

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
30 April 2025

Daniel Puttick
Durham County Council Planning Development
PO BOX 274
Stanley Co Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Mr Puttick,

**DM/25/00845/LB and DM/25/00844/FPA Keep University College Durham
Castle Palace Green Durham**

Installation of guarding to the top of the Motte, installation of a handrail to both sides of the existing steps to the Motte, installation of escape signage, installation of emergency escape lighting, installation of gates.

The Trust understands the necessity of ensuring a safe exit during emergencies and correspondingly does not object to these proposals. However, the handrail lighting will cause negative impact on the lightscape of the Castle and Keep motte. There is also concern about the design of the emergency-lit fire exit signage and bulkhead lights and the appropriateness of attachment to the historic structures around the motte. Are these to be permanently lit or triggered in the event of a power failure or emergency? Permanent lighting would have the greater impact.

The Trust also wishes to use this opportunity to prompt greater reference to the value and significance of the mound garden. This tends to be underappreciated along with the significance of terraces and walks around the Castle and Peninsula defences. The heritage statement submitted for this application is an example of this.

While the proposals impact more upon the mound and its landscaping, the Statement refers only to the buildings of the Castle and in some detail. The mound garden is a 17thC example of a scholars' garden – other examples being Gray's Inn, London, designed by Francis Bacon, and at New College, Oxford. At the time of construction the Keep would have been a ruin. Gray's Inn mound no longer exists, New College mound remains but is heavily devalued as a viewing mound due to heavy over planting and tree growth. Durham's may be one of the only surviving examples.

Another influence would have been the tradition of creating viewing mounds, at first on existing mounds and then on constructed mounds in the 17thC and 18thC. Norman castle mottes were used for this. An example based on a neolithic mound later repurposed as a Norman castle motte is Merlin's Mound in Marlborough, Wiltshire and Oxford Castle Motte (18th/19thC). Pathways around the mounds were typical and often in a spiral. This may have had religious or contemplative associations. It also fits into the general trend (as found on the Peninsula) as the defensive value of the walls and Castle faded. The trend was to create terraces to view over the walls or capture elevated views outside of the walls. This took advantage of the extensive panoramas over the river, city and surrounding countryside. The demolished Bishops Walk belvedere was a built example of this trend.

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The Trust's comments are that the Castle gardens should be recognised as a special aspect of the World Heritage Site. The emergency lighting proposals need to be based on this enhanced understanding of the Castle gardens' significance and the emergency lighting needs to respect its specific context.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust