

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Web site: <https://durhamcity.org/>

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
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25th June 2026

Mr Callum Harvey
Durham County Council Planning Development
PO BOX 274
Stanley
County Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Mr Harvey,

DM/26/01140/FPA Land To The North Of Robert Moore Close Robert Moore Close Bowburn DH6 5NB

Hybrid application comprising Full planning permission for the erection of 65no. dwellings; and Outline planning permission (with all matters reserved except access) for the erection of up to 135no. dwellings, including associated service infrastructure and landscaping.

The Trust objects to this proposal based on concerns about traffic generation, access, house design and layout, landscaping, and stress on local facilities.

Traffic and Access.

The Trust notes and echoes the concern expressed in objections and comments from local residents about traffic safety. The only access for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians is onto the fast and busy A177. The vehicle access is onto the 60mph national speed limit section before the limit reduces to 40mph: the Trust would support reducing the limit. The layout proposed creates a large, extended, cul de sac.

While the Trust welcomes the offer to widen a 300m section of footpath in the village, and to provide basic enhancement to crossings, this is insufficient to make the development acceptable in planning terms. Very few amenities are available within 800m walking distance and, beyond the footpath proposed for widening, users have to follow a lengthy section of substandard footway only 1.3m wide. There is no safe cycle access to locations beyond Bowburn, and off-site enhancements proposed are minimal and not conforming with Active Travel England guidance. Bus services are unreliable for those in most need of them. Residents will therefore not have a genuine choice of transport modes as required by NPPF para. 110.

Detailed evidence on these points is provided in the appendix below.

Facilities

The Trust notes the local concern about stress on facilities and the lack of adequate exploration of this within the submitted documentation.

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Design

This proposed two phase development is a poorly connected isolated extension to Bowburn's residential area. It is effectively a large cul de sac separated from adjacent housing and constrained by the proposed Bowburn Relief Road. There has been substantial housing development in Bowburn with little overall planning to create a sense of place or distinctiveness. The submitted design code is particularly weak. Of the 17 examples chosen to illustrate influences, only 6 reflect something of a more distinctive character from this formerly rural area. The remainder are all recent nearby housing consisting of other housebuilders' standardised designs that have reflected nothing of the potential the sites once had for distinctive layouts and house design. It is pointless to use these as an influence. The result is to create a ubiquitous, very basic design theme creating no distinctiveness. This was not the purpose of introducing design codes and thwarts the intention for improvement.

The layout is predominantly detached/semidetached houses with extensive short access roads and driveways. These combine to create an extensive surfaced interior to the housing enclave, leading to dull street frontages.

House types

Other than the design deficiencies noted above, the Trust welcomes the high proportion of 2-bed and 3-bed properties proposed, representing 72% of dwellings in the initial phase. The number of dwellings per hectare, 33, is also higher than most recent housing applications. It is to be hoped any further phase, if also approved, would repeat or improve on this.

Landscaping

The landscape areas are mostly pushed out to the site boundaries and, by area, dominated by the SUDS requirements. The small central open space is relatively weak and will mostly be surfaced play area. There is an extensive reservation of the Bowburn Relief Road where it connects to the A177 that will be dominated by a roundabout if built. The north east A177 boundary and south east boundary shared with the adjacent development are only narrow grass verges too limited to offer any meaningful tree development. The west boundary that will abut the Relief Road is problematic. It is not possible to determine from the submission at this stage what the apparent dotted blue line (Plan No. 0002713 P03 1100) reserved area for the Road will be. The intention to create a buffer zone is therefore reliant on being provided with the Relief Road together with any noise attenuation measures. This is not in the developer's gift. What is left is too minimal to be effective visually and in terms of noise reduction if the Road is built. It should be noted that at the southern corner the Road joins the reserved area for the Leamside line, also a potential noise generator of uncertain timing and design. The site will be highly visible in the surrounding flat agricultural landscape.

The net result of the access, design and landscape failings is to create a featureless isolated housing block adding nothing to Bowburn and bringing only more pressure on its limited facilities. The Trust therefore objects to the proposals.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe

Chair, City of Durham Trust

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Celebrating, Protecting and Enhancing the City of Durham

Appendix: transport issues

Walking accessibility

The National Design Guide defines walkable well-designed places as having local facilities within 800m. This is backed up by the CIHT report *Planning for walking* (2015). The submitted Transport Assessment lists amenities within 1.6km in Table 5.1. Apart from the filling station at 200m and the Church of Christ the King at 800m, all amenities listed are beyond 800m from the site, but there is a good range of facilities. Residents would not be limited to motorised transport for access, though the distances are likely to encourage car use.

The audit provided in pages 82 to 87 of the Transport Assessment PDF file is reasonably thorough. It identifies large corner radii at the junctions of Tail-Up-on-End Lane and Prince Charles Avenue with the A177 “resulting in high left-turn entry vehicle speeds”. The corner radii at these locations are around 10m. Surprisingly, with the awareness of this issue, the applicant proposes a northern access junction with corner radii of 10.0m and a southern access junction with corner radii of 8.0m. While the proposal for a raised table at the southern access junction is very welcome, the Trust considers that the corner radii at both junctions should be reduced to 6.0m or less. Manual for Streets 2 para. 9.4.10 states:

As noted in Sections 6.3 and 6.4 of MfS1, tight corner radii help pedestrians and cyclists to travel across and through junctions by reducing the speed of turning vehicles. Advice contained in TD 42/9554, that minimum corner radii should be 6m in urban areas, should therefore not be taken as representing best practice when the needs of vulnerable road users are to be prioritised.

While the applicant is offering to widen a 300m section of footpath between Dallymore Drive and Prince Charles Avenue, the audit identifies a considerable length of footway beyond this on the main route into the village with a width of only 1.3m. This is unacceptable as the recommended minimum width is 2.0m. It would not be possible for two wheelchairs to pass on such a width of path.

Cycling accessibility

The applicant has completed and submitted the Active Travel England Assessment Toolkit. The cycling accessibility is rated as a pass. In fact all categories in the assessment have been accorded a pass.

In evidence of the accessibility rating, the toolkit submission cites the reasonable cycling distance to Durham city centre and major employment sites, including Integra 61 and Aykley Heads. It also mentions the applicant's willingness to fund widening of a 300m section of path between Dallymore Drive and Prince Charles Avenue.

ATE's own guidance on completing the assessment notes the following “common shortfalls” in the cycling accessibility category:

- Cycle routes relied on by the development are not coherent, direct, safe, comfortable or attractive in line with the five core design principles and geometric requirements in LTN 1/20 (see Sections 4.2 and 5). This may be due to physical features, steps, steep gradients or surface quality; or the absence of ramps, lighting or appropriate crossing facilities.

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- The development relies on shared use routes in full or intermittently, which conflicts with the clear position in paragraph 1.6.1 (2) of LTN 1/20 that cycles must be treated as vehicles and not as pedestrians.
- There is insufficient protection from motor traffic in accordance with the suitability and segregation standards in LTN 1/20 (see Figure 4.1 and Section 6) such that some potential cyclists would be excluded.

All of these shortcomings apply in the case of this application:

- The cycle routes are not coherent, but intermittent, and they do not meet the geometric requirements of LTN 1/20: the route north towards High Shincliffe is as narrow as 1.7m in places, where the recommended minimum is 3.0m (LTN 1/20 Table 5-2)
- None of the existing routes have segregation between cyclists and pedestrians, the section of path which the applicant offers to widen would be shared, and the active travel route proposed along the southern boundary of the site is also unsegregated. There is no reason why a greenfield development should not comply with the guidance.
- None of the routes which might be used by cyclists have sufficient protection from motor traffic. As noted in the audit, there is no verge on the A177 which is a national speed limit road. LTN 1/20 would require a minimum 2.0m separation from the carriageway (LTN 1/20 Table 6-1) or a crash barrier (para. 5.11.3).

The rating cannot therefore be considered a “pass”.

The audit provided by the applicant does not assess the routes northwards towards Durham City, despite the Transport Assessment highlighting that all of the educational facilities at secondary level and above are located in that direction. Although there is the inadequate shared use path as far as High Shincliffe, the A177 down Shincliffe Bank is a 40mph road and the footway is too narrow for shared use with cycling. The national Cycle Infrastructure Design document LTN 1/20 would class this (via Figure 4.1) as “provision suitable for few people and will exclude most potential users”.

There is therefore, in effect, no safe access to any facilities outside Bowburn by means of cycling.

The impact is confirmed in the 2011 Census statistics: the Medium Super Output Area E02004318 which includes Shincliffe, High Shincliffe, and most of Bowburn, had only 15 people recorded as cycling to work, less than 0.7% of commuters. The DfT Propensity to Cycle Tool (<https://pct.bike/>) estimates that with Dutch-quality infrastructure (as mandated by LTN 1/20) and good take-up of e-bikes, that figure would rise to 17%, or around 450 people.

Proportionate measures to improve cycle accessibility should therefore be funded through Section 106 contributions. Upgrading a 300m section of footpath within Bowburn village, while welcome, is insufficient to realise the vision of giving residents a genuine choice of transport modes.

The proposed Active Travel route along the southern boundary of the site includes a 2m wide link from one of the estate access roads. This needs to have level access from the carriageway to assist both pedestrians and cyclists, as there is no footway proposed on that

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side of the carriageway. Dropped kerbs will be required on the opposite footway. This is not made clear on the plan and should be secured by condition.

Buses to Durham

The site benefits from a number of bus services into Durham, but the experience of local people is that these services can be unreliable at peak hours, especially for accessing secondary and further education. Buses are often filled to capacity well before arriving at their destinations in Durham. Objectors to application DM/26/00773/OUT have described how they had to arrange a rota of parents to ferry students to central Durham for attending 6th form studies. One of the county councillors in the debate on application DM/23/02201/FPA described how students at New College Durham could not rely on the morning bus services for the same reason.

Without reliable bus services and effectively no safe alternative in the form of cycling, there will inevitably be unnecessary car journeys adding to the congestion into Durham.