



# Tall Buildings in Cambridge: Will they be economically viable or sustainable?

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# Key Issues

- **Does high density development necessarily require tall buildings?**
- **Why do landowners and developers propose tall buildings?**
- **Do tall buildings make economic sense?**
- **Are tall buildings environmentally sustainable?**
- **Where, if at all, should tall buildings be located?**

# Tall Buildings: A Landowner and Developer View

- Offices. Will work in city centres or transport interchanges
- Residential. Commercially attractive if a 'point' building, if others pay for public space and infrastructure. Only works for small non-family apartments
- Retail and other services. Generally only on ground or first floors
- Mixed uses. Will work in city centres but not elsewhere
- Vanity of developers may override 'common sense'.

# Do Tall Buildings make Economic Sense?

- Depends whether developer is meeting full cost of infrastructure and environmental dis-benefits
- Councils should only permit, if these costs are being met
- Tall buildings are expensive, particularly residential, due to services and utilities
- Generally, Cambridge property too low to justify tall buildings for either residential or offices. Premium locations, eg river side, unlikely to be acceptable because of townscape or historic importance

# High Density and Tall Buildings

- **Relationship often misunderstood between density, height and scale**
- **Policy supports accessible, high density mixed use**
- **Tall buildings are often seen as easy win for high density**
- **Key considerations include scale of likely redevelopment and available local infrastructure and services**

# Are Tall Buildings Environmentally Sustainable?

- Capable of meeting low or zero carbon standards e.g. CSH 5/6 or equivalent, but no detailed Life Cycle Analysis to confirm effectiveness of tall buildings, as against medium rise, high density development
- Proximity to services, density and transport access crucial to sustainable transport, not height alone
- Difficult to create 'mixed and balanced' communities in tall buildings
- Other environmental impacts are site specific eg impacts on historic core and views

# Where could tall buildings be located?

- **Where existing services and facilities are available within walking distance and have spare capacity**
- **On sites of sufficient scale to allow coherent provision of local services and facilities, including public transport**
- **On existing or proposed high frequency public transport routes**
- **Within walking distance of major public transport interchanges**
- **Cambridge is large enough to support new subsidiary centres, but only if of sufficient scale**