

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Web site: <http://www.DurhamCity.org>

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
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Durham, DH1 1TH

24th July 2026

Ms Amber Windle,
Durham County Council Planning Development
PO BOX 274
Stanley
County Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Ms Windle,

DM/26/01695/RM Land To The North Of Mount Oswald South Road Durham DH1 3TQ

Reserved matters application relating to access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline planning permission DM/20/03238/OUT for a scheme of purpose built student accommodation for up to 850 students.

And

DM/26/01655/VOC Land To The North Of Mount Oswald The Approach Durham DH1 3TQ

Variation of Condition 4 (heights) limited to Block E in the north east corner of the site pursuant to planning permission DM/20/03238/OUT

This development is of importance to the City and University, and it is crucial that it both maintains the quality of the nearby College developments and minimises impact on local residents. The Trust considers that the proposals in these two applications fail to achieve the necessary design standard and will cause unnecessary negative impact. The Trust therefore objects to both applications.

In commenting on the original outline application, the Trust expressed the need for this development to 'build beautiful'. It is unfortunate that despite very substantial design strengths in both older and newer University Colleges, the immediate context is the weaker residential blocks of John Snow College. In choosing a restricted materials palette for the whole of this new development with minor differing arrangements, the overall impact is monolithic and overbearing. There is cumulative negative impact with the residential blocks of John Snow College.

The specific height increase breaking the original 4 storey height limit from the outline approval conditions is made very substantially worse by the height increase in other blocks facing west into St Georges Way. The promise of the original application was that the block 'fingers' facing the housing would be set lower into the site and be two storey with a small section of three storey. They would be separated by landscaped areas and fronted by a landscape strip. This was not generous but may have served screening purposes. The blocks are now 4 storey and four of them are backed up with linking blocks also 4 storey. The increase in impact is obvious and to the detriment of the residents along St George's Way.

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This impact is not capable of being successfully mitigated by screen planting that would also have taken a substantial number of years to become effective. The landscape screen dwindles to almost nothing for a substantial section of St Georges Way. It will require substantial use of semi mature trees to gain any measure of screening from this narrow strip. The conclusion is that the surrounding residential areas have been severely let down by the development.

The Trust draws attention to the wording of the original approval that the development is for '*up to 850 students*'. This represents a ceiling not a planning requirement. As ground conditions have limited the building footprint the result should not have been to increase the height of the blocks and weaken the design while increasing its negative impact.

A separate issue quite rightly referred to in the original and current local objections is that there is student car parking in the new residential areas. It is unreasonable to issue any new approval until the new roads are fully adopted and control measures put in place. These blocks will place heavily increased pressure on this parking unless it is prevented.

Planning policy failures are indicated in the appendix below.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe

Chair, City of Durham Trust

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Celebrating, Protecting and Enhancing the City of Durham

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Appendix – Planning Policies

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

County Durham Plan

Policy 16 Durham University Development, Purpose Built Student Accommodation and Houses in Multiple Occupation

2. Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

- e. the design and layout of the student accommodation and siting of individual uses within the overall development are appropriate to its location and in relation to adjacent neighbouring uses.

Policy 29 Sustainable Design

- a.
- b. The proposals fail to contribute positively to an area's....townscape.
- e. The proposals fail to provide high standards of amenity and privacy, and minimise the impact of development upon the occupants of existing adjacent and nearby properties;
- h. The landscape proposals fail to respect and where appropriate take opportunities to create attractive views of....the site.

Policy 31 Amenity and Pollution

Proposals which will have an unacceptable impact such as through overlooking, visual intrusion, visual dominance or loss of....privacy will not be permitted unless satisfactory mitigation measures can be demonstrated.

Durham City Neighbourhood Plan

Policy S1: Sustainable Development Requirements of all Development and Redevelopment Sites Including all New Building, Renovations and Extensions

The proposals fail because they do not:

- c) Harmonise with their context in terms of scale, layout, density, massing, height, materials, colour....and soft landscaping.

Policy H3: Our Neighbourhood Outside the Conservation Areas

The proposals do not:

- a) sustain and make a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the area; and
- c) use high quality design which contributes to the quality and character of the area; and
- d) have scale, density, massing, form, layout, landscaping and open spaces appropriate to the context and setting of the area.