

# Comments for Planning Application 18/02495/FULM

## Application Summary

Application Number: 18/02495/FULM

Address: Axcel Group Limited 36 - 44 Piccadilly York YO1 9NX

Proposal: Partial demolition of existing building and construction of 3 to 5 storey hotel to provide 158 bedrooms, with ancillary restaurant/cafe, gym, conference room, landscaping and retention of the Banana Warehouse facade|cr|

Case Officer: Victoria Bell

## Customer Details

Name: Dr David Fraser

Address: Fairfax House, 27 Castlegate, York YO1 9RN

## Comment Details

Commenter Type: Consultee response

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: York Civic Trust's Planning Committee considered this application at its meeting on 13 December 2018.

The Trust does not object in principle to the redevelopment of the site, nor adverse to the provision of a hotel here, which could be a positive move for the city - if sensitively executed - and would be in keeping with the Council's Castle Gateway Masterplan.

Piccadilly dates from the early C20, and the Banana Warehouse itself from the interwar period. Built in 1925, this former warehouse for F.T. Burley holds historical evidence of the former use of the River Foss for commerce and trade (in this case, stored and refrigerated fruit) and national 'Imperial Preference' drives following Stanley Baldwin's Conservative Government's election in 1924 in order to bolster the ailing economics of the British Empire during the mid-1920s. The warehouse has subtle Art Deco motifs and has aesthetic value that contributes positively to Piccadilly.

The Trust objects to this application in its current form due to:

1. Over-development
2. Poor-quality design
3. The tokenism in maintaining the Banana Warehouse façade.

Collectively these three factors negatively impact on important historic sites and the river/streetscape.

## 1. Over-development

This proposed site is associated within a wider sensitive, historic space. It is in York's Central Historic Core Conservation Area. It is highly visible when viewed from the top of Clifford's Tower and forms its backdrop when seen from Tower Street (Grade I; York Castle: Scheduled Monument), and visible from the Eye of York and associated listed buildings here (Castle Museum / former Female Prison, Grade I; York Crown Court, Grade I) and its vicinity (31 Castlegate, Grade II; 6 & 7 Tower Street, Grade II; 3 & 4 Tower Street, Grade II). To the front of the site on Piccadilly is the façade of the Banana Warehouse. This is an identified building of merit and on the York Local Heritage List and consequently considered a non-designated heritage asset in the NPPF.

At five-storeys in parts, the proposal is too tall and the massing too overwhelming for such a sensitive site. When seen from Clifford's Tower - a critical view - it would be sprawling and consequently distracting from more important historic and aesthetic views. The decision to box in services on the fifth floor with a perimeter wall only aggravates the massing and over-development issues.

## 2. Poor quality design.

The Castle Gateway Masterplan requires first-rate architectural design if it is to help incorporate this part of York with the commercial and cultural success of the city centre. This proposal is not first-rate architecture. The Piccadilly façade is unimaginative, especially the ground floor arcading, but also due to the choice of materials. The decision to make the form and materials sympathetic to the approved hotel scheme at 46 Piccadilly (approved in 2017, but also currently seeking a revised design scheme - 18/01296/FULM) is a poor one. Not only does this enforce an uninspiring design as part of this application, it would also add an unwelcome monumentality along a significant length of Piccadilly. The rear of the hotel, especially when seen from Clifford's Tower would appear convoluted and the choice of materials are not dissimilar to the 1960s CLASP buildings at the University of York's Heslington West campus - and hence highly inappropriate for this location.

## 3. Tokenistic façade retention

While York Civic Trust welcomes the retention of the Banana Warehouse façade in principle, this should not be tokenistic. The proposed addition of a floor on top of the warehouse facade (albeit slightly setback) would belittle and unsettle the visual effect of the Banana Warehouse's interwar façade. The clipping back of the upper part of the pediment would lessen its subtle Art Deco attribute. Considering the proposed positioning of a restaurant behind the façade, and how this leads down to the River Foss to the rear, greater historic and architectural integrity might be

achieved if the Banana Warehouse façade fronted a standalone two-storey linear building, perhaps then connected to the side with the glazed atrium of the hotel complex as proposed.

In conclusion, York Civic Trust objects to this application due to the proposed over-development and massing of the site, the poor-quality design of the hotel, front and back, and the tokenism in maintaining the Banana Warehouse façade as part of a larger and over imposing structure. These limitations would adversely impact on what is a sensitive historic space with key views of and from nationally recognised heritage assets and scheduled monuments.