

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
17 June 2021

Dear Mr Dalby,

DM/21/01876/FPA Sidegate House Sidegate Durham DH1 5SY

Demolition of existing house and construction of replacement house on same footprint

The Trust objects to this application based on its negative impact on Sidegate and therefore the Durham City Conservation Area through size and design. There is also a lack of information about the existing building and any link it may have to the earlier Baths Cottage. As a potential remnant of an unlisted heritage asset it should not be demolished before this is fully understood.

1. Context.

The building to be demolished is a low key, unobtrusive single storey building nestling into the hillside. Much modernised, it may or may not be, inclusive of the original (at least 1860's) Bath Cottage. This lacks clarification in the Heritage Statement and needs explanation. The potential inclusion is supported by the Durham City Conservation Area character analysis for Framwellgate:

Towards the lower end of Sidegate is Bath Cottage, a historic building shown on the 1860's maps but now unrecognisable as a modernised bungalow of an L-form and set in extensive grounds on the north side of the street, elevated high above street level. Continuing eastwards the street opens up to the

The analysis rightly identifies Sidegate as the former extent of the medieval City and an important route out to Crook Hall and open country – to which the Trust adds its role as an important route to Finchale Priory from the Cathedral. It confirms Sidegate's significance.

The medieval surrounds have been completely altered around Sidegate with replacement of the Framwellgate Peth with a widened road and the demolition of original plots beside it. The riverside developments have encroached close to it. The surrounds to the east were heavily altered by various mining and brick/tile works. However, these have now gone, and the area is reclaimed as a more 'rural' area by extensive tree growth. This is a valuable factor in insulating Sidegate as a remnant historic street and a character enclave. Durham County Council, in its recent Sands Commons Rights Inquiry evidence and questioning, has sought to diminish the rural status of the area but this is a very apparent and an important sub-component of the inner setting of the World Heritage Site.

Sidegate is now an important remnant with its domestic scaled late 19thC terraces and rural setting. This is easily appreciated looking down Sidegate. It is historically significant.

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The site's inclusion in the Green Belt is recognition of its value in helping to separate areas of development, the historic inner City core and later suburbs, and also as the termination of the separation of Durham from Chester Le Street. This protects the River Wear corridor.

2. Proposal

The proposal is to demolish the existing building and the Trust suggests further evidence is needed to support this. If no heritage value is found, then redevelopment on a properly identified current footprint would be seen as possible.

The major issue the Trust sees in the current replacement is its size. It also sees discordance in the way newer cladding elements are introduced into the general traditional building style adopted.

The large new building (four storeys) intrudes into Sidegate and dominates it in views up and down the street. It rises over the view of adjacent trees and their canopy, failing to replicate the recessive quality possessed by the current building and decreasing the 'rural' character of the street. This also works against the openness of the Green Belt area. There is some doubt over the true extent of the footprint related to temporary/permanent buildings and thus reduction of Green Belt area and this needs clarification. The relationship of the proposed building to the original including hardstanding has not been made available. Also missing is information to demonstrate the relationship to the other existing buildings on Sidegate.

The adoption of more contemporary type of cladding for the window bays reinforces its large scale and pushes it towards a mixed commercial character, contrasting with the adjacent domestic terraces. It also partly links it stylistically to the nearby Radisson Blu hotel building.

3. Policies

The proposal fails against **County Durham Plan** Policies as follows:

Policy 20 Green Belt - Fails against NPPF Policy 13 Protecting Green Belt Land, d) Purpose to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns - c) the proposal will result in a building that results in disproportionate additions over and above the size of an original building. As clarified by the NPPF supporting text (Para 145) development is appropriate only if it does *'not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development'*

Policy 44 Historic Environment, Conservation Areas, f) Fails to understand significance, character and appearance of the conservation area and show how this has informed high quality proposals and respect local distinctiveness. **g)** Fails to regard conservation area character appraisal, **h)** Fails to respect the positive characteristics of the area in appropriate design - massing, height, and materials.

Policy 45 Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site c) Fails to protect or enhance the immediate (*inner*) or wider setting.

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It fails against **Durham City Neighbourhood Plan** policies as follows:

Policy D4: Building Housing to the Highest Standards, Fails as new housing, not being of high quality design relating to: a) the character and appearance of the local area; and b) aesthetic qualities.

Policy G4: Enhancing the Beneficial Use of the Green Belt. d) It fails because the proposal contributes to harm to the overall quality of the Green Belt environment, particularly its openness.

Policy H1: Protection and Enhancement of the World Heritage Site, c) Fails to use materials and finishes appropriate to the vernacular, context and setting, d) Fails to seek balance in terms of scale, massing, and form.

Policy H2: The Conservation Areas, Durham City Conservation Area, g) Fails to protect important view of the Durham City Conservation Area from viewpoint (Sidegate) within the Conservation Area. i) Fails to have appropriate scale and massing, j) Fails to have materials and detailing appropriate to the vernacular, context and setting. k) Fails to use high quality design sympathetic to the character and context of the local area and its significance and distinctiveness, and to the immediate landscape.

Policy S1: Policy S1: Sustainable Development Requirements of all Development and Re-development Sites Including all New Building, Renovations and Extensions, c) Fails to harmonise with its context in terms of scale, massing, height, materials, and hard landscaping; d) Fails to conserve the significance of the setting, character, local distinctiveness, and the contribution made to the sense of place by the Neighbourhood's designated and non-designated heritage assets;

The Trust therefore objects to this application.

Yours sincerely,

Francis Pritchard
Honorary Secretary
City of Durham Trust.