

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

Dear Ms Penman,

DM/22/00683/PNC East Moor Leazes Farm Bungalow Brasside DH1 5SG

Conversion of existing agricultural barn to 1 no. dwellinghouse including alterations to facilitate conversion (Resubmitted)

The Trust objected to the previous PNC Application (DM/21/03650/PNC) and maintains its objection to the amended submission. The basis for the objection is that the building is in such poor condition and the works so extensive that it fails to meet the requirements for Class Q permitted development (Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 2015). The requirements are clearly identified in Paragraph: 105 (Reference ID: 13-105-20180615) of the relevant planning guidance. It states that is not the '*intention of the permitted development right to include the construction of new structural elements for a building*'. Extensive structural works will be necessary to implement the sketch plans submitted.

The Trust has also identified consequent failings against planning policies that would result from the plans as submitted. This is based on lack of information, inappropriate sketch design and negative impact on the Green Belt and countryside.

Context

The site is next to Union Hall Farm and the very substantial Adventure Valley and Nursery developments. These have cumulatively caused substantial intrusion into the countryside and the inappropriate conversion of the East Moor Leazes farm buildings will accelerate the loss of rural character if not managed well.

The buildings are a good example of 19thC farm design and date at least from 1850, probably earlier. The Trust supports the County Council Design and Conservation comment that the building is a 'a non-designated heritage asset'. Something of the farm setting has been lost through a newer agricultural building and the wider setting loses character through the Adventure Valley visitor attraction. However, this remains an important rural building worth conserving in an appropriate way

The lane serving the farm is shared with the Adventure valley/Union Hall complex and is very heavily used. There are unsatisfactorily resolved issues relating to improvement of the lane for pedestrians and this proposal would add another user.

Condition

The buildings are dilapidated based on the applicant's submitted evidence. The structural report only deals briefly with dwelling conversion suitability. The building is clearly not suitable by form and condition for conversion to a dwelling by only insertion of windows and doors and

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necessary services. This is also spelt out in the guidance quoted above – ‘*Therefore it is only where the existing building is **already suitable for conversion** to residential use that the building would be considered to have the permitted development right*’.

Proposals

The submitted sketch elevations fail to make clear how much of the building is to be rebuilt or renovated. However, what can be assumed from the sketch plans indicates that the proposal as submitted will result in complete or substantial rebuilding and unsympathetic alterations. It is not clear whether the existing walls are suitable for residential building use and whether they may need structural work to ensure this. Walls are currently collapsed as are sections of the roofs. Other walls are cracked and leaning. Ceiling head heights are not indicated, and roofs may require raising to ensure this. Insertion of a mezzanine is clearly a structural change and may well cause the need to raise the roof and alter its structure, any sections of existing two storey barn (if any) are not adequately identified.

There is insufficient information on the condition of the building in relation to its conversion suitability, materials, farm history, or heritage value. Materials need to be detailed. The design shown is inappropriate for the conversion of a heritage asset in the countryside and Green Belt. It fails to respect window and door conventions that have played a part in the conversion of agricultural buildings approved elsewhere under full planning applications.

Planning Policies

As submitted, the proposals would fail against the following:

County Durham Plan

Policy 10 Development in the Countryside

Development of Existing Buildings

h. As a change of use of an existing building the proposals fail to demonstrate:

1. *In relation to a building that already makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area that this is capable of conversion without complete or substantial rebuilding, or unsympathetic alterations;*
2. The enhancement of the building’s immediate setting;
4. *That, in the case of this heritage asset, it represents the optimal viable use of that 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.

- l. The proposals will give rise to unacceptable harm to the heritage, and intrinsic character of the countryside, individually and cumulatively,

Policy 11 Rural Housing and Employment Exception Sites

The proposals, in failing against Policy 10, are not covered by a rural housing or employment exception.

Policy 29 Sustainable Design

The development proposals fail to achieve a well designed place.

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

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 origins of the area*).

The Trust therefore objects to this application because of its specific failures against the requirement of Class Q permitted development. It will also fail against the Council's adopted planning policies as discussed above.

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust