

City of Durham Parish Council
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Durham City DH1 1WA

3 June 2019

Peter Howson
Accommodation Strategy Officer
Asset Management, Regeneration and Local Services
Durham County Council
County Hall
Durham City
DH1 5UL

Dear Mr Howson,

**Informal consultation for the proposed application for deregistration, Section 16
Commons Act 2006, of part of the Common Land at the Sands, Durham City.**

Thank you very much indeed for your letter of 25th April offering the City of Durham Parish Council the opportunity informally to comment on the County Council's proposed application for deregistration of part of the Common Land at the Sands in Durham City.

This informal consultation was discussed at the meeting of the Parish Planning Committee held on 24 May 2019 to which the full Parish Council meeting on 23rd May had delegated this matter.

The Committee noted that Durham County Council is preparing to submit a deregistration application under Section 16 of the Commons Act 2006 in order to replace a small area of common land at The Sands in Durham City. The land being replaced (referred to as the 'release land') is currently used as a coach park. A larger area to the east of the Rivergreen Centre at Aykley Heads (the 'replacement land'), currently in use as meadowland, has been identified as the proposed alternative. The 'release land' is required as part of the proposed site for the County Council's new Headquarters building.

The Committee further noted that "*replacement land is required to be within the vicinity of the release land and to be suitable for grazing animals. The council considered other options for the replacement land, but following review, the land to the east of the Rivergreen Centre*

was identified as the most suitable, due to its proximity to the release land and the fact that it is meadowland. Both the release and replacement land are owned by the council."

It was also noted that the County Council's Public Rights of Way Officer states that: *"The existing coach car park and therefore part of the proposed development site is registered as Common Land. As it is registered Common Land is it therefore also designated as open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; so the public have a right to walk and run on it ('a right to roam')."*

At this informal consultation stage, the Parish Council is not required to set out a full representation, but a general indication of its views would be appropriate. The Parish Council Planning Committee, after due consideration, agreed to oppose the permanent loss of this part of the Common Land at The Sands, which should be used for public enjoyment and recreation without impediment. The substitute area at Aykley Heads being suggested by Durham County Council is land more than two miles away. The people using the Sands Common do so because it is within walking distance for them and is adjacent to the city centre. To reach the land east of the Rivergreen Centre would take locals over 30 minutes to walk to and is an area already open to those who do live in proximity to it.

Accordingly, the City of Durham Parish Council objects on the above grounds at this informal consultation stage to the permanent loss of this part of the Common Land at The Sands. If you have any questions on this please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Adam Shanley

Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council