

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Response to the County Durham Plan Pre-Submission Draft

COUNTY DURHAM PLAN PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT - Consultation October 2013

For Office Use Only

Consultee ID:

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Please use a separate form for each representation.

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Preferred method of contact (please tick):	Email <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Letter <input type="checkbox"/>
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To which part of the County Durham Plan does your representation relate?			Site Ref
Chapter	Paragraph	Policy no 32	Proposals Map

Q1

Do you consider that this policy/proposal of the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan to be Legally & Procedurally Compliant and Sound?

Legally and Procedurally Compliant No (Go to Q3)

Sound No (Go to Q3)

Q2 – not relevant.

Q3

Why do you consider that this Policy/Proposal of the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan is not Legally & Procedurally Compliant or sound? Is it:

Positively Prepared? No

Justified? No

Effective? No

Consistent? No

Q4

If you do not consider this policy/proposal of the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan to be Legally & Procedurally Compliant or Sound please use this box to explain why.

1. The Trust welcomes the inclusion of a policy relating to student accommodation, but considers it to be a subject for a more strategic policy. Around 7,000 students, in a city of almost 45,000, are, we estimate, currently occupying more than 1,500 converted family houses. However, Policy 32 is unsound because it has **not been properly prepared**, for it is late in the day regarding HMOs and has not addressed the step change in the type of student accommodation currently being built and planned, i.e. privately funded and run halls of residence. We will deal with each aspect in turn.

HMOs

2. Most undergraduate students live for their first year in college. In their second year a considerable number move out into privately rented houses primarily in the centre of Durham. The 2011 Census recorded 5,030 students living in 1,227 student-only households in the three central wards of Durham City (see appendix). In addition there will be students living in mixed households, plus those in houses that have gone over to student occupation in the three academic years since the census – there were 21 planning applications for this in the first eight months of 2013. These houses are Houses in Multiple Occupation – HMOs. The Pre-Submission Draft estimates (we infer from claims for exemption from Council Tax) between 1,550 and 1,750 student houses in Durham City which would equate to between 6,350 and 7,150 students at an average occupancy rate of 4.1 students per house.
3. The authorities, both past District and present County, have hitherto failed to tackle the question of student accommodation, even though the saved Policy H9 from the Local Plan stated that division or conversion of houses for flats, bed-sits or multiple occupation for students would only be permitted if it did not result in concentrations and did not affect the amenity of nearby neighbours. The intent of the proposed new Policy 32 is welcomed but unfortunately there is an error in the wording that makes it **unsound**. The term *postcode area* technically relates to the letters at the beginning of the postcode, i.e. DH, rather than the full postcode¹. In order to make this policy lawyer-proof the term *postcode area* should be replaced with *full postcode*, or if this is felt to be too small an area then *street*.
4. This is an urgent and long-standing problem. To leave the details to a future Houses in Multiple Occupation and Student Accommodation SPD is to kick it into the long grass. More detail needs to be incorporated in the Plan and the SPD needs to be worked on urgently so that it can be implemented the moment the Plan comes into force. Not to do so would make the plan **not effective** because it would not be deliverable at the start of the plan period.

Student halls of residence

5. Over the past two years a number of privately managed student halls of residence have been proposed. Two are now occupied, a third is under construction, and a further four are in the pipeline. The reference in paragraph 7.42 is not sufficient. This issue needs to

¹ See <http://www.londonlegacy.co.uk/royal-mail-introduces-new-e20-postcode-for-the-olympic-park/> at end.

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be tackled in a policy. The failure to address this objectively assessed development requirement makes the Plan unsound because it is **not positively prepared**.

6. The halls referred to above are:
Elvet Studios on Green Lane (112 studio apartments) opened autumn 2013;
St Margaret's Flats (110 beds) sold by St John's College to private company;
Ainsley Street is under construction (223 beds);
Renny's Lane planning application approved 3rd December 2013 (350 beds);
Former County Hospital pre-application discussions ongoing (475 beds).
These total 1,270 beds.
7. In addition pre-application consultations are taking place regarding **Neville House** and **Sheraton House** at Sheraton Park, with around 454 beds. We understand these will be privately-managed but with a link to St Aidan's College. And outline planning permission has been given to a 1,000 bed new college at **Mount Oswald**. This brings the total capacity of these large projects – there are several smaller – to over 2,700 places, far in excess of the University's projected increase in population.
8. To date, permission for development has been considered, and permission granted, on a first-come-first-served basis, without regard to location, *vis-à-vis* surroundings or proximity to the University's teaching quarters. Para 7.41 ends with the statement, "The Council will consult with Durham University on all proposals for student accommodation not proposed by the University." The future tense is noted, since hitherto there has been no consultation. We suggest that there is a 'duty to consult' with the University on this strategic matter.
9. The University, for its part and notwithstanding its own *Residential Accommodation Strategy*, appears not to liaise with the Authority on the topic. (It has not, for example, commented on the planning application (reference CE/13/00849/FPA) for the development of a 350-bed hall at Renny's Lane.)

Q5

What change(s) do you consider necessary to make this policy/proposal of the Pre-Submission Draft Plan Legally & Procedurally Compliant and Sound?

1. Delete the word *area* from *postcode area*.
2. The issue of proposed new student halls of residence needs to be tackled in a policy, either by expanding Policy 32 or as a new related policy.
3. Put more detail into the Plan and have the SPD prepared mid-2014.

Q6

Do you wish to participate in the Examination in Public? (Please note that the Planning Inspector will make the final decision on who will be invited to attend individual sessions at the Examination).

Yes

Q7

Do you want to be informed of the following:

The submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State? Yes

The publication the Inspector report? Yes

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The adoption of the County Durham Plan? Yes

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Appendix: Student numbers in Durham

The Neighbourhood Statistics for the 2011 Census² include counts of how many households there are containing only full-time students, and how many people live in these households. The figures are:

Ward	Non-students	Non-student households	Students	Student-only households	People	Households
Neville's Cross	6,851	2,962	2,552	584	9,403	3,546
Elvet	2,259	1,216	1,822	452	4,081	1,668
Gilesgate	7,405	3,425	656	191	8,061	36,16
Sub-totals	16,515	7,603	5,030	1,227	21,545	8,830
Newton Hall	7,316	3,350	7	3	7,323	3,353
Framwellgate Moor	9,869	4,471	48	16	9,917	4,487
Belmont	6,096	2,749	6	1	6,102	2,750
Sub-totals	23,281	10,570	61	20	23,342	10,590
Totals	39,796	18,173	5,091	1,247	44,887	19,420

(The wards listed are on the 2011 boundaries. They were reorganised for the 2013 elections.)

As may be seen, the three central wards have between them a total of 1,227 households where everybody living there is a student, a total of 5,030 students. In addition there will be mixed households where perhaps some have graduated when others are continuing their studies. Calculating the numbers of these is beyond the scope of this exercise.

The figures do not include students living in communal establishments, i.e. colleges, as these statistics relate to people living in households.

Census day was 27 March 2011, in the 2010-11 academic year. Three years on, in the 2013-14 academic year, the numbers will have further increased. The City of Durham Trust noted 21 relevant planning applications in the first eight months of 2013.

² See <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/> Household composition tables