



**CITY OF DURHAM
PARISH COUNCIL**

Learning from the past.
Building for the future.

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21st December 2021

Dear Mr Jones,

DM/21/03574/OUT | Demolition of existing buildings adjacent to B6532 and outline planning permission (all matters reserved except access) for a maximum of 1,550 dwellings (Use Class C3), a local Centre (use classes E and F2), public house (use class sui generis) and primary school (use class F1), associated infrastructure and landscaping | Land At Sniperley Park West Of The A167 And North And South Of The B6532 Durham

The City of Durham Parish Council Planning Committee considered this application at their meeting on the 10th December 2021 and resolved to object to this application.

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) operates under a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that development proposals, which accord with the development plan, should be approved without delay. The adopted Development Plan where the site is located comprises the planning policies of the County Durham Plan (CDP) and the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan (DCNP).

Material considerations include: the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF updated July 2021) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

Eleven years have been spent in establishing whether the Durham City Green Belt should and could be used to meet the quantitative and qualitative need for housing in the County. That matter has been settled by the acceptance of the Examination in Public Inspector's required Main Modifications and the formal adoption of the County Durham Local Plan on 21 October 2020, Policy 4 of which allocates Site H5 (4/DU/101) for 1,700 homes.

At the same time, the Government has endorsed the report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission to promote and increase the use of high-quality design for new build homes and neighbourhoods.

This is therefore a critical moment to establish the true principles of sustainability, design and other key policies to ensure satisfactory development.

The Parish Council considers that the key to a successful and sustainable development is for a master plan or design brief that genuinely incorporates and applies the principles of sustainability and high quality design, together with phasing and possible timing of each subdivision of the site. This major site is a precious resource to be carefully released for development over a number of years rather than an opportunity to roll out a standard housing layout. The masterplan must identify and deliver packages of land to meet the short, medium and long term demands as anticipated by the County Plan population and housing forecasts. This will ensure that development is phased in smaller and distinctive units avoiding a continuous building site appearance, and in a timely fashion where progressive improvements in housing style and function are possible.

At the EiP into the County Durham Plan, the Inspector's report made some telling points about the nature of the development on this major housing site. In his required Main Modifications, now implemented, the County Plan Inspector in his Final Report said of for Sniperley Park:

“89. The site is well served by buses to and from the city centre and elsewhere. Part (j) of policy 5 requires an expansion to the adjoining park and ride site, along with the provision of attractive and safe links from the proposed housing. Part (i) requires the provision of suitable, convenient, safe and attractive cycleways and footpaths to the existing development to the east of the A167. These proposals, along with other policies in the Plan relating to sustainable transport, should ensure that future residents are not dependent on the use of private motor vehicles.”

The above quote provides an indisputable set of requirements that a master plan or design brief would need to embody. Here is the big opportunity for a very sustainable development. Clearly, a master plan needs to come first, in such a way that it informs all subsequent planning applications and that all important master planning process represents an opportunity for all stakeholders to work together towards satisfactory development.

County Durham Plan Policy 5 is clear that: *“Development is required to be comprehensively masterplanned and to demonstrate how the phasing of development on these sites will have regard to the provision and timing of the infrastructure and services necessary to support them.”* Given that no masterplan has been provided, the Parish Council submits that this application is in direct conflict with this important Policy. CDP Policy 5 goes on to set out a very clear set of requirements for the development of this site, namely:

“a. Sniperley Park will be a sustainable urban extension incorporating a centrally located local centre which will act as the focus for community activity, including convenience retail provision for A1 floorspace and an allowance for A2, A3 and A4 units to facilitate a viable and vibrant community. The local centre will also include a building suitable to be used as a health centre;

b. a new primary school will be provided of a scale which will meet the expected requirement for school places generated by the new housing development. The primary school should be readily accessible to public transport, walking and cycling routes. The primary school will contain associated playing fields which will replace those lost at the southern end of the site and will be of an equivalent or better quality; equivalent quantity and available for use by both the school and by community teams via a community use agreement;

c. structural landscaping will be required along the A167 and the southern edge of the new road from the A691 to the Pity Me Roundabout to ensure suitable screening and that the perception of an extension to Durham City is minimised;

d. a surface and foul water drainage management plan incorporating SuDS will be required with no further water draining into the Blackdene Burn. Where possible wider opportunities for improvement of local water quality should be explored;

e. the design of development in the vicinity of Sniperley Hall and Farm will have regard to their character and setting, and the recognition of the area as an Historic Park and Garden of Local Interest, including through the provision of public open space and the use of reduced housing densities. The woodlands in that area will be retained;

f. any visual association with the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site will be given special regard to reflect its significance;

g. as a major benefit to new and existing residents, a linear park will be provided in perpetuity through the centre of the site. It will run from Folly Plantation in the north, through the former Cater House Pit to the parklands of Sniperley Hall in the south. The park will comprise of approximately 25 hectares of public open space, wildlife habitats, playing fields and community woodlands connected by a network of footpaths and cycleways linking housing areas with the local centre, the wider countryside and the urban areas to the east. It will incorporate the mature woodlands and tree groups of Sniperley Park, maintaining the 62 CDP Adopted Version 2020 4 How Much Development and Where relationship of the Hall with land to the north and with Sniperley Farm, having regard to their setting. It will incorporate the habitats of the former Cater House Pit and Folly Plantation, providing new linkages between them and the wider countryside;

h. schemes of compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility to the remaining Green Belt will be provided:

1. on land north and south of the A691 to the south of the site to include, the planting of new hedgerows, woodland, parkland trees and hedgerow trees, habitat creation to buffer existing features and new public rights of way linking to the wider footpath network in the Browney Valley to the south; and

2. on land north of Potterhouse Lane and south of Little Gill, to the north of the site, to include the planting of new hedgerows and gapping up of existing hedgerows, the planting of new

hedgerow trees, the planting of new woodland along Little Gill and on steeper slopes to connect existing woodland with woods to the east, habitat creation to buffer existing features, and new public rights of way providing opportunities for circular walks and linking to the wider footpath network to the north.

i. opportunities for a district heating network will be explored given the site's proximity to Lanchester Road Hospital and Aykley Heads;

j. in order to achieve sustainable and cohesive communities, the development must be connected to the existing development to the east of the A167 through suitable, convenient, safe and attractive cycleways and footpaths;

k. the expansion of the Sniperley Park and Ride facility will be required. Attractive and safe links between the housing and the existing Park and Ride facility will be created to maximise its use by residents;

l. to ensure that there are no unacceptable impacts on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impacts on the wider road network (in terms of capacity and congestion), details of all necessary on and off-site highway works and improvements, together with a timetable for their implementation, shall be agreed with the council as part of the comprehensive masterplan and any future planning applications for the Sniperley Park site. These works and improvements shall include, but not be limited to:

- improvements at the junctions of Trout's Lane, Potterhouse Lane and the B6532;*
- a new link between the B6532 and the A167 park and ride roundabout; and*
- capacity improvements along the A167 corridor from Neville's Cross to Sniperley, including improvements to Sniperley Roundabout.*

A contribution to delivering sustainable transport in accordance with policies 21 (Delivering Sustainable Travel) and 22 (Durham City Transport) will also be required”.

The public consultation into the masterplan for Sniperley Park is still ongoing until mid-January 2022 and it is therefore very disappointing that this application has been submitted ahead of this consultation's completion.

This application should be withdrawn or refused until such a time as the ongoing public consultation into the masterplan for this site is complete. As it stands currently, this application is contrary to CDP Policy 5.

No material considerations lead us to judge otherwise in accordance with the development plan.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Shanley

Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council