

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

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

Dear Ms Jennings,

Planning application DM/23/00436/FPA | Demolition of existing dwelling and construction of 2no. semi-detached dwellings | Goldrill Farnley Hey Road Durham DH1 4EA

The City of Durham Trust objects to this planning application because it fails to protect the setting of the Durham Cathedral and Castle World Heritage Site as required by County Durham Plan Policy 45 and City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan Policy H1. If the proposal can be modified to meet these objections there are further matters which could be dealt with by condition.

The setting of the World Heritage Site

CDP Policy 45 says

The Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site is a designated asset of the highest significance. Development within or affecting the World Heritage Site and its setting will be required to:

- a. sustain and enhance the significance of the designated asset;
- b. be based on an understanding of the Outstanding Universal Value of the site, having regard to the adopted World Heritage Site Management Plan and Statement of Outstanding Universal Value; and
- c. protect and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value, the immediate and wider setting and important views across, out of, and into the site.

Development that would result in harm to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site or its setting will not be permitted other than in wholly exceptional circumstances.

The first two parts of Neighbourhood Plan Policy H1 are concerned with development within the World Heritage Site itself and are not relevant here. But the final part is relevant:

Development proposals throughout Our Neighbourhood should be shown to sustain, conserve and enhance the setting of the World Heritage Site where appropriate by:

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- e) carrying out an assessment of how the development will affect the setting of the World Heritage Site, including views to and from the World Heritage Site; and
- f) protecting important views; and
- g) taking opportunities to open up lost views and create new views and vistas.

It should be noticed that the wording of both the County Durham Plan (“protect and enhance”) and the Neighbourhood Plan (“sustain, conserve and enhance”) are consistent and neither would permit even minor damage to the setting of the World Heritage Site.

The proposed development is much taller than the existing building it is to replace. The appendix shows plans, at the same scale, of the south west aspect of both. This is the side that fronts onto Farnley Hey Road. The replacement building is at least 3.3 metres taller to the ridge line of the roof and consequently, as already noted by neighbours, the view of the Cathedral from Farnley Mount will be lost. The photograph in the appendix shows marks where the ridge of the roof would be. The plans show that the neighbouring buildings, Farnley Hey and Farnley Tower, are of a similar height but they are positioned differently and they do not obstruct a view of the Cathedral.

As map 2 in the Neighbourhood Plan shows, the application site lies within the inner setting of the World Heritage Site. It is 860 metres almost exactly due west of the Cathedral tower. We have already shown that views to the World Heritage Site will be affected. It follows that the proposed new building will be in views looking out from the World Heritage Site.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy H1(e) requires an assessment to be made of how the development will affect the setting of the World Heritage Site, including views to and from the World Heritage Site, but this has not been done.

The views towards the World Heritage Site are important ones, as evidenced by the comments by local residents on the planning portal. In views outwards from the World Heritage Site the new building will be four storeys high and close to the skyline. Without the required assessment it is difficult to see how you can make a reasoned judgement of this proposal. I hope your professional colleagues may also be able to help you.

Further matters

The garages appear to be 2.75m wide but the latest version of the Parking and Accessibility SPD specifies a minimum width of 3 metres. This SPD also requires each house to have an active EV charging point. These could both be secured by condition.

Farnley Hey Road is narrow, with narrow pavements. It is a residential street and the approaches via The Avenue or Farnley Mount are not only residential but also steep. There is a small hotel next door. If permission is given there should be conditions to restrict hours of work and also to require that Farnley Hey Road is not obstructed by building materials or delivery vehicles.

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Conclusion

The current proposal does not meet the requirements of both County Durham Plan Policy 45 and City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan Policy H1 because it would block important views of the World Heritage Site, specifically Durham Cathedral, and because it lacks the required assessment of how it will affect the setting of the World Heritage Site and views to and from it. It should therefore be refused.

If revised proposals or further documentation are brought forward we hope there will be a reconsultation which we would hope to comment on.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN LOWE

Chair, City of Durham Trust

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Appendix: plans and photographs

Existing building



Proposed building
at same scale



View from Farnley Mount, with proposed roof ridge shown

