

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
6th December 2022

Dear Mr Shields,

DM/22/03237/FPA Sniperley Park and Ride, Sniperley Park DH1 5RA

Extension to Sniperley Park and Ride by 262 total bays accommodating 29 disabled bays, 18 electric charging bays and 4 motorhome bays

The City of Durham Trust wishes to comment on this application that fails to show how it will function in relation to the adjacent housing development. It regards it as a missed opportunity and lacking in the design quality that such a major development requires.

Context

The land that forms a major part of the expansion is also part of the adjacent urban expansion area covered by County Durham Plan (CDP) policies, a Bellway Homes planning application due for revision next year and a masterplan by the County Council. Surprisingly, the submission for the car park extension makes no mention of any of this significant context. The CDP specifically mentions the need for connections to the new housing under Policy 5(j). The policy requirement is for Park and Ride expansion but it must comply with the detail: *'Attractive and safe links between the housing and the existing Park and Ride facility will be created to maximise its use by residents'*.

The new housing area is oddly described as *'agricultural fields.'* It should be considered a formative part for transport proposals relating to both City and the new Sniperley housing area. It clearly has a close relationship with proposed adjacent housing. It is appreciated that the complex planning context makes it difficult to be certain of how the car park will relate to new housing, but a flexible response could be incorporated into the design.

The current site landscaping is good, and the area surrounding the car park functions as part of the structural landscaping surrounding the housing site and screening for the car park.

The Trust welcomes the expansion of the park and ride as a contribution in principle to Durham's sustainable transport planning. This is the reason that the Trust is commenting rather than objecting to the proposals as designed.

Proposals

As noted, the failure to acknowledge the development context is a considerable error. Therefore, the inclusion of a footpath link into the new housing area is therefore somewhat puzzling. More than one link is also required by the CDP policy. Even though the Park and Ride bus stops might be the most convenient public transport facility for many future residents of the Sniperley Park development, there is no indication in the Transport Assessment as to whether the pedestrian route is of suitable design. At 3m it is the recommended width for a cycle-only route, and a shared-use route should preferably be wider. The Transport Assessment, at paragraph 2.2.8

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

quotes NPPF paragraph 112 stating that developments should “give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements”. The Trust would like to see a proposal where the links to the housing are via paths which have clear priority over internal vehicle movements in the car park. This could be achieved by raising the path and providing ramped access for vehicles to cross it, or by redesigning the vehicle circulation within the car park to minimise the need for vehicles to cross the pedestrian/cycle connections.

At presented, the design is a simple and unconvincing exercise to insert as many car spaces as possible and deal with the ensuing SUDS requirement at the expense of the landscaped area otherwise needed to create an attractive setting. The car park and SUDS basin will effectively clear significant parts of the landscape screening for the car park and reduce the buffer against the new housing. The design of the landscaping and the assessment of the context are substandard. The new landscaping is too minimal. As such it fails to offer any kind of leadership in boosting design quality. This is disappointing given that the County Council is hoping to encourage improvements from the two house building companies through its masterplan for Sniperley Park.

A more holistic and forward thinking approach is needed. As an example, the Trust has previously pointed out that the car park can offer support to the adjacent housing development by contributing to the residential parking requirement for neighbouring houses and apartments. Residential car parking is most in demand when the Park and Ride car park is emptiest. Co-locating some of this provision would support NPPF paragraph 124 through “efficient use of land” as there is clearly “scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use”.

It would not be difficult to construct an objection to these proposals given their very obvious failings against planning policies. The Trust therefore hopes that the County Council will take a step back and seize this opportunity to raise design standards. It can have a positive impact on the emerging urban extension rather than detracting from it. Robust design leadership would offer support for the pursuit of the County Council’s aim of improving the quality of the new housing, something that the Trust strongly supports.

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust