

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

Dear Mr Dalby,

DM/21/02198/FPA Land Opposite Aldin Grange House Aldin Grange Terrace Bearpark
The construction of 3 new detached dwellings with integral on site parking and Garages with shared site access from Auton Stile Road

The Trust objects to this application based on removal and threat to trees, poor access, and high negative impact on local character, an area of countryside and edge of Green Belt.

1. Context.

The Trust is sympathetic to the need to resolve the upkeep of this land and to ensure a stable and balanced community in Bearpark. However, there are substantial concerns about this proposal.

The site has not been put forward as a potential housing site in the 2019 Strategic Housing Land Availability assessment (SHLAA) and is of a sufficient size (2.7ha, limit 2.0ha) to be included as a brownfield site if that had otherwise been an appropriate designation. The site is on the edge of the built area of Bearpark, the only break in the 'green' village fringe on this side of the road is from the two houses adjacent to the east of the site. Its appearance is of countryside edge, and it is adjacent to the Green Belt forming its boundary. It also plays a role in separating Durham from the villages and these from each other. It shares and contributes to the landscape of the Green Belt and is a supporting landscape element for it. It has remained undeveloped from at least the 1850s and the rear boundary may be much older than that. It appears to never have been developed and would possibly have formed part of the historic functions of the area, important from the Norman occupation forwards. Despite the front overgrown hedge, it is very much 'countryside'.

The green break the site offers, and its trees, define the character of this edge of the village and the lead out to Aldin Grange Bridge and its surrounding countryside.

The more recently developed site to the west of the site has a very groomed appearance, suburban in character and in distinct contrast with this site as it is currently and areas it adjoins.

2. Proposal

The proposal is presented over the tree survey plan but gives no clear indication of how the trees to be kept will be impacted upon or how the proposed hedging will work with the development. With tree retention restricted to the east and west ends of the site the impact will be very substantial. The site will present as 'cleared' and significantly reshaped and built over during development. It is a very substantial change in character. There is no submitted information on what the character of the area is or how this development responds to and

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supports it. There is no design and access statement. There is no evidence of how the development fits into the village and its housing needs.

The proposed large, detached houses crowd in on the rear boundary. Access and parking arrangements lead to a very tight entry drive close on the back of a proposed 1.8m footpath. It is awkwardly opposite a road junction.

The rear hedge retention and reinforcement are not likely to materialise because of the proximity of the rear of the houses and patios that will inevitably lead to a desire to keep the open views of the surrounding countryside. The front, hemmed in by drive access and visibility requirements, is cut into with a footpath. Inevitably this will lead to a failure for any substantial hedging to reappear. It is not possible on the layout submitted and very unlikely to be welcome if the adjacent development frontage is an example. There is no information on why the tree in the centre of the site must be felled. The larger frontage trees will be threatened by the excavations and level changes for the drive and footpath. The landscaping shown on plan and sections will prove illusory. As an example, the drive three point turning head immediately abuts the new path with no planting gap, but a hedge is shown between the two. No information is submitted on how the hedges might be retained, and they should be regarded as at substantial risk of damage and potential loss.

The house design has little relationship to the character of the area. The potential for future proofing the houses and increasing their sustainability is not designed in. The heat pump shown on the energy assessment list appears not to be a proposal as it is unscored. The proposals also include wood burning stoves.

The poor condition of the front boundary and lack of site maintenance are not valid reasons to justify a high intensity development. The proposal clears a green site, replaces it with high intensity development that adversely alters the character of the area. It has a negative impact on the street and adjacent Green Belt. It is an inappropriate development on the village fringes and surrounding countryside. It lacks information, removes trees unnecessarily and fails to achieve a reasonable standard of sustainability to help combat climate change. It is 'ribbon' development along Auton Stile.

3. Policies

The proposals fail against the following policies.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

NPPF 12 – Achieving Well Designed Places.

Para. 130 b – Failure to ensure good layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.

Para. 130 c – Failure to be sympathetic to local character and surrounding landscape setting

Para. 130 d – Failure to establish a strong sense of place.

Para. 131 – Failure to retain trees or allow for adequate new tree planting

NPPF 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Para 174 b – Failure to recognise the intrinsic character of the countryside

Para 174 d – Failure to provide net biodiversity gain.

County Durham Plan

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Policy 6 - Development on unallocated sites.

Para b The development will contribute to coalescence with neighbouring developments and cause ribbon development.

Para d – the development is not appropriate in scale, design, layout, and location or setting in relation to the settlement

Para e. The vehicle access will be prejudicial to highway safety

Policy 10 – Development on the Countryside.

Para. m – The development will increase coalescence between settlements

Para, n – The development will increase ribbon development.

Para. o The development will impact adversely on the setting of a settlement

Policy 20 Green Belt

The development forms the boundary to the Green Belt and fails to protect it in accordance with **NPPF Policy 13** Protecting the Green Belt **Paras. 147/148**. It causes harm through inappropriate development on the boundary, through tree removal, coalescence of settlements and reduction in openness.

Policy 29 Sustainable Design

Para. a – The development is not locally distinctive and fails to contribute positively to the area’s character and landscape features.

Para. c – Fails to minimise greenhouse gas emissions

Para d – Fails to minimise the use of non-renewable and unsustainable resources.

Landscape Proposals

Para. g – Fails to respond creatively to landscape features or wildlife habitats

Para. i – It fails as an edge of settlement development to provide for an appropriate level of structural landscaping to screen and assimilate the development into its surroundings and provide an attractive new settlement boundary.

Policy 39 Landscape

The proposal will create unacceptable harm to the landscape. They fail to mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects

Policy 40 Trees Woodland and Hedges

Trees – the proposals fail to retain existing trees and fail to adequately propose replacement planting.

Hedges – The proposals remove existing hedges of amenity and biodiversity value, failing to retain the existing hedges or provide adequate replacements.

Policy 41 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The proposals fail to provide a net gain for biodiversity

The Trust therefore objects to this application.

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust.