no heart.

The people who will pay the highest price for this folly, this extreme short termism in approach, are going to be the present and future residents of Castle Ward. It is an extreme example of Municipal irresponsibility in promoting a financial gimmick over the long term interests of the Historic Town.

Possible solutions:

1. Best. Choose a different site and a different location. Say the old Comet site behind the stations or Aberdeen Walk, or both.
2. Less good. Reduce the quantity of units on application site substantially. The number should be determined by what the architects can achieve after they have accommodated the townscape constraints, and evolved a bespoke design, not a computer generated off the shelf job.
3. Much the best. Formulate an entirely new brief for the site, developing the Market Quarter of the Old Town in a coordinated way.
4. Ask the MHCLG for more time and professional help as part of the 'Future High streets funding'.

18th Nov.2020