

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

Dear Ms Hurton,

DM/22/00704/FPA 7 The Avenue Durham DH1 4ED

Dormer windows to front and rear, removal of small rear roof peak, insert roof lantern and 2no bi-folding doors to existing rear extension

The Trust wishes to object to this application based on negative impact within the Conservation Area on an unlisted heritage asset and street character. There is a failure to protect and enhance the house and its original features, the terrace, and their character.

Context

This house is part of a continuous terrace frontage, one of twenty-three houses with same main facade but with variations in groups along the terrace. This house is one of four with the same upper window/roof detail at the rear. None of the four currently have dormers although there is a distinctive original bay style dormer to a group further along the terrace. It appears that the original design has been changed as building progressed up the street possibly, in part, in response to the topography. There are only two houses with more recent and discordant dormers. The rear of the terrace houses has been subject to a range of variations at garden level.

The terrace appears over the top of houses in Hawthorn Terrace and is viewed from the rear of these and the flats in Harrison House, the conversion from the former organ works. There are glimpse views of the rear of the terrace down the side streets to Hawthorn Terrace. It forms a significant part to the roofscape in the area due to the street topography. The lane to the terrace is in use, the collection of large wheelie bins is due to the increased disposal requirements of intensively occupied student properties on Hawthorn Terrace that seem unable to store the bins in their yards.

The County Council's Conservation Area Appraisal notes this street as follows; '*Crossgate Peth and The Avenue are streets of considerable character*'. It includes The Avenue as an unlisted asset and considers that preservation should be the presumption; '*The following buildings are not statutory listed but do make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and through the planning process could be identified as non-designated heritage assets. There is a presumption in favour of preservation of these structures*'.

None of this is noted in the applicant's heritage statement.

Ensuring similar treatment to identical buildings is essential in maintaining the character of this street and the City Conservation Area. This has been recognised in the 2016 Article 4 Direction that was set up to ensure that original features were retained and that replacements are authentic. The Durham City Neighbourhood Plan reinforces the requirement to ensure positive

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treatment of such assets and again lists The Avenue as an unlisted asset. Its policies particularly stress the need to *'Sustain and enhance a continuous frontage and roofscape'*.

Proposal

The submission, in some respects, is welcome. It keeps the house in family use and offers more appropriate replacement of the current discordant windows. However, it does not see these as outweighing the character damage that will be caused by the proposed dormers and loft alterations. The Trust raises no issue with the basement, rear, ground floor and first floor alterations

The solution chosen for the loft is a false, poorly disguised large roof intrusion. This has become a feature of submissions on student property conversions and should have been consistently refused on character grounds. In this case the ceiling height to the first floor bedrooms is reduced as there is insufficient head height in the loft. This fails by destroying the original proportions of the rooms and creating a visible slope on view through the bay window. The dormers are a crude device to mask the bulk of the extension. The result is removal of a large part of the rear symmetrical roof, substituting the original slate roof with a bulky arrangement of imitation lead facing. The dormers do not match the prevailing style of the terrace. The existing small, pitched roof window detail found on this and the neighbouring three properties is removed, breaking up the group and losing an original feature. There is therefore character and original feature/materials loss followed by substitution with a discordant contemporary false attempt at vernacular styling. The roofscape is negatively impacted. The front dormer also fails to match the prevailing style.

The proposal is directly counter to the requirements of the Article 4 Direction, the County Council's own policies and Conservation Area Appraisal. It significantly fails against the requirements of the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Policies

In detail, as submitted, the proposal fails against the following policies:

County Durham Plan

Policy 44 Historic Environment

Conservation Areas

The proposals fail to:

- f. Demonstrate an understanding of the significance and character and appearance of the conservation area and how this has informed proposals to achieve high quality sustainable development, which is respectful of local distinctiveness and the conservation or enhancement of the (unlisted) asset;
- h. Respect, and reinforce the established, positive characteristics of the area in terms of appropriate design (including, features, materials and detailing).

City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan

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

Conservation, preservation, and enhancement of Our Neighbourhood

The proposal fails to:

- c) Harmonise with its context in terms of materials;

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d) Conserve the significance of the setting, character, local distinctiveness, and the contribution made to the sense of place by Our Neighbourhood's non-designated heritage assets.

Policy H2: The Conservation Areas - Durham City Conservation Area

The proposals fail to:

- a) Sustain and enhance the historic and architectural qualities of a building,
- b) Sustain and enhance a continuous frontage and roofscape;
- e) Avoid harm to an element of an asset which makes a positive contribution to its individual significance and that of the surrounding area.
- j) Have materials and detailing appropriate to the vernacular and context.
- k) Use high quality design sympathetic to the character and context of the local area and its significance and distinctiveness.

The Trust objects to the application, based on the above points.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust