



**CITY OF DURHAM
PARISH COUNCIL**

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16 November 2020

Dear Mr Dalby

**DM/20/02277/FPA: Change of use of the first floor from (A2) offices to form 2no. 1 bed self-contained studio student accommodation (C3), 2no. 6 bed student HMO (C4) and 1no. 7 bed large student HMO (Sui-Generis) with bin store and cycle store extension (revised description),
The Crossgate Centre Alexandria Crescent Durham DH1 4HF**

The City of Durham Parish Planning Committee considered the above amended application at its Zoom meeting held on 13 November 2020, and resolved to maintain its previous objection, as expressed in our letters of 8 September and 9 October 2020, on the following grounds.

In the first place, the applicant's amended Planning, Heritage and Design and Access Statement cannot be relied upon in considering the relevant arguments in this case:

- At paragraph 4.11 it asserts that the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan can be given only limited weight, whereas in fact it carries significant weight, thanks to the County Council's Decision Statement dated 30 July 2020.
- Remarkably, the Statement goes on at paragraph 4.12 to recite the terms of Neighbourhood Plan Policy D2 despite the fact that this policy has been deleted.
- Furthermore, at paragraph 6.3 it states that Planning Inspectors have indicated that 61.8% of Council Tax properties is the 'tipping point' as to when communities become unbalanced. This Statement is completely wrong: the balanced communities tipping point is not 61.8%, it is 10%. That is the 'tipping point' threshold in Adopted County Durham Plan 16.3 and the National HMO Lobby seminal publication *Balanced Communities & Studentification* (2008). Our objection of 8 September pointed this out and it is regrettable that the consultant's October amended Statement perpetuates this attempt to mislead.

The policy position for objection is straightforward. National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 8b describes the key social objective of the planning system as being to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities; paragraph 62 sets the objective of creating mixed and balanced

communities, and paragraph 192 seeks sustainable communities. These basic principles are enshrined Policy 16.3 of the Adopted County Durham Local Plan.

The percentage figure for a 100-metre radius around The Crossgate Centre is given by the applicant's Planning, Heritage and Design and Access Statement as 64.6%. This is greatly in excess of the 10% proportion of student HMO properties allowed under Policy 16.3, and therefore the application is contrary to the Statutory Development Plan for the area.

Policy 16.3 goes on to state that a change of use to a House in Multiple Occupation would not be resisted "*where an area already has a concentration in excess of 90% of council tax exempt properties (Class N), that this is having an unreasonable impact on current occupiers and that the conversion of remaining C3 dwellings will not cause further detrimental harm to the residential amenity of surrounding occupants.*" Accordingly, additional HMOs in this location are not acceptable, on the basis that the 64.6% current proportion is well below 90% and means that 35.4% of properties continue to be the homes of year-round residents whose amenity should not be jeopardized.

In conclusion, the Parish Planning Committee notes the cavalier policy assessments and statements by the applicant's consultants and re-affirms that this application should be refused as contrary to Adopted County Durham Plan Policy 16.3. We trust that you will decide to refuse the application but, in the unlikely event that you are minded to approve it, we would re-affirm our requests of 8 September and 9 October that it be submitted to the Central & East Area Planning Committee so that we can put our views to Members.

Yours sincerely,

ADAM SHANLEY

Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council