

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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4 October 2024

Mr David Richards
Durham County Council
Durham County Council Planning Development
PO BOX 274
Stanley Co Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Mr Richards,

DM/24/02177/FPA Crook Hall Farmhouse Sidegate Durham DH1 5SZ

Re-design of garage and garden room approved under application DM/22/03818/FPA

The Trust does not see sufficient grounds for an objection to these proposals as they are a redesign of one part of the previously approved work to the property. However, it does consider that there is weakness in the design approach and therefore its cumulative impact. It considers that further mitigation is possible, and it therefore makes the following comments.

The original farmhouse was 17thC or earlier in origin and perhaps deserved much greater recognition in the past. The original character and significance of the building has been eroded by the series of additions and changes on the site. The first is the loss of original outbuildings and replacement by the dominant and questionable west wing building in the 20thC. The approval of the rear extension to the farmhouse has further reduced the visibility of the original farmhouse. uPVC windows appear to have been used throughout. The additional porch further obscured the front elevation and is now for replacement with a larger extension under the approval. The garage block to the front substantially detracts from the key view of the property.

The value of the site lies in its grouping with other original farm buildings and proximity and relationship to Crook Hall. It is also within the Green Belt as it penetrates towards Sidegate and as rural fringe it has substantial value requiring care in extent and detail of new development.

The removal of the existing garage block and omission of its replacement are gains under this new proposal. However, what is now presented still involves a very substantial area of excavation, hard paving for car parking and access, a terrace, walling and the insertion of the garage at a lower level. The Trust has pointed out previously that this type of approach is a decrease in openness affecting the character of the Green Belt Area. In this case it also impinges negatively on the character of the farm and surrounding Crook Hall setting. It does not demonstrate the high quality needed in such a location in the Conservation Area and Green Belt and adjacent to a Non Listed Heritage Asset (NDHA).

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The Trust considers that, within the broad constraints of the design and layout, further mitigation of the negative impact is possible by paying more attention to detailing and makes the following suggestions:

Garden Room and Link

It is possible for the more contemporary approach to this design to work successfully but there is scant information on the detailed design. By ensuring that the materials used are recessive this will help the room settle into its location. The sketch of the link is unconvincing. It appears to be a solid roof and awkwardly joined to the one of the two remaining and unextended original walls of the farmhouse. Such a link would typically work by ensuring it is fully glazed at the junction to ensure that the original wall is fully visible and the connection minimal. Ensuring the design and materials of the link and the garden room would seem appropriate.

Garage

Poor choice of door could cause greater visibility and impact. A recessive finish should be requested by a materials condition. There seems little scope for avoiding the stack up of garage front and garden room at this stage of the submission.

Car Access, Parking and Terrace

It is not clear from the layout submitted how much of the area is needed for access and parking, but it is very extensive. Inserting sufficient breaks in the surfacing against the walls and adding planting to this and the terrace will help assimilate the area into its surrounds. No landscaping is shown. A materials, layout and landscaping condition is needed to ensure this is fully explored. This should include the surrounds within the ownership to the area as well.

Walls

Again, no details are submitted. The 20thC extension stonework is poor in contrast to the original farmhouse. Ensuring appropriate stone choice, coursing and finish is essential; a materials condition is needed.

The Trust hopes that these suggestions are adopted; the scheme is still capable of improvement.

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe

Chair, City of Durham Trust