

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
22 February 2022

Dear Ms Penman,

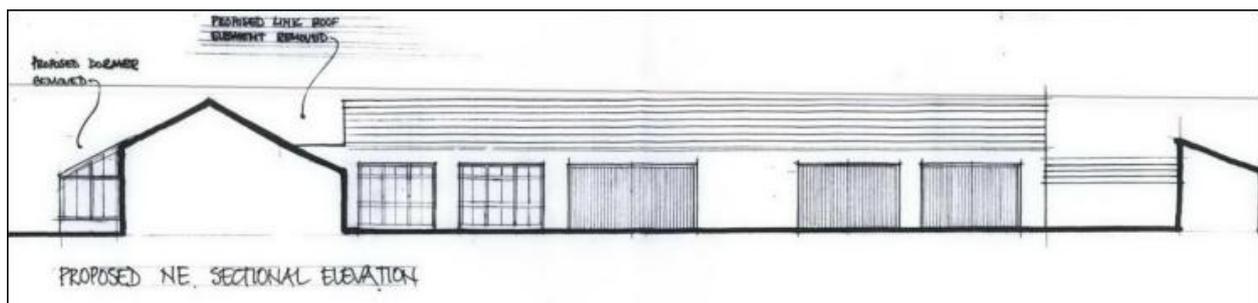
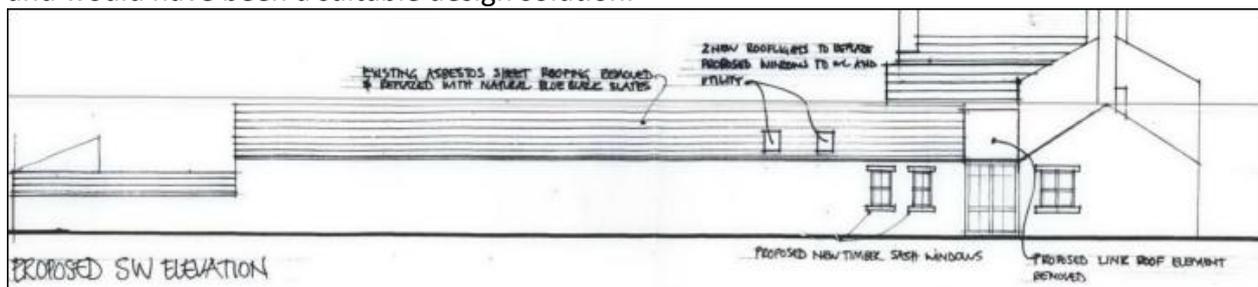
DM/21/02984/FPA Low Burn Hall Farm Darlington Road Durham DH1 3ST
Construction of 2 no. rear dormer windows

The Trust objects to this application because of its inappropriate design and negative impact on a conservation area, the green belt, the Woodland Trust area and the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan's (DCNP) Emerald Network.

Context

The 18th/19thC farmhouse complex is part of a key green infrastructure area between the Croxdale and Burnhall historic estates. It was once part of the Burnhall estate and is part of the Burnhall Conservation Area. It is also within the Green Belt and close to the River Wear. The surrounding area is part of the DCNP Emerald Network that draws a range of open spaces into green corridors. The Woodland Trust has taken over the fields surrounding the farmhouse and has developed an area of important establishing woodland open to the public. Public footpaths cross close to the farmhouse and it is on view from them and the Woodland Trust area. How the farm complex is changed is therefore of heritage, open space and Green Belt significance. It is in a sensitive area.

The farmhouse has had a complex and difficult planning history. It was first approved for conversion to part residential and outbuildings in 2008 (4/08/00929/FPA). The detailing to the outbuilding extension that is the subject of this application was not considered appropriate and it was redesigned and agreed under condition in 2009. This represented a reasonable compromise and would have been a suitable design solution.



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However this outbuilding was demolished and part rebuilt without the benefit of planning approval. It was approved retrospectively in 2009 (4/09/00720/FPA and 4/09/00721/CAC). The ridge height was increased. An extension to the garage/workshop was approved in 2013 (CE/13/00904/FPA). Rooflight sizes may have increased as shown in the new submitted drawings. Despite these changes the outbuildings remain subordinate to the main farmhouse and reflect the typical Durham farm complex – important in avoiding presenting the house and outbuildings as a monolithic grouping. The other barn buildings have also been separately converted to residential use.

Proposal

There is scant information presented in the application on the heritage context and what has been a convoluted planning history. The proposals involve the creation of a new dwelling with front and rear access separated from the farmhouse – not identified in the application. To enable this there are two very poor first floor flat roofed extensions – under-described as dormers. Two of the garage/workshop doors are replaced in what looks like brick, destroying the original outbuilding appearance. None of the detailing respects the traditional design in natural materials of the current building - finishes, styling and design approach are not explained in the submission. They fail to positively enhance the building and impact negatively on the view to the complex from the Woodland Trust area and public footpath. They decrease the subordination of the outbuildings to the main house and will result in loss the traditional farm outbuilding appearance presented to the public. The County Council achieved a sound design conclusion with the applicants in the original 2008 submission; this now complexly undermines that approach with no ensuing public benefit or other acceptable need to create a new dwelling.

It therefore impacts negatively on the Conservation Area, the DCNP Emerald Network and the Woodland Trust area. Although not increasing the building footprint the upper floor extension is very disproportionate to the original building and therefore should not be considered an exception in relation to the Green Belt regulations.

Planning Policies

As submitted, the proposals fail against the following:

NPPF

13. Protecting Green Belt land

149. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building (*the proposals will result in a disproportionate extension of the upper floor relative to the outbuilding*).

County Durham Plan

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 (*part of*) an existing building the proposals fail to demonstrate:

2. The enhancement of the building's immediate setting;

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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.

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

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 (*the farmhouse/farm complex is an unlisted heritage asset representing the rural and estate origins of the area and forming part of the conservation area*).

Designated Assets

The submission fails to give sufficient weight to the conservation of a designated asset (the Conservation Area) and its settings. *It also fails to identify whether the development leads to harm to the designated heritage assets. Public benefit is non-existent.*

Durham City Neighbourhood Plan

Policy S1: Sustainable Development Requirements of all Development and Redevelopment Sites Including all New Building, Renovations and Extensions

The development proposals fail to demonstrate the following principles.

Conservation, preservation and enhancement of Our Neighbourhood by:

- c) Harmonising with its context in terms of scale, massing and materials,
- d) Conserving the significance of the setting, character, local distinctiveness, important views, tranquillity and the contribution made to the sense of place by Our Neighbourhood's designated and non-designated heritage assets;

Policy H2: The Conservation Areas

Burn Hall Conservation Area

The development proposals are within and negatively affect the setting of the Burn Hall Conservation Area and fail to sustain and enhance the significance of the Conservation Area.

Policy G1: Protecting and Enhancing Green and Blue Infrastructure

Protecting green and blue assets

Protecting and enhancing public rights of way and other footpaths

Development proposals fail to have regard to the local distinctiveness, character, and quality of a public right of way and other footpaths.

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. It suggests that the County Council upholds its own previous decisions regarding the design

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approach to converting this outbuilding. In considering any further change, greater sensitivity to the site's context is needed to maintain the quality of the Conservation Area and this important woodland leisure and biodiversity resource. The original agreed approach, if adhered to, would achieve this.

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust