

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Phone (0191) 386 2595
Email: chair@durhamcity.org
Web site: <http://www.DurhamCity.org>

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

Dear Mr Jones

DM/21/02360/FPA: Sniperley Park

The City of Durham Trust objects strongly to the submission and validation of this application prior to the agreement by Durham County Council of a comprehensive masterplan for the whole of the Sniperley Park site. This is clearly in breach of Policy 5 of the *County Durham Plan* (CDP) which states:

“Development is required to be comprehensively masterplanned and to demonstrate how the phasing of development on these sites will have regard to the provision and timing of the infrastructure and services necessary to support them.”

Policy 4 of the CDP defines the Sniperley Park allocation (H5) as consisting of 107.8 Ha and providing 1,700 dwellings. This application covers just 20 Ha and would provide 370 dwellings. It is a small fraction of the full allocation.

Among the many documents submitted by the applicant one (*ES Volume 1 Figure 3.3 Masterplan*) does indeed claim to be a masterplan, but it simply covers the 20 Ha included in the current proposal. Three other documents use the word “Masterplan” in their title (*Landscape Masterplan Parkland* and *Landscape Masterplan Compensatory Area Sheet 01 & 02*), but they don’t even cover the whole of the application site, let alone the whole of H5. There isn’t a single document submitted that refers to development beyond the 20 Ha site.

This failure to meet the requirements of Policy 5 is even more egregious when we consider that the policy text itself goes into considerable detail about the contents of the essential masterplan. These are set out in sub-paragraphs a – l of Policy 5. We summarise these in turn and note that several of them were included as a result of Main Modifications required by the inspector following the Examination in Public only last year.

- a. A community centre that will include a health facility;
- b. A new primary school (MM46);
- c. Structural landscaping to ensure screening so that the perception of an extension to Durham City is minimised;
- d. Water drainage management with no further water draining into the Blackdene Burn;
- e. Sensitivity to Sniperley Hall and Farm through the provision of public open space, reduced housing densities and the retention of woodlands;
- f. Special regard to the significance of the World Heritage Site (MM47);
- g. A linear park through the centre of the site, something that Policy 5 describes in detail in the words of the inspector’s modification (MM48);
- h. Schemes of compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt. This is a criterion inserted by the inspector (MM49);

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

- i. The exploration of opportunities for a district heating network [this item is included in (h) in the online version but appears in (l) in the printed version];
- j. Convenient, safe and attractive cycleways and footpaths to connect to existing developments to the east of the A167;
- k. The expansion of the Park and Ride facility [outline planning permission is sought for this];
- l. Details of all necessary highway works (MM50).

This last requirement is particularly significant, not least because the passage quoted below is entirely the inspector's modification. It illustrates very clearly why a masterplan is required in order to take account of the wider impacts of such an extensive development. It is worth quoting in full:

“To ensure that there are no unacceptable impacts on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impacts on the wider road network (in terms of capacity and congestion), details of all necessary on and off-site highway works and improvements, together with a timetable for their implementation, **shall be agreed with the council as part of the comprehensive masterplan** and any future planning applications for the Sniperley Park site.” (Emphasis added)

It could not be clearer that such a comprehensive masterplan is required to be agreed with the County Council before any particular planning application can be considered. Consequently, this application is self-evidently premature as well as being contrary to policy. If the applicant cannot be persuaded to withdraw this application, the Trust strongly urges the County Council to refuse it because of its lack of compliance with the very specific requirements of Policy 5 the *Durham County Plan*. It is difficult to see how any appeal against refusal on such grounds could succeed.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe
Chair, City of Durham Trust