

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the Planning and Licensing Committee meeting held via Zoom at 10:00am on Friday 15th May 2026

Present: Cllr L Brown (in the Chair), Cllr G Holland, Cllr R Cornwell, Cllr R Handy, Cllr C Lattin and Cllr P Layton.

Also present: Mr A Shanley (Parish Clerk), Councillor S Walker, Mr Gareth Devine (Durham University) and Mr John Lowe, Mr Allan Gemmill, Mr John Ashby, Mr John Carter, Mr Peter Smith, Mr Malcolm Reed and Dr Francis Whalley (members of the public).

1. Welcome and apologies

None received.

2. To receive any declarations of interest from members

Councillor P Layton declared an interest in the licence application for Norse and took no part in the discussion or vote on this application.

3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 1st May 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st May 2026 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. To receive any public participation comments on the following agenda items.

Mr John Lowe advised that he was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items.

Mr Allan Gemmill advised that he was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items.

Mr John Ashby advised that he was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items.

Mr John Carter advised that he was attending the meeting with a particular interest in the discussion relation to the future of the former Hild/Bede site.

Mr Peter Smith advised that he was attending the meeting with a particular interest in the discussion relation to Item 5 on the Agenda.

Mr Malcolm Reed advised that he was attending the meeting with a particular interest in the discussion relation to Item 5 on the Agenda.

Dr Francis Whalley advised that he was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items.

The Chair welcomed Mr Gareth Devine from Durham University to the meeting and thanked him for attending. Mr Gareth Devine thanked the Committee for allowing him to speak briefly today on the future of the former Hild/ Bede site.

Gareth firstly outlined the university's broader residential strategy, which seeks to prioritise college accommodation and appropriately located purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) in order to reduce reliance on HMO housing, which has grown to the detriment of wider city housing supply. The Hild Bede project, formally initiated in 2022 though planned internally for several years prior, was identified as a key vehicle for delivering this strategy. The project was structured as a Design, Build, Finance, Operate (DBFO) model, whereby the university would contribute land and a private sector partner would design, construct and operate sufficient bedrooms — with the university nominating occupants to provide security of income — to make the scheme financially self-sustaining.

A competitive procurement process ran from 2023 into May 2024, resulting in the selection of a preferred bidder who met the university's quality specifications and affordability parameters at the point of appointment. However, macroeconomic pressures — principally inflation, the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and rising borrowing costs — caused construction costs to increase significantly between May 2024 and 2025, ultimately requiring a contribution from the university of many tens of millions of pounds beyond any affordable parameters. In October 2025, rather than cancel outright, the university requested an alternative proposal from the partner. The revised proposal required such a fundamental change in scope and risk transfer that the university was unable to proceed, and given the formal competitive procurement process, was also unable to continue with the same bidder. The university formally cancelled the procurement in early 2026.

Gareth was clear that cancellation of the procurement did not represent an abandonment of the university's commitment to the site. The Leazes Road site remains within the university's ownership and is not currently designated for disposal in its Strategic Asset Management Plan. The university is entering a new strategy development period — its previous ten-year strategy runs to 2027 — and the residential strategy supporting that new direction will continue to prioritise finding an appropriate solution for Hild Bede and the wider Leazes Road site. Gareth acknowledged he was unable to confirm the form or timeline of any future solution at this stage.

Mr John Ashby and Councillor G Holland both noted the well-documented geological instability affecting a significant portion of the site, questioning whether a less ambitious, smaller-scale development might be more viable. Gareth confirmed that the proposals had already excluded the geologically unstable areas, concentrating development on the refurbishment of the historic Hild Bede buildings and the area previously occupied by the former School of Education.

Gareth acknowledged that the cost of foundations and retaining walls on the site had proved prohibitive at scale, and indicated that the university is now considering whether residential income from development on other university-owned sites — rather than the Leazes Road site itself — might be used to cross-subsidise the refurbishment of the historic Hild Bede buildings.

Councillor R Cornwell raised the forthcoming revision of the County Durham Plan and urged the university to engage more proactively in the plan-making process than it had done previously, particularly given the potential for university-owned sites to feature in allocations. Gareth acknowledged the feedback and undertook to raise the matter with Ian Rooney, noting that Hannah Shepard within his team is already engaged with the County Council on residential strategy matters.

Councillor R Handy sought assurance that the Leazes Road site would not be sold. Gareth confirmed that disposal is not currently part of the university's plans, though he was unable to give an absolute guarantee that this position would never change.

The Chair thanked Gareth for his openness and transparency, which members echoed, and noted the value of maintaining this channel of communication between the university and the Parish Council.

5. Discussion on the status of Durham Station with reference to the new National Planning Policy Framework

Malcolm Reed presented a series of charts and graphs setting out passenger trends at Durham and Darlington stations over a period beginning in March 2010. He explained that Durham had experienced steady growth in passenger numbers through the early 2010s, with particularly strong growth after 2011 when an hourly London service was introduced, and that Durham's growth had outpaced Darlington's for much of that period. He noted that the pandemic caused a severe collapse in usage across the network, but that Durham recovered more strongly than Darlington in the years that followed. He also explained that the most recent figures were lagged, as annual data is not now published until late in the following calendar year, and cautioned that some of the figures presented were still work in progress.

Mr Reed then referred to consultation material produced in 2022 in relation to timetable changes, explaining that this material had indicated that Darlington was over-provided for and that Durham generated more passengers and revenue than Darlington. He said this underpinned planning for the East Coast Main Line timetable changes from 2014 onwards, including a fast service between Newcastle and London via Durham and Darlington alongside an hourly "all stations" service. He expressed concern that the later decision, taken in November of the previous year, to stop the slower Edinburgh services only at Darlington rather than alternating between Durham and Darlington, ran contrary to the consultation outcomes and to the connectivity Durham had long enjoyed, particularly for links to Peterborough and onward destinations in Europe. He argued that the decision had ignored both the consultation evidence and the practical reality of Durham's wider passenger base, which he said extended well beyond London-bound travel.

Mr Reed went on to explain a further table based on local authority rather than station-level figures. He described how he had adjusted the county and local authority data to account for the fact that County Durham has multiple stations whereas Darlington has comparatively few. On the basis of those figures, he said

Durham had far fewer London passengers than Darlington but generated a very large number of journeys to Newcastle, which he characterised as evidence of Durham's importance within the wider Newcastle travel-to-work area. He also said the station played a substantial role in journeys to destinations such as Manchester and Edinburgh, and he emphasised that Durham's demand profile reflected the city's character, the presence of the University, and the strong intercity connections associated with a historic and regional centre. He concluded that Durham's strategic importance had not been properly reflected in recent decisions affecting the station and that the new timetable would likely weaken patronage further.

The Clerk responded by firstly thanking Malcolm Reed and Peter Smith for drawing the issue to attention. He explained that the Council had generally welcomed the principle in the emerging National Planning Policy Framework of encouraging development near railway stations, but had overlooked the Government's proposed change to the metric used to define a "well-connected station".

The Clerk advised that this new measure, the Travel to Work Area metric, was problematic because it reflects labour market self-containment rather than the realities of rail connectivity, such as service frequency, journey times, network hierarchy or strategic role. He noted that Durham is a major East Coast Main Line station and said it was ludicrous to suggest that it was not well-connected. The Clerk also questioned how the travel-to-work classification distinguishes work-related journeys from leisure travel, and asked how the measure is actually assessed in practice. The Clerk indicated that the Council should be writing to its MPs on the matter quickly.

Councillor G Holland said there did not appear to be any sound statistical basis for the conclusion that Durham should lose "well-connected" status, and argued that the issue should be pursued through the region's MPs, who ought to press the Government to reconsider the decision.

Councillor R Cornwell added that Durham's train service pattern, with departures clustered around the hour and half-hour, created long effective waits and was a practical disincentive to travel. Councillor R Cornwell suggested that season ticket sales might be a better indicator of work-related travel than raw journeys, and noted that Durham ranked highly on such measures, reportedly fourth in the region after Darlington, Newcastle and Middlesbrough. Malcolm Reed reinforced the point by stating that Durham and Darlington both ranked within the top ten per cent of stations nationally by strategic importance, and that Durham could not reasonably be described as anything other than a major strategic station.

Peter Smith, who had originally highlighted the policy issue, said that his concern was that Government decisions could be based on misleading statistical interpretations, and that if the underlying metric was wrong then the policy outcome would be wrong as well. Peter warned that if the definition of "well-connected" were corrected, Durham would likely remain protected and might even be strengthened as a station, whereas if left unchecked the same flawed approach

could be replicated elsewhere. In response to the Clerk's warning that a more favourable station designation might have knock-on consequences for development land north of Sidegate House, Peter argued that the site would not realistically be suitable for the density of development required by the NPPF because of its access constraints and the presence of the probation office and surrounding highway layout.

The Committee **agreed** that a letter should be sent to local MP Mary Foy, raising the issue of the proposed NPPF change and Durham Station's status as a well-connected station.

6. Matters arising:

(a) To approve the responses to the following planning/ licensing application(s)/ appeal(s):

DM/26/00592/CEU | Use of existing residential property for short-term holiday letting purposes | Rowanwood Clay Lane Durham DH1 4QL. The Committee **approved** the response to this application.

DM/26/00808/CEU | Certificate of lawfulness for the existing use of the property as a Class C4 House in Multiple Occupation | 3 Southend South Road Durham DH1 3TG. The Committee **approved** the response to this application.

(b) To consider the latest updates on the following planning/ licensing application(s)/ appeal(s):

DM/26/00975/FPA | Rear kitchen extension | 14 Hawthorn Terrace Durham DH1 4EL. The Committee **noted** the advised from the Parish Council's planning consultant and agreed to write a letter in relation to this case to the Council's Cabinet Member responsible for HMO Licensing issues.

DM/26/00980/FPA | Replacement of the front timber sash windows with new timber sash windows. Replacement of the rear timber sash windows with upvc sash windows. Replacement of the rear timber casement windows with upvc casement windows. Infill of 1 existing window opening with brick to match existing. Installation of 1 velux window to the rear slope of the main roof. Replacement of the dormer felt roof with EDPM. Replacement of conservatory acrylic sheet roof with fibre cement slate tiles and 2x velux windows. Replacement gutter, downpipes and soil pipes | 12 Brierville Durham DH1 4QE. The Committee **noted** the advised from the Parish Council's planning consultant and agreed to write a letter in relation to this case to the Council's Cabinet Member responsible for HMO Licensing issues.

DM/25/03389/OUT | Outline planning application for access with all other matters reserved for the construction of 2no. dwellings with attached garages, demolition of the stable block, conservatory extension on Fernhill and erection of a garage | Fernhill Newcastle Road Crossgate Moor Durham DH1 4JZ. The Committee **noted** the additional information in relation to this case, as submitted by the applicant, and **agreed** to maintain its objection in its entirety.

DM/26/00766/LB | Listed building consent for the change of use of the upper floors, including internal alterations and roof extension, to create three apartments (House in Multiple Occupation - Use Class C4) | 6 - 7 Market Place Durham DH1 3HL. The Committee **noted** the additional information in relation to

this case, as submitted by the applicant, and **agreed** to leave the determination of this case to the Design and Conservation Officer.

(c) To consider the outcome of the following planning/ licensing application(s)/ appeal(s):

Appeal for DM/24/02972/FPA | Conversion of a former care home to Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) comprising 48 studio bedspaces, including re-roofing of conservatories; cycle shelter; bin store; EV bays and associated works | Hallgarth Care Home Hallgarth Street Durham DH1 3AY. The Committee **noted** that this appeal had now been allowed by the Inspectorate, with the requested condition that a certain percentage of the rooms be designated for disabled and neurodivergent students only.

DM/26/00137/FPA | Two storey rear extension to existing small HMO | 23 Mistletoe Street Durham DH1 4EP. The Committee **noted** that this application had now been approved.

DM/26/00504/FPA | Two storey side, rear and front extensions, sliding gate and garden alterations including railings, retaining walls and fencing (Resubmission of DM/25/00643/FPA) | 7 Diamond Terrace Durham DH1 5SX. The Committee **noted** that this application had now been approved.

7. To consider the following new planning applications in the parish area

a) To note:

DM/26/00797/FPA | Proposed replacement conservatory roof | 21 South Street Durham DH1 4QP. It was **agreed** to note this application.

DM/26/01036/TPO | Various tree works | Sheraton Park North Of Kirkwood Drive Nevilles Cross DH1 4FF. It was **agreed** to note this application

DM/26/01123/LB | Replacement windows and internal alterations to basement steps | 43 Crossgate Durham DH1 4PS. It was **agreed** to include this application as a further example of concern to the Cabinet Member responsible for HMO Licensing. The Clerk **agreed** to draft this letter.

b) To discuss:

DM/26/01032/FPA | Change of use of 3 bed dwellinghouse (C3) to 3 bed HMO (C4) including cycle parking and bin storage | 27 St Bedes Close Crossgate Moor Durham DH1 4AA. It was **agreed** to object and call in this application. Councillor L Brown **agreed** to draft the response to this application.

DM/26/00611/FPA | Demolition of existing rear extension and replace with single storey bedroom extension and loft conversion to existing HMO | 5 High Wood View Durham DH1 3DT. It was **agreed** to object and call in this application. The Clerk **agreed** to draft the response to this application.

DM/26/00940/FPA | Remove part of the garden wall and hedgerow beyond the final parking area space to create off street parking for use of the residents of the property, and using low wooden gates | Crestholme The Avenue Durham DH1 4DX. It was **agreed** to object to this application. It was **agreed** to ask Jo-Anne Garrick to draft the response to this application.

8. To consider the following new licensing applications in the parish area

- Application for a minor variation by Epic Bars and Clubs Limited for Home and Botanic. North Road. Durham. DH1 4PW. It was **agreed** to note this application.
- Application for the grant of a premises licence by CD Wines Limited for Norse. 26 Market Place. Durham. DH1 3NJ. It was **agreed** to submit a comment on this application in relation to the accessibility of the toilet and outdoor seating on a Saturday.
- Application to vary a premises licence by Durham University for The Graham Sports Centre. Maiden Castle. Durham. DH1 3SE. It was **agreed** to note this application.

9. Dates of future meeting(s) of this Committee:

29th May 2026 at 10:00am via Zoom

12th June 2026 at 10:00am via Zoom. It was **noted** that this date/ time may change.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all attendees for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

Liz Brown

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Planning and Licensing Committee
(29th May 2026)