



**CITY OF DURHAM
PARISH COUNCIL**

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26 March 2020

Dear Ms Morina,

DM/20/00340/FPA: Extension and alteration of existing building to provide increased/reconfigured living accommodation to 6 apartments, 1A - 1F Victoria Terrace, Durham DH1 4RW

The City of Durham Parish Council's Planning Committee has considered the above application and offers the following comments.

The application proposes to add 11 bedrooms to an existing property that is currently sub-divided into six residential apartments which are believed to be occupied by post-graduate students. The property is located at the extreme southern end of Albert Street in the centre of Durham City Conservation Area. It is an end terrace 3 storey house with an unsympathetic external steel staircase to the front (east) elevation. The original sliding sash timber windows were replaced some time ago with inappropriate white uPVC top hung windows.

The property commands a prominent position in views in this part of the Conservation Area because it sits high above North Road with the former County Hospital to the west and Wharton Park to the east. The Conservation Area Character Assessment of the area carried out by Durham County Council led to an Article 4(1) Direction in 2016 to ensure that even minor developments are controlled so as not to undermine the general visual amenity of the area, which the Assessment describes as "grand Victorian terraces".

The proposed three storey extension would significantly extend the mass of the building disproportionately and to the detriment of the elevations along Princes Street. It would intrude into the view to the Cathedral and the original County Hospital buildings. This would be contrary to City of Durham Saved Policy E6 which seeks to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and to Saved Policy E22 for enhancing the character of the Conservation Area. This harm is

not outweighed by the positive aspects of removing the ugly fire escape and replacing uPVC windows with traditional wooden windows.

The proposed car park area for six cars would be in the front (eastern) side of the property, standing above North Road, where the front garden rises steeply and has mature trees. The gabion wall needed for the car park platform would be very prominent as would the cars parked on the raised platform. This is highly discordant and would substantially mar the principal garden elevation. Furthermore, the groundworks to establish the gabion support for the new parking area and their height are not shown, the details submitted being inadequate.

The Parish Council notices that the application form states that there have been no pre-application discussions with a planning officer; this is regrettable and ill-advised for a scheme such as this in a very sensitive location. Furthermore, for the application to be registered, part 17 of the form requires supplementary information to be provided on the number of residential units involved. No such information is shown on the Portal and so it would appear that the application should therefore not have been registered. The information is also essential in order to be able to determine whether what is proposed is a C3 residential extension or a C4 extension to an existing House in Multiple Occupation which falls to be considered under the Council's Interim Policy on Student Accommodation and County Durham Plan Policy 16.3 as proposed for a Main Modification following the Examination in Public.

Accordingly, the Parish Council considers that the application, once registered correctly, should be refused on the above grounds. We trust that you agree but, if you are minded to approve the application, then we request that it be called to Committee for determination so that we can put our views to Members.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Shanley
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council