

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

c/o Blakett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
6 January 2022

Web site: <http://www.DurhamCity.org>

Dear Mr Spurgeon,

DM/21/03362/FPA Outbuilding And Greenhouse Croxdale Hall Croxdale DH6 5JP

Works to refurbish and increase the footprint of existing outbuilding and greenhouse to allow conversion to single holiday let, and repairs to masonry wall

The Trust objects to this application because of its failures against the relevant policies of the County Durham Plan as detailed below; the inadequacy of the supporting information that has been submitted; and the lack of any strategic planning context for this application as it relates to Croxdale Hall and its setting, a listed heritage asset and a Grade II* Registered Garden.

While the application, considered in isolation, might appear to be a relatively minor change, the Trust has serious concerns about aspects of the proposal and about the inadequate detailing within the application, particularly means of vehicle access.

Context

A previous change in use for the Hall chapel to enable use as a wedding venue was approved but with minimal response to issues the Trust raised as comments. Parking was dealt with directly by the County Council with the applicant with no accessible public information. The solution to parking was stated in the delegated report on the application as being in a field. This is another application for both change in use and complete rebuild of a feature with potential to impact on the Hall and its setting. Change in and around the Hall needs a clear explanation of how these and any future changes will cumulatively impact on historic significance. The greenhouse/outbuilding is within the Grade II* Registered Garden. The Historic England assessment of the walled garden considers the interior wall of the structure to be of interest, potentially 18thC with historic horticultural connections. It does not appear to be served by existing vehicle access, and this is not clarified by the applicant.

Proposal

The potting shed/greenhouse are demolished and an approximation of their footprint and height is rebuilt as holiday accommodation. Two new openings are made within the historic wall to allow the unit to function. Although a structural survey is submitted, there no detailing by elevation of how the openings will be formed and what their impact on historic significance will be. Repair of the historic wall is to be part of the works, but greater detail is needed. No vehicle or construction access is shown or referred to. Any cumulative impacts with other developments on the estate are not analysed. Any impact on the walled garden or estate through access is therefore unknown.

Comment

As already noted, there has already been an approval for the use of the Hall chapel as a wedding venue. This will increase future vehicle access, as would the current application. Neither the current nor previous application has been accompanied by the information about the strategic

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context which should be a pre-requirement for an estate with a Hall, Park, and Garden of this quality and historic significance. Supporting detail is especially minimal and fails to cover basic aspects such as access and parking. This leads to a failure to identify any cumulative impact on the Hall and Garden setting. An overall plan is essential, particularly if further changes are being considered. Piecemeal approval, application by application, can lead to unforeseen cumulative harm. Detailed comments are:

1. No vehicle access or nearby parking is shown, and this would have impacts on the Garden and its setting. The applicant suggests potential for use of the accommodation by the 'ambulant disabled'. Drop off and pick up by car and parking somewhere in the vicinity is usually the essential minimum access for holiday accommodation. Access to an 'ambulant disabled' standard will be needed. It is presumed that this will be added, and it needs explanation, its impact understanding and mitigation put in place.
2. The historic wall is penetrated by two new openings. To appreciate what work is needed to the wall and impact of the new openings, high quality elevational survey drawings are needed. These should then show areas needing repair, new treatments, and the openings.
3. No means of sewage disposal is shown, and this may have implications for the Garden setting through disturbance - dependent on method.
4. The patio provision is of a design unrelated to the rest of the walled garden.

Planning Policies

As submitted, the proposals fail against the following:

County Durham Plan

Policy 8 Visitor Accommodation

1. As new visitor accommodation the application should not be supported for the following reason:
 - a. The proposals fail because the accommodation access, landscaping and presumed car access and parking have not been demonstrated as being appropriate to the scale and character of the area.
 2. As the proposals are for visitor accommodation in the countryside, they should not be supported until they meet criterion (a) and also:
 - c. Confirm they are necessary to meet an identified visitor need; and
 - e. Respect the character of the countryside.

Policy 10 Development in the Countryside

Development of Existing Buildings

The development has not been demonstrated as necessary.

- h. As a change of use of an existing building the proposals fail to demonstrate:
 2. The enhancement of the building's immediate setting;
 4. The optimal viable use of a heritage asset consistent with their conservation.

General Design Principles for all Development in the Countryside

As new development in the countryside the proposals do not accord with all other relevant development plan policies.

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Policy 29 Sustainable Design

The development proposals fail to achieve a well designed place.

- a. They do not contribute positively to an area's character, identity and heritage significance, and landscape features.

The landscape proposals do not:

- g. Respond creatively to existing features of landscape or heritage interest.
- i. Reflect in the detailed design any features characteristic of the locality such as boundaries, paving materials and plant species.

Policy 44 Historic Environment

The development fails to sustain the significance of a non-designated heritage asset and the contribution made by its setting. The development proposals fail to contribute positively to the built and historic environment (*harm from presumed vehicle access and parking*).

Designated Assets

The submission fails to give sufficient weight to the conservation of a designated asset and its setting. It also fails to identify whether the development leads to harm to the designated heritage assets. The public benefit is minimal.

Registered Parks and Gardens

e. The sustainable management of the landscape, its features and setting is not demonstrated in the submission.

The Trust therefore objects to this application because of its specific failures against the Council's adopted planning policies as discussed above, and the inadequacy of the supporting information.

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust