

3 September 2023

Jack Burnett  
Planning Development Central/East  
Room 4/86-102  
County Hall  
Durham City  
DH1 5UL

Dear Mr Burnett,

**DM/23/02201/FPA | Full planning application for the construction of a new all-weather playing pitch with associated lighting and the repositioning of the car park | New College Durham Framwellgate Moor Durham DH1 5ES**

The Trust objects to this application on the following grounds:

- the car parking is not “limited to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport” (Policy 21) despite the applicant having three times previously provided evidence of a surplus in provision.
- the analysis in the accompanying Transport Statement does not demonstrate whether there would be an unacceptable impact on the local highway network at peak times or that “appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up” (NPPF 110a).
- the application is unclear about whether the development will lead to additional staff or student numbers attending the site.
- the design is unclear as to whether it gives “priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements” (NPPF 112a)

The Trust considers that there is insufficient evidence of the demand for retaining (let alone increasing) the existing levels of car parking provision, and without further data the presumption must be that the replacement car park is not necessary, and the application should be refused in accordance with Policy 21.

If the car park is to be approved, the Trust requests the following changes be secured by condition, or by revision of the application:

- a reduction in size of the car park by at least 100 spaces to remove the previously identified surplus and set a target for future modal shift
- a raised pedestrian crossing to be provided where the access to the proposed car park crosses the public right of way
- the corner radii of the adjacent junction to be reduced from 6m to 1m

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---

- improvements at the southern end of Framwellgate Moor Footpath 1 to allow cycle access to and from the highway
- a revised Travel Plan to address the shortcomings in the plan submitted as DM/22/02518/DRC

The Trust also suggests conditions be imposed to ensure that the final design of the lighting is put before the Planning Authority for approval and to require limits on the times when the lighting may be used. The potential for the lighting to intrude on long distance views of the World Heritage Site should also be checked.

The detailed justification for the Trust's position follows.

## **Need for car parking spaces**

The applicant proposes replacing 300 existing car parking spaces with an all-weather pitch, and constructing a new car park of 313 spaces.

County Durham Plan Policy 21 sets out the principles to be used when determining parking provision in development. The relevant clause reads:

car parking at destinations should be limited to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport, having regard to the accessibility of the development by walking, cycling, and public transport;

The policy text notes the intention to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document to reflect these principles. The SPD has not yet been adopted, but has passed through three rounds of consultation. Although the SPD gives guidelines for the levels of car parking provision at FE colleges, in conformance with the principles in Policy 21 the SPD provides for car parking to be reduced in accessible locations. The applicant's Transport Statement confirms that the location can be judged accessible according to the criteria set out in the SPD. Therefore, the car parking should be limited in order to encourage sustainable transport.

Policy 21 and the SPD do not provide guidance in terms of numerical factors as to the limits to be applied. The Council has indicated that decisions will be made case by case, "taking into account the location and type of development and any other specific circumstances which are relevant"<sup>1</sup>

No justification is given in the application for the number of car parking spaces required by New College. Given national and local policy promoting sustainable transport and a reduction in private car use, there should not be an automatic assumption that providing a new car park of equal size (or indeed, slightly larger) is acceptable.

The Trust offers the following specific circumstances which are relevant to this development.

Previous planning statements have stated that there is spare capacity in the car park:

## **DM/18/01943/FPA 3-storey extension**

The Summary Transport Statement recorded significant spare car parking capacity: "*Spot surveys carried out over the course of a week and at various times across the day show the actual demand to be such that the average, residual spare capacity ranges from 24% to 32%*".

---

1 Statement of Consultation, Parking and Accessibility SPD, 2023, p.3

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---

The application resulted in the loss of 21 spaces, just 2% of the total.

## **DM/21/03497/FPA** Extension to the sports hall

Regarding the loss of car parking spaces for the extension, the Committee Report concluded that *“given the current surplus of 222 that even when 92 spaces for additional staff and students and 47 spaces to facilitate the proposal are subtracted there will still be a surplus of parking on site totalling 83 spaces.”* That would constitute about 10% of the spaces.

The Transport Statement (Para 2.4.1) confirmed that, post-Covid, NCD were seeking to move to a blend of attendance/online working to reduce demand for car parking going forward.

## **NCD Travel Plan 2022/23** (submitted under DM/22/02518/DRC)

This claims (para 3.4) that travelling by car had decreased from 77.45% (2018 baseline) to 38.8% (2022). The Travel Plan has a main objective in the Action Plan (Table 4) *“To decrease the overall use of car use as a method of travel to and from the site.”* with a corresponding action of *“Dynamic monitoring of parking throughout the year of parking provision and demands.”*

If the Travel Plan has been put into effect, there should be ample data to determine the demand for car parking and the scope for reducing this demand through further measures. This could include constraining the provision of car parking and introducing or increasing the charges for parking permits. DCC Highways Development Management noted, in relation to application DM/18/01943/FPA that the reduction in car parking spaces *“may result in displacement to more sustainable modes of travel”*. Recently DCC refused to discharge a planning condition at the nearby hospital (DM/23/01349/DRC) because of failings in the Travel Plan. A recommendation in the AECOM Travel Plan Response was to reduce the amount of staff parking places available: *“Levels of car parking usage should be managed, as this will help to achieve the goal of reducing single occupancy trips.”* And it summarised that additional parking spaces would appear to **promote** single occupancy vehicle use rather than discourage it.

In view of the identification of surplus car parking spaces in the past, the success in shifting from car use to sustainable modes, and the change in patterns of provision reducing demand, the Trust considers that any new car parking provision should be substantially smaller than proposed in this application. The planning authority should defer determination of this application and seek further evidence from the applicant to understand the need for car parking and the scope for further modal shift.

If the proposals are part of a longer-term strategy to relocate car parking, allowing other parking spaces to be redeveloped to expand college buildings, then this should be made clear, and conditions should be applied to ensure that new parking facilities only become available to coincide with decommissioning of existing spaces.

## **Promotion of sustainable transport**

The Planning Statement identifies various areas of national and local planning policy which require measures to promote sustainable transport. The assessment in section 6 considers that the development will have little impact on the surrounding highway network, and states that the non-motorised access to the site will *“remain unchanged and enhanced”*. There is no other indication as to compliance with Policy 21, including the requirement that all development *“deliver sustainable transport by delivering, accommodating and facilitating investment in safe sustainable modes of transport”*.

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---

It is not clear how the non-motorised access will be both unchanged and enhanced. Paragraph 4.8 of the Transport Statement mentions improvements, but the only ones detailed within the Statement are the changes in the neighbouring area that may result from the Sniperley Park development.

The Trust notes that in the Statement of Community Involvement the summary of pre-application advice does not cover sustainable transport, while the Highways response takes no account of the scope for modal shift.

## ***Pedestrian and cycle access***

What is clear is that the public right of way through the site (Framwellgate Moor footpath 1) will be interrupted by the vehicular access to the new car park to the east of the footpath. No “give way” markings are shown on the plans where the footpath crosses the car park access, so it is not clear that pedestrians will have priority here. Like other locations within the New College site (see Transport Statement p. 16), priority for pedestrians should be secured by using raised pedestrian crossings and ramps. The adjacent junction has been drawn with corner radii of 6m. As noted by Manual for Streets 2, para. 9.4.10:

tight corner radii help pedestrians and cyclists to travel across and through junctions by reducing the speed of turning vehicles. Advice contained in TD 42/95, that minimum corner radii should be 6m in urban areas, should therefore not be taken as representing best practice when the needs of vulnerable road users are to be prioritised

As the advised speed limit within New College grounds is 15mph, there is no need for 6m radius corners which would support much higher speeds and longer vehicles. The corners could therefore be reduced to 1m radius as illustrated in Manual for Streets figure 6.3.

These changes would help ensure that the development gives “priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements” in accordance with NPPF para. 112(a) and provides “appropriate, well designed, permeable and direct routes for walking, cycling and bus access” in compliance with Policy 21(b). This design detail should be secured via a suitable condition.

Footpath 1 continues as FP 4 and then Bridleway 4 to access the A167 underpass. The Design and Access Statement p. 7 acknowledges that the complete route is already being used by cyclists as well as pedestrians. Through the college grounds the path is currently about 3.5m wide and is divided into pedestrian and cycle use by a white painted line down the centre and painted symbols where the path meets junctions.

At the southern end, however, the path was not upgraded. It is not obvious how cyclists are supposed to reach the public highway, especially when the car park is closed. At present the development does not “clearly link to existing services and facilities together with existing routes for the convenience of users” as required by Policy 21(b).

The footway also becomes very narrow. See the following photographs:

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---



# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---



In order to provide proper cycle and pedestrian access to the site to support the college's Travel Plan, the Trust suggests that the access at the southern end should be upgraded as part of the scheme. This might be achievable within the budget if the excess car parking spaces are reduced.

The lamp columns shown in the submitted plans should be moved to the opposite side of the access road to maximise the space for the pedestrian and cycle route. If motor vehicles access is not needed at this entrance, the carriageway could be dedicated for use by cycles and emergency vehicles. Otherwise, the path should be widened to at least 3.5m, and preferably wider. Ideally the space should be separated for cyclists and pedestrians via a shallow kerb and a distinct surface treatment including a centre white dashed line the length of the cycleway. Motor vehicle access via the path should be prevented using the minimum number of bollards necessary, not via chicane barriers, to maintain accessibility for all. The cycle route should be signposted from the public highway and formally dedicated as a cycleway by arrangement with DCC.

## ***Transport Statement***

There are inconsistencies in the stated aims of the development, and consequently the transport analysis may be flawed. According to the Planning Statement the proposals are hoped to lead to an increase in student numbers, but according to the Transport Statement there would be no increase.

Paragraph 3.8 of the Planning Statement states (emphasis added):

The proposed AGP is **hoped to attract a number of new students** across not only sport but the rest of the College curriculum as timetables are being developed so that the Football Development Centre can be accessed by as many College students as possible.

Paragraph v of the “Speed Read” section of the Transport Statement on page 4 states:

The proposals **will not result in an increase in staff or student numbers**; they are aimed at providing improved facilities which will reduce commuting costs and less emissions associated with transporting students to other sports facilities such as Consett Football Club.

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---

Planning Statement para. 3.2 gives part of the aim as being to “identify future development zones” which suggests further expansion is envisaged.

The Transport Statement's analysis of highway impact only examines the possible trip generation for use of the pitch by the community, with the peak hours for this used being in the evenings. The absence of any data on the expected increase in student numbers mentioned in the Planning Statement means that the impact on peak commuting traffic is unknown.

Rather than using trip generation estimates based on sports pitch provision with peak activity in the evenings, a robust analysis would have looked at the expected number of additional students which the development is hoped to attract. New College must have made this assessment in its internal business case for the pitch and car park works. The increase in students could then be translated into journeys by various modes using the college's recent travel surveys, rather than sites elsewhere selected from the TRICS database.

If there is to be an increase in student or staff numbers, that gives all the more reason to expect sustainable transport improvements, in line with NPPF para. 110(a) direction to ensure that:

*appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;*

Overall, the Transport Statement has the feel of a box-ticking exercise. It assumes that like-for-like replacement of car parking needs no justification. The conclusions appear to have been written before the actual size of the replacement car park was finalised: in two locations (para. 4.10 and “Speed Read” para. iii) the net change in spaces is given as “XX”. The consultants have not referred to New College's submitted Travel Plan or the data available from the travel survey. There is also a lack of local knowledge which can be illustrated by the map of key walking routes in Figure 3.7 on p.23. This includes a route from the railway station via North Road, the A691 and the A167 to the point where the B6532 passes under the A167, and thence to the college via the B6532. The consultants seem unaware that there is no pedestrian connection here between the two roads.

The Trust considers that the methodology of the submitted Transport Statement is inappropriate, and the key questions of how the development will impact the highway network and how it will contribute to promoting sustainable transport are unanswered.

## **Travel Plan**

The current NCD Travel Plan submitted as DM/22/02518/DRC in discharge of conditions relating to DM/21/03497/FPA has a number of shortcomings which should be addressed by requiring a revised plan as a condition on accepting the present application. Employer and school travel plans are among the transport interventions proposed in Policy 22 in order to “reduce the dominance of car traffic” and “address air quality”.

The travel survey results show the main means of travel to New College, but staff and students are not separately identified in results. Nor do the proportions of different modes used total 100%. Preferably the results should be presented in three different categories:

- Staff
- Students eligible for free bus travel
- Students ineligible for free bus travel

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---

In each case the number of responses, the response rate and the total number of people in each category should be stated, in order to allow a robust assessment of the scope for further modal shift.

While the plan claims a reduction in car use from a 2018 baseline, detailed figures are not presented. The planning authority should require full detail of previous surveys (broken down where possible, showing response rates and the total staff and student population) to be included in an appendix so allow trends to be analysed and the effectiveness of interventions to be assessed.

While the Travel Plan includes a map showing the home locations of staff and students, there is no indication of the mode of transport used, or the proportions living within different distances or on accessible bus routes. The College should perform more detailed analysis of this data to enable future measures to be targeted appropriately.

The Trust is very supportive of the provision of free bus travel for 16 to 18 year olds. Given the success of the free bus travel scheme it is disappointing that there seems to be no intention to subsidise bus travel for other people attending the site. Durham University has a scheme for reduced fares for bus travel available to all staff and students.

The Travel Plan lacks data on the actual numbers of staff and students likely to be present on site at different times in the week. The travel survey should be supplemented and corroborated by surveys of car park and cycle parking occupancy, along with data from bus companies, if available, relating to the use of the bus passes.

There is no indication as to whether there is any charge for staff or student use of the car park. There may be insufficient incentives for those without free bus travel to use public transport when there is a plentiful supply of car parking. The Durham City Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan, adopted 2019, criticises the provision of free car parking at major employment sites. If charges are introduced, there may need to be measures to regulate parking in neighbouring residential streets.

The Travel Plan is limited in its support for cycling. The Cycle to Work scheme for purchase of cycles is mentioned, and the increase in cycle storage is also commendable. There is no identification of barriers to cycling to the site or where off-site improvements in cycle infrastructure would be beneficial. As shown above, the cycle route provided through the site does not even join the public highway successfully. While this may be outside the control of the college, it would assist the local authority in prioritising and evidencing its funding bids.

## **Lighting**

Policy 31 states that:

Development which does not minimise light pollution and demonstrate that the lighting proposed is the minimum necessary for functional or security purposes will not be permitted.

It is not clearly specified which sports will be catered for on the all-weather pitch though the implication is that the main use will be for football (the pitch is not suitable for rugby). The type of sport played affects the lighting design. The proposal gives appropriate wording in the proposal about use of a lighting design to minimise any negative environmental and residential



# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---

impact by featuring high control optics and LED lamps to minimise maintenance, energy usage and light spillage. Various standards and guidance are referenced. The applicant should also use the new guidance from CIBSE SLL 'LG 21: Guide to protecting the night-time environment' which builds on the 2012 guidance 'Guide to limiting obtrusive light'.

The applicant notes that "all lighting levels are to be fully determined at the next stage of design" and that "luminaires submitted as part of this design are indicative only. final luminaire selections are to be made at later design stages" It is therefore important that the planning officers check these designs when they become available. The applicant should provide an image that shows the lighting contours around the pitch and the new car park given by the final choice of luminaires. This would enable accurate assessment of light spillage and therefore its impact.

There are long distance views of the Cathedral from the top of Findon Hill and the small housing estate on the skyline, which includes a road called Cathedral View. If there is any risk that the proposed pitch lighting might intrude on such long-distance views of the World Heritage Site, then a fuller study should be performed in order to ensure compliance with Policy 45.

The pitch will be used until 22:30 on weekdays; and 17:30 at weekends; the car park till 20.30. It should be a requirement that the lighting is turned off at those times. With high control optics the College should be able to ensure that the lighting control is automatically linked to the booking system so that floodlights are not on when the pitches are not in use. This will require monitoring when the pitch comes into use and enforcement.

Yours sincerely

**Sue Childs,**

Vice-Chair, City of Durham Trust