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3 May 2019

Mr Henry Jones  
Durham County Council  
Planning Department  
Central/East Room 4/86-102  
County Hall  
Durham City  
DH1 5UL

Dear Mr Jones,

**DM/19/01084/FPA: Infrastructure works including provision of new footpath route, highways works including new signalised crossing at the Hollingside Lane and South Road junction, and the creation of a car park of up to 215 spaces at Upper Mountjoy, land south of the New Inn junction along South Road to Mount Oswald and Hollingside Lane to Upper Mountjoy**

The City of Durham Parish Council Planning Committee discussed this application at its meeting on 26 April 2019. The application for a new “super route” for pedestrians and cyclists is most welcome in principle and represents a major investment to tackle the longstanding problems of the limited capacity of the South Road pavements causing risks to the growing numbers of pedestrians and cyclists as new University buildings materialise under the Durham University Estate Masterplan. As the accompanying Design and Access Statements says, *“South Road has footpaths on both east and west sides varying in width from approximately 1m to 2.5m. At peak times during the day the paths are extremely busy and people are seen to step off the footpath into the road. With the increased student numbers as the University grows, it is anticipated this will only get worse.”*

The proposed infrastructure recognises the need to improve the routes people travel between student accommodation and academic departments and identifies this new north-south “super route”. It will reduce pressures on existing public footpaths by creating a safer

route to travel between key locations, providing an attractive alternative to South Road. It is further welcome that the new alternative routes, whilst in University land, will be available for the general public to use.

In considering and welcoming this footpath and cycling scheme in principle, the Parish Planning Committee wishes to draw attention to the following concerns.

First, the Planning Committee continues to believe that the Masterplan has very significant economic, social and environmental impacts on the city and beyond, and should be subject to a comprehensive assessment in its totality instead of being advanced piecemeal through individual applications and assessments.

Second, sections of the new 'footpaths' are in fact to be shared with cyclists and this is undesirable from a safety point of view. The accompanying documents seek to make a virtue of cyclists sharing the pathway with pedestrians by stating that this will naturally slow cyclists down to a safe speed. This is a recipe for conflict and for accidents. It would be better to install a design now, as used successfully elsewhere, that achieves clear separation of pedestrians and cyclists rather than have to re-work the scheme in a few years' time.

Third, the proposals involve steps; these represent a barrier to continuous cycling and contrary to the County Council's Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan. A potential solution using the existing public footpath through Little High Wood should be considered again. The proposed solution to the problem of steps incorporates wheeling tracks for cycles to be pushed past the steps. Whilst less than ideal, this solution cannot address the absolute barrier that steps offer to wheelchair users. There is a legal duty to make provision for wheelchair users, and this aspect of the scheme is unacceptable. The Parish Council is aware of the objection from Durham City Access for All Group which sets out in detail the improvements required to meet the needs of the mobility and visually impaired, and is supportive of that objection.

Fourthly, the application includes provision of a 215 space car park. This involves far greater vehicular use of Hollingside Lane and would significantly worsen conditions for pedestrians and cyclists on this at present relatively quiet lane. The Parish Council considers that the 215 space car park element of the current application should be removed and be part of a comprehensive sustainable travel plan that addresses ways of influencing modal shift away from car usage. The County Council's own Durham City Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan recognises that, *of great relevance to demand management through car parking policy, is the extensive parking that is available free of charge at major employment sites across the city. This represents an opportunity to control both the quantity and price of parking available to people working in Durham City, with the consequent potential to influence peak hour travel in particular.* The Parish Council considers that the University, as a major employer in the city, should play its part in significantly reducing car usage through such

measures as pricing, sharp reductions in the overall quantity of staff parking space, and a ban on students (other than on disability grounds) bringing cars to Durham city.

Finally, in bringing to bear appropriate current planning policies, it should be noted that the accompanying Planning Statement correctly states in relation to the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan that *"as the plan has not yet been subject to examination, it cannot be afforded any weight"* but in relation to the Pre-Submission Draft County Durham Plan it says that it can be afforded limited weight. This is not the County Council's own view, which is that *"the CDP is not sufficiently advanced to be afforded any weight in the decision-making process at the present time"*.

The Parish Planning Committee therefore considers that, whilst welcoming the principle of the pedestrian and cycling super route, the application as submitted should be referred back to the University so that the car park component can be removed and the improvements as set out above can be addressed.

Should you be minded to approve this application, we would wish this application to be called to Committee so that we can put our case to Councillors.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Shanley  
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council