

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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DM/20/03455/FPA 64 Gilesgate, Durham

Dear Ms Morina

The City of Durham Trust has two serious concerns about this application. The first one is about a significant inconsistency in the documentation provided by the applicant. The proposal is generally described as an application to convert the house into three flats (Use class C3). However, in Section 5 of the Planning Application the proposal is described as “Change of use from C3 to HMO C4 No.3 flats with internal alterations, lowering of the first-floor ceiling and new dormer to rear elevation.” This might well be the applicant’s true intention as he has tried to achieve this previously. If it is then the application must fail against Policy 16.3 of the County Durham Plan as 58% of properties within 100m radius are exempt from Council Tax.

Secondly, the Trust is not convinced by the County Council’s Design and Conservation Officer’s approval of the proposed rear dormer. Its construction is an artificial construct. It should not be regarded as two dormers with only a section of infill. It is contrived to introduce a very large single dormer construction lightly masked by the side windows. It creates a large section of non-slate ‘artificial’ lead infill. In principle this should be unacceptable in the conservation area as a discordant roof structure removing a slate roof important in the townscape. In this instance there are very few other dormers or rooflights, probably due to the low pitch of the roof, unusable in conventional construction. It will require lowering of the first floor ceiling to achieve usable space.

The rear may not be on view other than minimally from public areas but it is, of course, clearly on view from rear areas surrounding the property and from properties on Station Lane. It should be a principle that roofs and rear elevations not visible from public areas should not become open to otherwise unacceptable change to the basic structure and materials of the property. In Durham very little is not ‘on view’. It should be noted that there is concern over the small front conservation rooflight in the County Council’s Design and Conservation comment but little for the very large, discordant and intrusive dormer at the rear.

The Trust objects to this damaging roof design because of harm to the building as a non-listed heritage asset and to the conservation area. This is contrary to County Durham Plan Policies: **Policy 29 Sustainable Design Para. a** – Fails to positively contribute to character, heritage significance and townscape. **Para. e** - Fails to provide high standards of amenity for residents. **Policy 45 Historic Environment, Conservation Areas Para. f, g and h** – Fails to understand significance, and character, positively respond to that understanding and respect it or provide appropriate design.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust