

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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24 April 2024

Chloe Robinson
Durham County Council
Planning Development
County Hall
Durham DH1 5UL

Dear Ms Robinson,

DM/24/00830/PN56 The Rectory The Village Brancepeth Durham DH7 8EL

Prior notification for the installation of ten solar panels on tilt racks

1. The Trust objects to this application based on the negative impact of the solar panels on the conservation area and cumulative impact together with the building.

Context

2. The Trust notes and supports the County Council's own assessment of the host dwelling in the Brancepeth Conservation Area Appraisal – *'Its open character and design detract from the otherwise historic backland development'*. It is of poor design and discordant in the context of the conservation area and its important historic core. The appraisal also notes the building as being capable of 'sympathetic improvement' to harmonise more effectively with the village core. The new Rectory is sited in the grounds of the Old Rectory. This was of medieval origin and the setting of, and approaches to, the building need to be a factor in considering impact.

Proposals and Impact

3. The type of panels selected with their tilt framing give them an undue prominence. They cannot be considered as a visually appropriate or positive introduction into the conservation area. Because of the negative impact of the existing building they cause cumulative negative impact, drawing more attention to the building.

Conclusion

4. The Trust is sympathetic to the introduction of alternative energy systems but in this instance any benefit is significantly outweighed by the context and extent of negative impact. It therefore objects to this prior notice and its proposals.

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

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe,
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).