

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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c/o Blakett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
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Durham, DH1 1TH
2 July 2020

Dear Ms Stephenson

DM/20/01487/FPA 7 Neville Street Durham DH1 4EY

The City of Durham Trust is concerned about the number of planning applications seeking to convert family dwellings to houses in multiple occupation or to increase the size of existing HMOs. This is increasing the imbalance between the student population and the long-term resident population of Durham City. Instead we need to promote and preserve inclusive, mixed and balanced communities (NPPF, 8b).

Accordingly, Trustees wish to object to this application which proposes to extend the size of 7 Neville Street. The percentage of properties exempt from Council Tax within 100 metres radius of this property is not given on the portal but it must be well over 10% and so the extension would be contrary to Durham County Council's Interim Policy on Student Accommodation. During the Examination in Public of the County Durham Plan, a main modification to policy 16 was agreed so that this restriction would continue in place.

The Trust also objects to this proposal because of its negative impact on the Conservation area and the setting of a Grade II listed building. The impact is caused by poor design, inappropriate choice of materials and increased prominence of the extended rear upper storey.

The terrace of stone built houses is a particularly strong feature in this part of the conservation where most terraces are in brick. While the frontage is unaltered by the proposal it has suffered from very poor upkeep resulting from lack of adequate management of the letting and can be unsightly. The rear is on prominent view – the submitted Design, Access and Heritage Statement is incorrect. It can be seen from North Road as a view up the Avenue House and Bus Station access. It is clearly on view from the Bus Station and forms the setting to Grade II listed Avenue House. The rear of this property has already been substantially reduced in quality by the previous extension, the use of UPVC windows and being rendered with a white finish. This has masked the original stone walling.

The new proposal will introduce a non-conforming material, wood cladding, and further add to the prominence of the existing ground floor extension with a poor design arrangement for the new first storey. The UPVC windows are again unsympathetic to what was once a particularly good terrace. As the rear of the terrace also forms the setting to the Bus Station it will be highly visible from the new development if it is built.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust