

## DURHAM CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FORUM



The Miners' Hall  
Redhills  
Durham  
DH1 4BD

E: [npf@durhamcity.org.uk](mailto:npf@durhamcity.org.uk)

14th June 2018

Nicola Waller  
DPP Planning  
Milburn House  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 1LF

Dear Ms Waller

### **Proposed office at the Milburngate House site, Durham City**

The Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum thanks you for your pre-application consultation letter dated 1 June 2018 and offers the following comments.

The Draft Durham City Neighbourhood Plan completed its Regulation 14 consultations at the end of 2017 and is now being amended to reflect submissions made in that consultation. It is a fundamental aspect of the Draft Plan that it has a Vision to have “Provision of a range of housing types to meet the needs of a sustainable mix of local residents, of all ages and abilities, and students living in harmony”. Indeed, one of its Objectives is “To change the imbalance towards student accommodation back to a sustainable, balanced community”.

Accordingly, the Draft Plan endorses the outline planning permission on the Milburngate House site for 441 dwellings. It is very important to bring people back as residents in the centre of the city, and therefore the 441 apartments approved in the outline scheme for this city centre site were particularly welcome.

However, this number will be reduced by, we understand, 38 if the current application for a Premier Inn is successful. Now a whole block of residential apartments is proposed to be lost so that a 6th office block can be provided (as you will be aware, the approved outline scheme has 5 office blocks). The documentation supplied does not explain why a sixth office block is felt to be necessary. In our view the number of dwellings on the other part of the site, where only outline permission exists, should be increased in compensation for this loss,

if necessary by removing office block(s) envisaged as coming forward in the later stages of the development.

In drafting the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan we were advised by the County Council and the Environment Agency to redraw the boundary of the residential allocation at Milburngate House so as to ensure that it lies outside the zone of highest flood risk. As you know, office development is permissible in a Zone 1 Flood Risk area but residential development is not.

The Forum is concerned that the incremental changes proposed now invalidate the original aims of the development. It was and is, because of its size and sensitive location, the most important development site in the City. In the revised draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan, the sustainable development policy has been strengthened to include the requirement for a master plan to guide future development of major sites. We believe that the approved plan no longer provides an adequate or reliable representation of the way the site will develop and that it is necessary for revised proposals to be submitted that protect the original concept of meeting a substantial part of the City's housing needs.

As a final point, we are aware that the Sidegate Residents' Association has noticed that the proposed offices "would be located very close to the access from Framwellgate Peth and wonder whether your recent application to vary the planning permission to allow access for non-residents will also apply to users of the offices. If so, this will significantly increase the traffic at what is already, in our view, a congested access point." The Forum endorses that comment.

We trust that the above comments will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Roger Cornwell  
Chair, Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum