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21st July 2024

Dear David

DM/23/02236/FPA 1 Beech Crest

The City of Durham Trust is writing to express our concern about the late arrival of documents related to this application. The application is being considered at the Area Planning Committee (Central and East) meeting on Monday 22 July.

The Committee Report on this application, paragraph 67, states:

"In this regard evidence has been provided from a number of letting agents which highlights that one and 2 bed accommodation in this location is highly sought after by both students and young professionals, in particular postgraduate students. Responses from letting agents have highlighted that there are a greater number of HMOs / PBSAs bedspaces in comparison to 1 and 2 bed properties. Therefore, there appears to be a demand for this type of accommodation in this part of the city and that this would be attractive to a range of potential tenants and not solely attractive to students. Responses from letting agents also identified that these types of accommodation are usually tenanted within a short period of time after being offered to market."

However, these three estate agents' letters were not available on the planning portal by the end of the working day on 17th July. The Trust wrote to Michelle Hurton on the 17th reporting this. These letters then appeared on the portal on 18th/19th July but were however given a publication date of the 12th March.

We have also noticed that a revised drawing entitled "Floor Plans (Currently Existing)" was uploaded on 17 July - 5 days after the Committee Report was published (which, incidentally, is dated as 22 July 2024!). Given that this is a part-retrospective application, such a drawing is key in terms of determination. The original drawing is not marked as 'Superseded'.

The Committee Report recommends that the application be approved with conditions.

If the estate agents' letters had been online from 12 March then the Trust could have responded to them in our submissions made after that date. And might have made supplementary submissions, as could other interested parties. Additionally, Committee members may also not have been aware of this late addition of documents.

In our previous submission of 14th April we complained that substantial additional documentation in support of this application was added to the planning portal long after the closing date but not drawn to the attention of those, including the Trust, who had submitted objections to the original application.

The failure to open the estate agents' letters to public view until 18th/19th is in the Trust' view maladministration. A way to prevent this from causing injustice would be for the application to be deferred for consideration to a later committee.

Regards

Sue Childs
Vice Chair, City of Durham Trust