

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

10 January 2024

Jess White
Durham County Council
Planning Development
County Hall
Durham DH1 5UL

Dear Ms White,

DM/23/02439/FPA, 28 Albert Street, Durham, DH1 4RL

Replacement of existing conservatory to single storey rear extension with 2no. rooflights. Internal alterations to attic space including new flat roof dormer window, 2no. rooflights and increasing the size of existing dormer window. Demolition of existing garage and construction of two storey garage and garden room.

1. The Trust objects to this application based on poor design and negative impact on the Conservation Area.

Context

2. Albert Street is an important component of the Conservation Area and Back Western Hill is a characterful interface between Flass Vale and the more intense development on Albert Street. The rear of 28 Albert Street has an 8 pane and a curved top window that are presumed likely to be original with 4 pane windows to a bay. The existing flat topped dormer does not enhance the character of the building roofscape generally Albert Street is a mix of early/late 19thC house. The current garage is poor in design and condition but its lower height does allow a glimpse view of the Albert Street rear elevations. These views are being progressively lost. Back Western Hill has a range of different and rear mews developments ranging from the very poor to stone faced buildings with dormers. It needs improvement and the avoidance of inappropriate development that will further erode its character.

Proposals and Impact

3. The heritage statement submitted fails to identify fully the context of the building. This is a failure against planning policy.

The existing dormer is to be raised, and a further non matching dormer inserted. The current dormer fails to enhance the roofscape and the new proposal increases the negative design impact of the dormers.

The loss of the existing rear conservatory is not viewed as an issue but the new proposal is for an uncompromising contemporary full width flat topped extension with bifold doors. This overwhelms the stone faced rear elevation, obscuring the original window. The new dormer windows are not shown as relating to the original windows. The conservatory creates a heavy contrast with the delicacy of the original elevation.

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The new garage with garden room above takes away the view. If this is to be lost, then it should be required that the new building adds something more positive than the contemporary building even though it is proposed was having a pitched roof. It will be built out beyond the current garage building line removing the current inset. This both creates an awkward shape and pitched roof and, more importantly, reduces the view of the neighbouring stone wall and creates a flatted frontage harming the character of the lane. Other new buildings have been extended and new rear buildings created on the lane with greater sensitivity to the historic setting. They include introducing dormer windows and stone facing.

Conclusion

4. The Trust concludes that the overall impact of these proposals is negative, and that the application should be refused.

(The policies the proposal fails against are listed in the following appendix.)

Yours sincerely,

Sue Childs,
Vice Chair, City of Durham Trust

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Appendix - Policies

The Trust considers that the proposals fail against the following planning policies:

County Durham Plan

Policy 29 Sustainable Design

- a. The proposals fail to contribute positively to an area's heritage significance and townscape.

Policy 44 Historic Environment Conservation Areas

- f. The proposals fail to demonstrate understanding of the significance, character, appearance and setting of the conservation area and how this has informed proposals to achieve high quality sustainable development, which is respectful of historic interest, local distinctiveness and the conservation or enhancement heritage assets.
- h. The proposal fails to show respect for, and reinforcement of, the established, positive characteristics of the area in terms of appropriate design (including, features, materials, and detailing).

Durham City Neighbourhood Plan

Policy S1: Sustainable Development Requirements of all Development and Redevelopment Sites Including all New Building, Renovations and Extensions

The proposal fails because it does not:

- c) Harmonise with its context in terms of scale, materials, and soft landscaping.
- d) Conserve the significance of the setting, character, local distinctiveness, and the contribution made to the sense of place by Our Neighbourhood's designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Policy H2: The Conservation Areas, Durham City Conservation Area

The development proposals negatively affect the Durham City Conservation Area by not taking into account, and meeting, the following requirements:

- a) Sustaining and enhancing the historic and architectural qualities of buildings; and
- g) protecting important views of the Durham City Conservation Area from viewpoints within the Conservation Area; and
- j) Having, materials and detailing appropriate to the vernacular, context, and setting; and
- k) Using high quality design sympathetic to the character and context of the local area and its significance and distinctiveness.