

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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5th March 2026

Ms Kelly Scott
Durham County Council
Planning Department
PO Box 274
Stanley
County Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Ms Scott,

DM/26/00394/FPA 33 Richardby Crescent Durham DH1 3TY

Replacement of 1.0m wrought iron railings to south boundary adjacent to public footpath with solid 1.8m high brick wall & piers

The Trust objects to this application based on negative impact on users of the footpath by creating a more unattractive and unsafe access route.

Context

The applicants have been placed in a potentially difficult situation by the poor design of the pedestrian link out from the development to the A167 footpath. The narrow path wedged between two more extensive driveways is poor urban design creating far too large a surfaced area and an equally poor footpath route. The Trust points to the advice in the consultation version of Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance and the Secured by Design Residential (Homes) Guide 2025. Relevant sections are shown in the appendix below. The latter shows how far the design of the footpath varies from what is considered current best practice; similar advice has been available for the past 15 years. This was for a footpath 3.0m wide flanked by 2.0m verges.

The narrow footpath width is exacerbated by the high acoustic fence to the rear of the properties and immediately abutting the footpath. The access in from the A167 does not appear to be maintained and contributes an unsafe entrance and potentially insecure route. The pedestrian link further to the north on Richardby Crescent at its junction with Chipchase Grove has an open space setting and is of a higher and more appropriate design quality. The Trust notes that maintenance of the footpath verges through the tree shelter belt is needed.

However, it is the Trust's view that overlooking from the lounge of the footpath is an essential part of its safety. It has streetlamps. If compared to houses in the city centre where many open directly onto the street, there is reasonable separation. If more privacy is required, this can easily be achieved by internal shuttering. While sympathetic to problems with anti-social behaviour, it seems to the Trust that other remedies should be tried through the police. If there is crosscutting over the private driveway from the path, other solutions to prevent this can be designed with much less impact on the footpath. It is concerning that anti-social incidents may also be directed at pedestrians and deter footpath use.

The link is well used as the submission states '*The public footpath is frequently used by pedestrians visiting the estate & using the green space*'. It is therefore important to create as safe and attractive a route as possible given the circumstances.

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Proposal

The Trust's view is that the 1.8m high wall starts a 'tunnel' effect, reducing overlooking and visibility for users of the footpath. This makes it less attractive to pedestrians. Although the application notes that the low fence on the opposite side is to stay, this is not under the control of the applicant and ownership and attitudes to boundaries can change. To approve the wall will be to encourage further walling here and elsewhere where it will create the full 'tunnel' effect.

The Trust therefore objects to the proposals as submitted for the reasons above and suggests that the current application is withdrawn or negotiated to design a more suitable proposal that will not disadvantage pedestrians (policy failures are indicated in the appendix below):

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe

Chair, City of Durham Trust

chair@durhamcity.org

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Appendix – Planning Policies and Guidance

The Trust considers that the proposals fail against the following planning policies and guidance:

Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance Consultation Version 2026

Page 152 Natural surveillance

The ability for people to observe public spaces from buildings and streets, increasing safety by making spaces visible and reducing opportunities for crime. It is achieved through design features such as active frontages, windows overlooking streets, and well-lit, open layouts.

Secured by Design Residential (Homes) Guide 2025

8.11 Public footpaths should not run to the rear of, and provide access to, gardens, rear yards or dwellings as these have been proven to generate crime. Where developments have to incorporate existing public rights of way, early consultation with the DOCO is required to ensure that the appropriate mitigating action is taken to reduce criminal opportunity.

8.12 Where a segregated footpath is unavoidable, for example where there is a public right of way, an ancient field path or heritage route, designers shall make the footpath a focus of the development by ensuring it is a safe space and accessible for all, in support of the National Police Chiefs' Council's Policing Violence Against Women and Girls - The National Framework for Delivery: 2024 – 2027.

A segregated footpath should be: as straight as possible, wide, well-lit, devoid of potential hiding places overlooked by surrounding buildings and activities, carefully landscaped, well-maintained so as to enable natural surveillance along the path and its border.

8.14 Where isolated footpaths are unavoidable, and where space permits, they shall be at least 3 metres wide (to allow people to pass without infringing personal space and to accommodate passing wheelchairs, bicycles and mobility vehicles).

NPPF 2024

Considering development proposals

In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

b) Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. *(The proposal fails to ensure this)*

c) The design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code⁴⁸. *(The proposal fails to observe this advice)*

County Durham Plan

Policy 21

Delivering Sustainable Transport

The transport implications of development must be addressed as part of any planning application. All development shall deliver sustainable transport by:

b. providing appropriate, well designed, permeable and direct routes for walking, cycling and bus access, so that new developments clearly link to existing services and facilities together with existing routes for the convenience of all users. *(The proposal fails deliver a well designed route for the convenience of footpath users)*

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Policy 29

Sustainable Design

All development proposals will be required to achieve well designed buildings and places having regard to supplementary planning documents and other local guidance documents where relevant,

b. Create buildings and spaces that are adaptable to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions and include appropriate **and proportionate measures to reduce vulnerability, increase resilience and ensure public safety and security**. *(The proposal fails to ensure measures to reduce vulnerability and ensure public safety and security)*

City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan

Policy T1: Sustainable Transport Accessibility and Design

Development proposals should be supported by evidence of how they contribute to sustainable transport accessibility and design where appropriate.

Accessibility

Approach routes to the site, and access within the development should be accessible to all, giving the highest priority to walking, then cycling and public transport, and should meet the travel needs of people with mobility impairments. *(The proposal fails to achieve this)*

Design

New access roads and residential streets, **and alterations to existing ones**, should include, where appropriate:

a) Permeability for sustainable modes with safe, direct and continuous routes for walking, cycling and public transport users within the site, connecting with surrounding paths and highways. *(The proposal does not create a safe route)*

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