

Durham County Council
Planning Development
Central/East Room 4/86-102
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UL

City of Durham Parish Council
c/o Room 103
Floor 1
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UF
16 January 2019

Dear Mr Hopper,

Planning application DM/18/03671/FPA: The Cottage 22A Allergate Durham DH1 4ET

The above planning application, for a 2 Storey Extension to the existing dwelling to create a total of 2 No. Dwelling houses, was discussed by the Parish Planning Committee at its meeting on 4 January 2019. It was resolved to oppose the application on the grounds of the adverse effect on the amenities of local residents (Policy H13) and also the effect on the setting of 22 Allergate, which is a listed building (Policy E23). Policies E3, regarding safeguarding local and long distance views to and from the World Heritage Site, E6, on quality of design in the conservation area, and E22, requiring a sufficient level of detail to accompany applications for development in a conservation area, also come into play. H13, E23, E3, E6 and E22 are all Saved Policies in the City of Durham Local Plan.

We hope the arguments set out below will persuade you, but should you be minded to approve this application we would like to call it to committee. When notified of a committee date we would confirm our attendance.

As a side issue, we note that the list of neighbours consulted includes 23 Allergate. This neighbouring property consists of five single-bedroom flats which are rented from the Bernicia Housing Association. We consider that these neighbours should be consulted individually. We hope you will do so, and extend the expiry date for neighbour consultations.

Adverse effect on the amenities of local residents

There are two aspects here: during construction and longer term when the property is occupied.

We consider that the conditions offered by the Council's Senior Environmental Health Officer are the ones commonly seen in planning approvals and do not meet the particular circumstances of the residents of Hanover Court, who range in age from 60 to 93. As such they might be expected to spend much of their time at home, and indeed the representations received so far from the residents of Hanover Court bear this out. The condition should set a quantifiable level that must not be exceeded within the surrounding flats. The phrase "best practicable means" creates enforcement difficulties as opposed to a simple limit. Even then, this might not be sufficient during hot weather when residents would want to open windows exposing them to extra noise and dust.

The conditions do not address the problems described by local residents of construction traffic parking in Allergate. This needs to be rectified. We note that the access is down an alleyway which narrows to 117cm (3ft 10in).

Should permission be granted then when the extension is occupied there will be disturbance from the student residents whose lifestyles will differ radically from those of their neighbours.

Heritage aspects

The Heritage Statement provided by the applicant does not give sufficient detail as to the intended final appearance of the extension. The specification is too vague and imprecise, leaving important details to be determined later. The sentence "Where practicable & appropriate traditional natural local materials, which contribute to the areas character & appearance, will be used" indicates that this important design factor has not been worked out.

Saved Policy E22 part 4 requires a sufficient level of detail to accompany applications for development in a conservation area to enable an assessment to be made of its impact. That is lacking in this application. This also means that an assessment under Policy E6, which relates to the Durham City Centre Conservation Area is not possible. From what is available it appears that requirements (c) to reflect a quality of design appropriate to the historic city centre and (d) to use external building materials which are the same as, or are sympathetic to the traditional materials of the historic city or an individual street have not been met.

While it is true that the extension will not be visible from the road, it will be only too visible from the flats and garden of Hanover Court, and also from the garden of number 23. Since the listed building is visible from Hanover Court, the extension will affect the setting of this listed building. The criterion in Policy E23 is "Not permitting development which detracts from the setting of a listed building" and there is insufficient detail to determine whether this is the case.

As residents of Hanover Court have pointed out, they have views of the Castle and Cathedral which would be blocked by this development, or which would intrude into those views. Policy E3 says that "Durham Cathedral and Castle World Heritage Site and its setting will be protected by restricting development to safeguard local and long distance views to and from the cathedral and castle". Plainly that is the case here, and that provides a further reason to refuse this application.

Yours sincerely

ROGER CORNWELL

Chair, Planning Committee