



Planning Services

COMMITTEE REPORT

APPLICATION DETAILS

APPLICATION NO: 4/10/00955/FPA

FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION: Erection of single storey extension to Durham Crematorium to accommodate replacement cremators, associated plant and garden store; erection of electricity substation; and revised parking arrangements

NAME OF APPLICANT: Durham County Council

ADDRESS: Durham Crematorium, South Road, Durham, DH1 3TQ

ELECTORAL DIVISION: Elvet

CASE OFFICER: Peter Herbert, Principal Planner
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DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSALS

1. Durham Crematorium lies on the south west edge of Durham City, and takes access from South Road. The premises are bounded by the Durham University student residential accommodation at Ustinov/Josephine Butler college to the north east, Durham High School for Girls to the south west; whilst due west, on the opposite side of South Road, lies Mount Oswald Golf Course. To the south lies a sewerage treatment works with open countryside beyond.

2. The crematorium dates from 1960, is octagonal in form, single storey, and constructed of local stone, and stands within 61 hectares of land that includes a cemetery and walled memorial garden. The crematorium design was reputedly inspired by the Durham Cathedral monks' kitchen.

3. In response to a change in Environmental Protection Act (1990) legislation requiring the removal of mercury from crematorium emissions by January 2012, it has become necessary to install new cremators and associated filtration systems. However, in order to enable the existing cremators to remain in use during the installation period, the new equipment would be housed within an extension to the existing building.

4. Once the new cremators are functioning, the existing cremators would be removed, and the space created used for additional storage and an expansion of office

accommodation.

5. The crematorium handles approximately 2100 cremations annually, more than five times its original turn over, and this has put an unforeseen pressure on the site in terms of vehicular access and parking. Currently it is not uncommon for vehicles to be prevented from accessing the site by those leaving. As a consequence queues form on South Road, and parking takes place on grassed areas that form part of the crematorium's landscape setting as a result of a shortfall in designated parking spaces.

6. The crematorium manager has recognized that, at a time of intense emotional stress, matters can only be worsened by such access difficulties. Accordingly, as part of this proposal, the opportunity is being taken to improve traffic movement within the site, increasing the number of car parking spaces from 42 to 77, increasing the number of disabled parking spaces from 2 to 5, and providing 2 dedicated spaces for those officiating at crematorium services and 2 coach parking spaces, and an electric vehicle recharging point.

7. Consideration was given to the widening of the crematorium site entrance at South Road, where two stone piers form a "pinch point". However, in view of the piers' visual importance (their design echoing that of Sir Edward Lutyens' London Cenotaph), and in consultation with the Highway Authority, the piers will remain in place. Instead, road widening will take place beyond the gateway within the site, and traffic flows will be managed by the simple mechanism of those leaving the crematorium being required to give way to those entering.

8. The extension design echoes the scale and style of the existing building, and is subservient to its principle elements. Materials will match, where possible, to include brickwork with bonding, copper roofing or similar, and stained hardwood windows. "Trespa" cladding panels below the crematory windows will reflect the existing building's weathered copper roofing, and obscured abstract stained glass windows in the committal rooms will echo the theme of the current crematory fenestration, allowing light yet maintaining privacy.

9. A boiler room, store, and electricity substation have been visually merged with the proposed extension by means of a walled service yard.

10. To off-set the high gas consumption of the cremators, a heat recovery system will help provide heating within the building. Further uses for heat generated, including the generation of electricity to be sold to the National Grid, will be explored in the future.

11. Sustainable drainage will take the form of some rain water being discharged into soak ways. The remainder, including car park run-off, being discharged, with the knowledge of the Environment Agency, into the neighbouring Saltwell Gill water course, as is already the case.

12. The application is supported by a comprehensive Design and Access Statement, Bat Report, and Tree Protection Plan.

PLANNING HISTORY

13. Durham Crematorium, designed by J R Chaplin, was built in 1960, and has been steadily developed thereafter.

14. Three new cremators were installed in 1992, including a new chimney, to comply with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

15. An award winning walled memorial garden was created in 2000, and the subsequent installation of art works within the crematorium grounds include the Spirit of Hope by Adrian Pearce erected in 2005.

PLANNING POLICY

16. NATIONAL POLICY:

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development sets out the Governments overachieving planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.

Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, sets out planning policies on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system. These policies complement, but do not replace or override, other national planning policies and should be read in conjunction with other relevant statements of national planning policy.

Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy, sets out the planning policies for renewable energy, which planning authorities should have regard to when preparing local development

Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk delivers government policy in respect of surface water disposal and the minimisation of flood risk.

Planning Policy Guidance note 13: Transport seeks to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level and to promote more sustainable transport choices both for carrying people and for moving freight.

17. REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY:

The North East of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) July 2008, set out the broad spatial development strategy for the North East region for the period of 2004 to 2021. The RSS set out the region's housing provision and the priorities in economic development, retail growth, transport investment, the environment, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. Some policies have an end date of 2021 but the overall vision, strategy, and general policies will guide development over a longer timescale.

In July 2010 the Local Government Secretary signaled his intention to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies with immediate effect, and that this was to be treated as a material consideration in subsequent planning decisions. This was successfully challenged in the High Court in November 2010, thus for the moment reinstating the RSS. However, it remains the Government's intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies when the forthcoming Local Government Bill becomes law, and weight can now be attached to this intension. Of particular relevance to this application are the following policies:

Policy 4 (The Sequential Approach to Development) provides that a sequential approach to the identification of land for development should be adopted to give priority to previously developed land and buildings in the most sustainable locations.

Policy 7 (Connectivity and Accessibility) seeks to promote the need to reduce the impact of travel demand particularly by promoting public transport, travel plans, cycling and walking, as well as the need to reduce long distance travel, particularly by private car, by focusing development in urban areas with good access to public transport.

Policy 8 (Protecting and Enhancing the Environment) seeks to promote measures such as high quality design in all development and promoting development that is sympathetic to its surroundings.

Policy 24 (Delivering Sustainable Communities) refers to the need to concentrate the majority of the Region's new development within the defined urban areas, and the need to utilise previously developed land wherever possible.

Policy 38 (Sustainable Construction) sets out that in advance of locally set targets, major developments should secure at least 10% of their energy supply from decentralized or low-carbon sources.

18. LOCAL PLAN POLICY:

Policy E14 (Protection of Existing Trees and Hedgerows) seeks measures to safeguard vegetation on development sites both during and after construction.

Policy E16 (Protection and Promotion of Nature Conservation) seeks to address and protect ecology associated with development sites

Policy T1 (Traffic Generation – General) precludes development proposals likely to lead to a level of traffic generation prejudicial to highway safety.

Policy T10 (Parking – General Provision) requires an appropriate level of off street parking that will avoid hazardous on street parking, yet encourage the use of a variety of transport modes.

Policy U8A (Disposal of Foul and Surface Water) requires satisfactory foul and surface water disposal, enabling water and sewage undertakers to meet their statutory obligations.

Policy Q7 (Layout and Design – Industrial and Business Development) requires a high standard of layout and design in respect of such development.

The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant in the Development Plan the full text, criteria, and justifications of each may be accessed at <http://www.cartoplus.co.uk/durham/text/00cont.htm>.

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES

19. STATUTORY RESPONSES:

The County Highway Authority, who was consulted throughout the design of this scheme, accepts the level of parking and traffic management measures proposed, including the retention of the gateway “pinch point,” provided that clear signage is put in place to alert drivers that those entering the crematorium grounds have priority.

The Highways Agency offers no comment.

20. INTERNAL CONSULTEE RESPONSES:

Environmental Health Officers draw attention to the fact that the crematorium is regulated under Local Authority Air Pollution Control of Industrial Installations, and will therefore require an installation permit at the appropriate time.

Whilst it is anticipated that construction work will cause some noise disturbance, the site’s secluded location, and the need for weekend working to minimize disruption to crematorium service delivery is recognised. Accordingly, working hours restrictions are not considered necessary.

The Senior Low Carbon Officer welcomes future investigation of the feasibility of low carbon electricity production as a byproduct of cremator heat generation.

The County Ecologist offers no objections.

21. PUBLIC RESPONSES:

None

22. APPLICANTS STATEMENT:

The necessity for this proposal has arisen from the tightening of pollution control in respect of mercury entering the atmosphere, and the opportunity has been taken to combine with this the improvement to vehicle access and egress, on site circulation, and parking within the crematorium grounds.

The extension design and choice of materials are respectful of the distinctive crematorium architecture, while the need to address local ecology and tree protection has been taken fully into account.

The necessity to allow the crematorium to fully function during the installation of the new

cremators has to a large extent informed the design approach taken. However, the space released once the existing cremators have been decommissioned will allow valuable additional office and storage space

The above represents a summary of the comments received on this application. The full written text is available for inspection on the application file which can be viewed at <http://82.113.161.89/WAM/showCaseFile.do?action=show&appType=planning&appNumber=10/00955/FPA>

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

23. Durham Crematorium is a vital component of Durham County Council's service to the public.
24. The installation of new environmental friendly cremators is a necessity rather than an option, yet it is critical that the crematorium continues to function during the course of this development.
25. The manner in which this task has been approached is both logistically effective and architecturally sensitive, providing the accommodation required yet being visually respectful of an important Durham building and its tranquil setting.
26. Similarly, a significant improvement to access, parking and traffic circulation within the crematorium grounds will be brought about, without sacrificing the distinctive character of the entrance gateway.
27. Accordingly, the objectives of Local Plan Policies Q7, T1 and T10 are considered to have been met.
28. The presence of bats, and the existence of important boundary trees, have also been carefully considered and addressed. The objectives of Local Plan Policies E14 and E16 are therefore considered to have been met.

CONCLUSION

29. This is a well considered and sensitively executed scheme, which both addresses a statutory requirement and enhances the appearance and operation of an essential County Council service.
30. The proposal complies with all planning policies that relate to such a development, and no objections to it have been received.
31. Accordingly, this application is fully supported.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. Reason: Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved plans, specifications and conditions hereby imposed: Sections (Drawing 07 Rev A), Access Road and Car Park Appendix 10 (Drawing 10) received 24 December 2010, Proposed Plans Phase 1 (Drawing 05 Rev F), Proposed Plans Phase 2 (Drawing 06 Rev E) and Tree Protection Plan (Drawing 1134089/TPP/01 received 24 January 2011, Proposed Site Plan (Drawing 01 Rev F), Proposed Elevations 1 (Drawing 08 Rev F) and Proposed Elevations 2 (Drawing 09 Rev E) received 16 February 2011. Reason: In the interests of delivering the objectives of Policies Q7, T1 and T10 of the City of Durham 2004.
3. Notwithstanding any details of materials submitted with the application no development shall commence until samples of the external walling and roofing materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details. Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the area and to comply with Policy Q7 of the City of Durham Local Plan 2004.
4. Prior to the commencement of the development details of the surface treatment and construction of all hardsurfaced areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details. Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the area and to comply with Policy Q7 of the City of Durham Local Plan 2004.
5. No development shall commence until a detailed scheme for the disposal of surface water from the development hereby approved has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Northumbrian Water. Thereafter the development shall take place in accordance with the approved details. Reason: To ensure the discharge of surface water from the site does not increase the risk of flooding from sewers in accordance with the requirements of PPS25 (Development and Flood Risk), and complies with the Hierarchy of Preference contained within Revised Part H of the Building Regulations 2000 which is specifically: 1 Soakaway, 2 Watercourse, 3 Sewer. Such an approach meets the objectives of Policy U8A of the City of Durham Local Plan 2004.
6. The mitigation strategy contained within Part F of the submitted "Phase 1 Survey Report and Bat Survey Report" shall be carried out in full. Reason: In the interests of safeguarding a protected species, and to meet the objectives of Policy E16 of the City of Durham Local Plan 2004.
7. Tree protection measures as shown on submitted drawing "1134089/TPP/01 "Tree Protection Plan" shall be carried out in full. Reason: To meet the objectives of Policy E14 of City of Durham Local Plan 2004.

REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

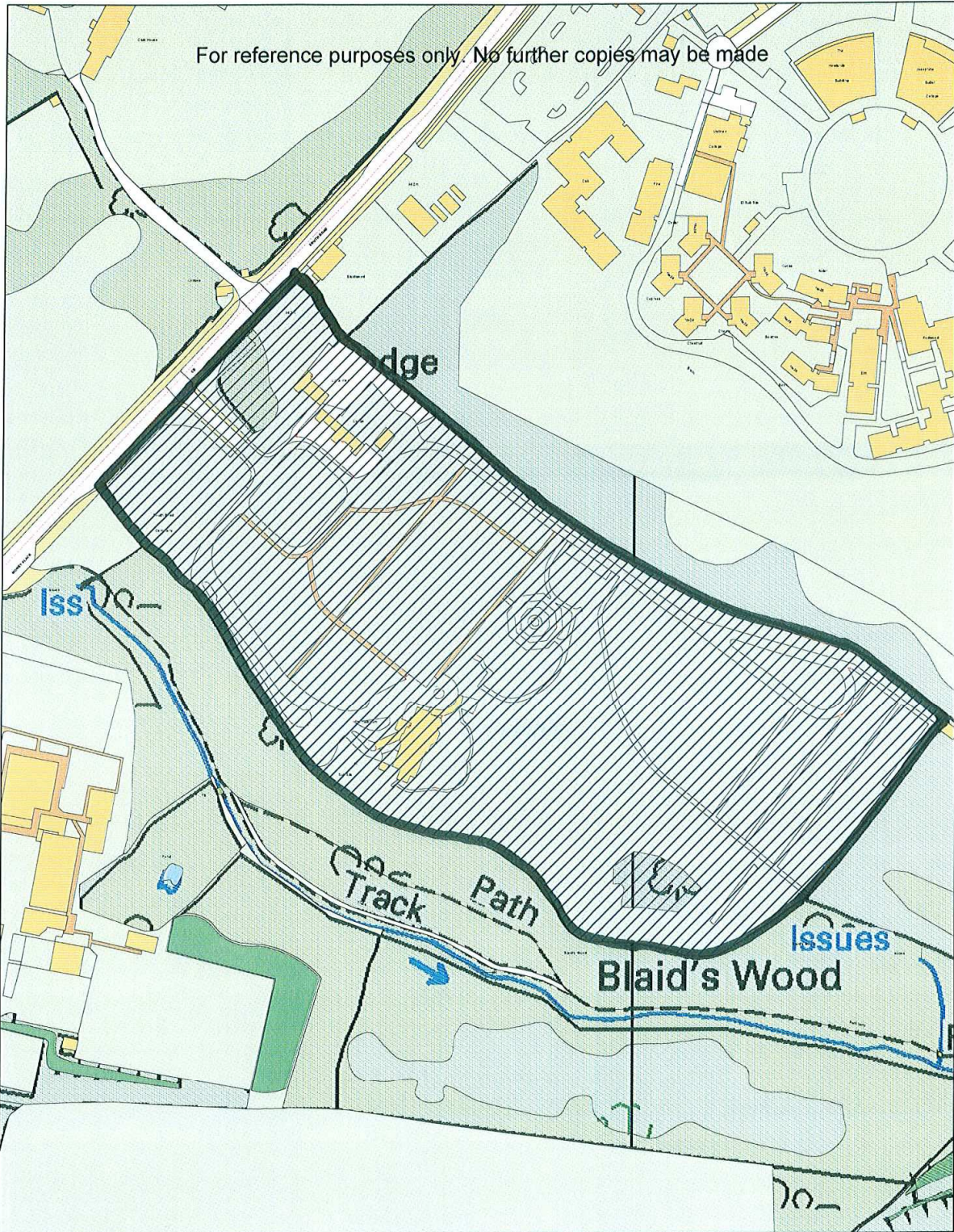
1. The proposed development is considered acceptable having regard to Policies E14, E16, T1, T10, U8A and Q7 of the City of Durham Local Plan 2004.
2. More specifically, this proposal constitutes a sensitively designed response to an essential environmental requirement that will enable an important County Council service to continue being available to the public.
3. No objections have been raised to this proposal by any party.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Submitted Application Forms and Plans.
Design and Access Statement
Bat Report and Tree Protection Plan
North East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) July 2008
City of Durham Local Plan 2004
Planning Policy Statements / Guidance, PPS1
Response from County Highway Authority
Response from Environment Agency
Response from Environmental Health
Response from Low Carbon Officer



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4/10/955/FPA - Durham Crematorium

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Comments

Date

24 February 2011

Scale

1:2500