

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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27 February 2024

Mr Mark Sandford  
Planning Development Central/East  
Room 4/86-102  
County Hall  
Durham City DH1 5UL

Dear Mr Sandford

**DM/24/00201/FPA: Change of use from dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a house in multiple occupation (Use Class C4) including single storey rear extension, cycle parking and bin storage, 31 Bradford Crescent, Gilesgate, Durham DH1 1ER**

The City of Durham Trust objects to this planning application because it would cram too many tenants into the property and so would fail against Policies 29 and 31 of the County Durham Plan.

## **Policy 29**

County Durham Plan Policy 29 requires all new residential development to comply with the Nationally Prescribed Space Standard. The required minimum for a two-storey, two bedroom house such as this is 70 square metres. The existing house has two floors, each with a gross internal floor area of 35 square metres so totalling 70 square metres. Also, the areas of the existing bedrooms exceed the required minimum by more than a square metre in each case. So the Standard is currently met in all respects.

However, the proposal would create a new HMO with a ground floor area of 50 square metres and a first floor area of 35 square metres, totalling 85 square metres. The maximum capacity set by the Standard of such a house is four people in three bedrooms. What is being proposed is five people in five bedrooms. The NDSS does not have an entry for this configuration as the Standard is for at least one room to be a double. It does have standards for five people in four bedrooms (97 square metres) and six people in five bedrooms (110 square metres). Only two of the five proposed bedrooms have a floor area that meets the standard (7.5 square metres).

Plainly the house is overcrowded and does not provide enough space outside the individual bedrooms. Paragraph 5.302 of the County Durham Plan, in support of Policy 29, sets out the Council's rationale for seeking adherence to the NDSS (Nationally Described Space Standard). *"The amount of space in a home influences how people live, impacting on their health and wellbeing."* With these proposed changes the end result would not be a well-designed building. Even if the rigid application of the NDSS is not thought to be appropriate, this proposal falls so

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far short that it must fail the requirements of Policy 29. Part (e) of Policy 29 requires that development proposals “**provide high standards of amenity and privacy, and minimise the impact of development upon the occupants of existing adjacent and nearby properties.**” The introduction of five students will, because of very different life-styles, threaten to have a detrimental effect on the living conditions of residents in the immediate locality. The Trust accordingly considers that the proposal is sub-standard and fails Policy 29 of the County Durham Plan.

## **Policy 31**

County Durham Plan Policy 31 on Amenity and Pollution includes the provisions that “**The proposal will also need to demonstrate that future occupiers of the proposed development will have acceptable living and/or working conditions. Proposals which will have an unacceptable impact such as through overlooking, visual intrusion, visual dominance or loss of light, noise or privacy will not be permitted unless satisfactory mitigation measures can be demonstrated.**”

As shown above, future occupiers of the proposed development will not have acceptable living and/or working conditions, because of the overcrowding. In addition, this property is very near to elderly persons accommodation. As with part (e) of Policy 29, the introduction of five students will, because of very different life-styles, threaten to have a detrimental effect on the living conditions of residents in the immediate locality, contrary to Policy 31.

## **Conclusion**

This proposal fails against both policies 29 and 31 of the County Durham Plan for the reasons set out above. It should therefore be refused.

Yours sincerely

**JOHN LOWE**

Chair, City of Durham Trust