

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
14th December 2022

Dear Ms Morina,

DM/22/03505/FPA DLI Museum Durham DH1 5TU

Refurbishment and extension of existing museum for use as exhibition centre and gallery venue (Use Class F.1) with ancillary restaurant/cafe (Use Class E(b)) and retail (Use Class E(a)) uses, and alterations to landscaping, access, and parking.

The City of Durham Trust wishes to comment on this application, it is supportive of the project but considers that there are points requiring further attention.

Context

The DLI Museum is considered to play an important role in the recognition of Durham's military and community history. Although the original concept for the building has been lost in the later extensions and changes, it remains a well-positioned building that is valued for its relationship to the surrounding landscaping. The maturity of the surrounding tree belt and quality of the original landscaping are an important part of this.

It is within the Green Belt and is also specifically referenced in the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan as part of the local green space.

Proposals

The proposal is a substantial increase over the existing building in extent and height. The Trust considers that in other circumstances it would be inappropriate due to harm to the Green Belt and the local green space. There are extensive retaining walls and tree removal, both constituting harms. The proposals just manage to maintain the building /landscape relationship but the building size and tree removal start to unbalance this.

The special circumstances that weigh against this harm need to be highlighted more in the submitted information. It is because of these that the Trust supports the project. Maintaining the DLI connection and providing a focus for it and the additional community use are particularly important factors in giving this support. In any other circumstance the Trust has, and will remain, opposed to such harm to the Green Belt or a local green space. This is specifically not seen as a precedent or quotable example in relation to any future development.

An issue previously noted and that the Trust wishes to draw attention to, is the area reserved for the scattering of ashes. This should be identified, ensuring that no building works take place over it, and protected with fencing during the building or landscape works.

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The Trust welcomes the three reports provided on the landscape and environs of the site by ecological consultants Delta-Simons. These relate to what the consultants see as best practice for achieving biodiversity net gain for the area at issue, as well as minimizing disruption and environmental damage during construction. They offer a “Biodiversity Management and Monitoring Plan” which lists various environmental factors and interventions in need of monitoring over time, with the repeated stipulation that “An ecologist will undertake monitoring at regular intervals (years 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30) to ensure the continued effectiveness of management activities. An ecologist will undertake a condition assessment and update the management plan to reflect any changes.” The Trust would urge that the Council adhere to the consultant’s recommended actions for the site and commit itself to the recommended management plan for monitoring the site’s continued ecological value.

Yours sincerely,

Francis Pritchard
Secretary, City of Durham Trust