

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
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7 October 2022

Louisa Ollivere
Durham County Council
Planning Development
Central/East Room 4/86-102
County Hall
Durham DH1 5UL

Dear Ms Ollivere,

DM/22/02347/LB and DM/22/02346/FPA
Durham Constabulary Police Headquarters Aykley Heads Durham DH1 5TT
Demolition of listed police telecommunications mast

The Trust wishes to restate its objection to the demolition of the police mast. It objects to both new applications.

It seems that the mast will gain the unwelcome status of having been demolished twice – the mast having been dismantled already and dumped in the long grass. The significance of the mast is clear and unusually well described in the applicant's statement of significance. However, any damage to the structure from the method of dismantling and its subsequent neglect should not be considered in determining significance. Failure in care should not be allowed as a valid reason to diminish that significance in this instance.

The financial grounds offered by the Police Authority for not re-erecting the mast, as required, and accepted by them when permission was granted to demolish it, are indefensible. Reassurance was given at the stage of applying for listed building consent to demolish in 2012 that re-erection was a viable option. The re-positioning of the mast was so that 18 additional houses could be built where the mast stood. The Police Authority received the appropriate residential development value for that land. Any financial consequences ensuing from the requirement to move and re-erect the mast should have been taken into account at the planning approval and project implementation stages of both housing development and the new police headquarters. If the requirement to re-erect it had not been acceptable to the Police Authority, then they would have had to forgo this significant capital receipt. Having made the commitment that enabled the funding of the new headquarters, there should be no excuse for now reneging on their undertaking

It appears to the Trust that the matter has been left until a stage is reached where the re-erection suddenly becomes an issue divorced from its enabling role in the financing of the original housing and headquarters projects. It was, and should have remained as, a project cost properly accounted for. Budgetary reasons should not be acceptable now, especially given the self-evident neglect of the structure. It should be noted the cost options are demolition and disposal at £223,800 set against re-erection at £496,000 (plus security fencing, if needed). The

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difference in base cost is £272,200. There has been no further involvement of the original designers in the option process.

The Trust had raised the failure to take care of the mast and re-erect publicly in 2018. Enforcement action was considered in 2020 but considerably delayed and seemingly leading to the current application.

There has been substantial evolution in the development context following the evolution of the Aykley Heads business park proposals and the holistic consideration of the surrounding estate. There is a role in the masterplanning for this important and exceptionally elegant 20th century structure. The changing planning policy context since 2015 adds further justification to ensuring that the mast is re-erected. The 'demolition' fails under the following policies because of the weak options analysis and the lack of justification for the demolition:

NPPF - Proposals Affecting Heritage Assets – Paras. 197,199,200 and 201

County Durham Plan - Policy 44 Historic Environment – Paras. Designated Assets, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

Durham City Neighbourhood Plan – Policy H2 Conservation Areas – Paras. d), e) and l).

Yours sincerely

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust