

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear David Cliff,

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Examining Authority for the opportunity to submit a further written statement in lieu of the planned Hearings.

My submission is formed of two parts – one part addressing the Examining Authority's Further Written Questions (ExQ2), another speaking more widely on the significance of The Angel of the North.

Part 1 –

Examining Authority's Further Written Questions – ExQ2

Firstly, I would like to thank the Examining Authority for reiterating some of the concerns that I have raised throughout this process and for seeking further clarification on several of these points in the Examining Authority's further written questions and requests for information (ExQ2), issued on 6th April 2020.

I will begin by restating my outstanding concerns relating to the DCO and make reference to where they have been reinforced by the Examining Authority's further written Questions (ExQ2).

Proposed Gantries

I am reassured to see that the Examining Authority has requested further clarification on the visual impacts of the proposed gantries (2.0.7 a, b, and c).

In answer to the Examining Authority's First Written Questions, the Applicant submitted the following document in an attempt to outline the visual impact of the gantries on views to The Angel of the North (A1 Birtley to Coal House Scheme Number: TR010031 Applicant's Responses to ExA's First Written Questions – Appendix 1.5.A - Angel of the North Narrative).

As I have already expressed, the quality of the visual renders in this document is too poor to provide an accurate understanding of the impact of the gantries upon views to The Angel of the North. Again, I would like to request that the Applicant makes available higher quality, and more thorough visual renders, or a video visualising the scheme from the viewpoint of a driver as they travel along the A1 rather than the fly-by video currently published online.

Notably, the conclusions drawn in this document do not take into consideration the landscaping or vegetation management plans – they only consider the effect on views towards The Angel of the North in relation to the current tree coverage.

As expressed in 2.0.8, I would be grateful to the Applicant if further details could be provided on the 'typical' design of the gantries, and further attempts at explaining the

parameters for modification of these designs in response to opening up a dialogue with relevant parties. In particular, I am concerned by the potential impact of the ‘super-span’ gantries that would stretch the full width of the widened A1.

Furthermore, as noted in 2.0.9, it is difficult to fully assess the potential impact on views towards The Angel of the North without consistent, clear and precise information on the final placement and number of proposed gantries.

I of course understand the number and placement of such gantries must be primarily informed by ensuring the safety of road users, but I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that I believe that views to The Angel of the North from the road, are as important as views to The Angel of the North for pedestrians.

#### Proposed replacement North Dene Footbridge

In relation to both the proposed gantries and the proposed replacement North Dene Footbridge, I would like to second the Examining Authority’s request for clarification on the limits of deviation and their effects on flexibility of design (2.4.3 b and c).

I would be grateful to see alternative design options that would have a lesser impact on views towards The Angel of the North (2.0.5 and 2.0.6).

#### Proposed Acoustic Barrier

Information on the visual appearance of the new acoustic barriers would also be greatly appreciated (2.7.6 b).

#### Access to The Angel of the North – both during the construction phase, and ongoing

I am grateful to know that the Applicant is taking steps to ensure that there is safe access to The Angel of the North throughout the construction process.

However, I would also be grateful to receive further guarantees from the Applicant that they are putting in place appropriate measures to safeguard pedestrian access to The Angel of the North as part of their wider scheme. No doubt, the widening of the A1 will lead to increased traffic, and I am anxious to prevent any negative consequences this may have on people visiting The Angel of the North by foot (2.8.3 and 2.9.4).

#### Landscaping and Views to The Angel of the North

I am forever grateful to Gateshead Council for acting as guardians to The Angel of the North. They have, over the years, worked hard to make sure that The Angel of the North remains a welcome place of pilgrimage, and a proud symbol of homecoming for many.

I am thankful for their dedication to the work and its immediate context, and the care and sensitivity that they have shown in their development of the landscaping proposals. Furthermore, I am thankful to Gateshead Council for consulting me about these proposals and for their willingness to respond to my thoughts and feedback. Without a doubt, the treatment of the vegetation that surrounds The Angel of the North has a significant impact on the experience of the viewer – whether from the nearby trainline, the road or on foot. It is vital that we assess the effect any contextual changes could have on the dialogue between The Angel of the North and the mound upon which it stands, and The Angel of the North and the road.

I welcome news on any further developments relating to the vegetation management plans that result from Gateshead Council's meetings with the Applicant (2.5.1 a). Likewise, I would be grateful for the opportunity to consider the NECT study commissioned by Gateshead Council in 2018 alongside both the Local Impact Report (REP2-075) and the DCO (2.5.1 b).

I am particularly concerned by the conclusions drawn in Gateshead Council's Local Impact Report that would suggest that the Applicant's scheme could have significant detrimental effect on views for northbound travellers on the A1 with similarly negative consequences for southbound travellers. The Angel of the North has become a landmark for the North East and welcomes travellers home. In my view, it would be heart-breaking to lose sight of The Angel of the North on the approach from the A1, and thus I am desperate to do all I can to protect these views.

## Part 2 –

### The significance of The Angel of the North

It is only two years since we celebrated the Angel's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday but I am aware how quickly original intentions of Gateshead Council Commissioners of this work can be forgotten and become obscured by the accretions of time: the ivy that throttles the life and obscures the shape of the trusty oak. This scheme proposed by Highways England will prevent the Angel from continuing to fulfil the ambitious original commission, so in the following paragraphs I outline what that original vision was, and my commitment to allowing the Angel to play its full role in the unfolding of the future of the North-East.

### The commissioning of The Angel of the North

I was commissioned by Gateshead Council in 1995 to make a landmark work that would be seen from the A1, from the railway and by people using the secondary roads surrounding Low Fell. The principle of the commission was to maintain the topography of the mound. The mound was made from the rubble following the destruction of the pithead baths at St Anne Colliery in the Teem Valley.

### The Angel of the North and site

Gateshead and Newcastle's heritage of coal mining, bridge building, and shipbuilding are built into the site the material and the structural forms of The Angel of the North.

To me the mound was a tumulus similar to those left to us by our Iron Age ancestors. Here it was the memorial mound to the lost history of coal mining in the North-East. The mound has a quiet but powerful symbolic presence resisting the amnesia forced upon this country by Margaret Thatcher's wilful wiping of all signs of coal mining from our landscape.

Without honouring the mound, we cannot pay tribute to the brave and extraordinary 200-year history of coal mining in the North-East.

From the very beginning, my ambition was to make a work that was integrated with the mound and expressed its dependency on it. The Angel and the mound is the work.

Without the mound being clearly visible and its profile clearly in a relationship with the wings, the work is compromised.

The way the work *works* is that there is a relationship between the cusp of the hill and the horizontal of the wings animated by the presence of the visitors. This is critical to how participation is invited. The Angel works so well because it is visited and animated by its visitors, with the visitors' scale put into dramatic contrast with the silhouette and size of the sculpture. The presence of the moving bodies of people held in the gap between two taut boundaries – the silhouette of the top of the mound and the silhouette of the wings – animates the work. In that gap you sense the proportional relations between a living body and this body that is ten times life-size. The clear profile of the curve of the mound is the ground on which the movement and size of the visitors relates to the underside of the wings and their horizontal top edge. This is the zone of interaction that makes the Angel function.

I am very proud of the fact that in daylight hours The Angel is rarely alone.

For me, it is not about visual corridors, it is about the way that the work animates the whole site and its wider context.

#### The Angel of the North as a landmark

The Angel was conceived from the beginning as a landmark. It has become a place of visitation and a sign of homecoming for thousands of local people. I want the work to be the fully visible landmark it was always intended to be.

The work has become part of the emergent identity of the region, a focus for the hope and ambition of the North East, a public visual recognition of its extraordinary contribution to the industrial revolution and everything that issued from the relationship between iron and coal.

The Angel celebrates that history but also embodies the confidence which Gateshead, Newcastle and the North have in their future. It's a totemic, transitional object between the industrial and information ages. If it is going to do its work it has to be 100% visible and it's got to be 100% participatory. Its visibility is part of that participation.

#### The Angel of the North as a focus for life

The Angel has become a place of pilgrimage, contemplation and hope. The fact that it is the chosen location both for the scattering of granny's ashes, the hosting of weddings under its wings, and the place to gather at the time of a solar eclipse suggests to me that a valuable social and spiritual function is performed by this object.

#### Key views and experiences of The Angel of the North

This work is seen in two very distinct ways: from a distance (and often from the moving vantage point of a car) and on foot.

It is essential that we protect these ways of engaging with it from the passing glimpse through the windows of your car to the experience of it sensed fully and physically in all seasons and times of the day: sun, wind and rain.

When you get out of your car, walk towards it, you get a sense of its relationship to the horizon. The Angel may be a landmark, but once you are out of your car you become a witness to the landscape that it faces. The mix of fell and field, road and railway, homes and places of work are full of history and the dialogue between human need and this earth.

The view from the A1 travelling South is my favourite. Having crossed the Tyne, your first view of the Angel is a small but clear shape standing starkly on the edge of the Teem valley. Once you have seen it from a distance, you are primed to look for it again. The work creates a binding relationship between intimacy and distance.

To me, the locals are incredibly important, they are the family of The Angel. I met the lovely man (he is in the *Making An Angel* book) who looks from his sitting room across the playing fields to The Angel of the North and feels less alone. The Angel's shadow is at times projected onto the football pitch and you see two teams playing in the still of a summer evening. That, to me, is really beautiful, the normalisation of something that is a bit strange: a surreal but magical interface between life as its lived; the dog walkers and the people that go to toboggan or to run and this 200 ton Angel.

I appeal to all involved in this process to play their part in safeguarding this landmark, to ensure that the Angel remains a visible symbol of hope and togetherness for generations to come.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Antony Gormley