

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

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

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) – Amended Plans July 2022.

The Trust objected to this PNC Application (DM/22/00683/PNC) and maintains its objection to the amended submission. The continuing 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).

Context

The amended plans offer some clarity in relation to design intentions and building condition. However, they remain at basic survey level with no detailed assessment of wall and roof condition or what changes are likely to be required when construction commences. The heritage significance of the building has yet to be properly explored. There is more that needs certainty – detailing of windows and nature of replacement wall and roof materials are examples.

The new plans have also revealed just how much of the building has collapsed. The prominent northeast corner is significantly missing and as is a section of roof to the southwest corner. It is not possible to convert something that no longer exists. There are two sections of metal profile sheet roof replacement. There is a first floor to the northeast barn but not the northwest larger barn. The proposal for the northeast corner is rebuilding and new structural support will be required for the missing section of roof. New structural elements will be needed for the first floor insertion into the larger barn. This is the least successful part of the current proposals where the large barn opening is subdivided horizontally. Ceiling heights for mezzanine insertions or use for residential purposes have been an issue for barn conversions elsewhere leading to proposals to raise the roof.

The buildings may be able to accommodate the proposals as shown but this not fully detailed. The walls are not surveyed in detail and there must be doubt, given the current collapses, that further investigation and a start on work will reveal the need for more structural rebuilding. This concern was shared by Durham County Council Design and Conservation - *'it is not clear if the building is physically capable of being converted as no structural survey report has been submitted, plus the scope of works and potential rebuilding works is unknown. Significant rebuilding may not constitute a true conversion and has the potential to result in a loss of heritage significance.'*

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The proposals cannot be considered as a straightforward or 'true' conversion needed to meet the Class Q permitted development requirements. They include significant rebuilding and new structural insertions. It is difficult to see why the applicants are pursuing this approach; a simple full planning application would be a preferred route enabling certainty for both applicant and the County Council, ensuring details are adequately dealt with leading to a successful repurposing and retention of this important farm building. This approach has been used for other barn conversions.

The requirements are clearly identified in Paragraph: 105 (Reference ID: 13-105-20180615) of the relevant planning guidance. It states that it 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 plans now submitted. The building is clearly not suitable by form and condition for conversion to a dwelling by only insertion of windows and doors and necessary services. This is also spelt out in the guidance – *'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.'*

There is insufficient information on the condition of the building in relation to its repurposing, materials, farm history, or heritage value. Materials need to be detailed. The Trust therefore objects to this application because of its specific failures against the requirements of Class Q permitted development

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust