

COMMITTEE REPORT

APPLICATION DETAILS

APPLICATION NO:	DM/24/03318/FPA
FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:	Full planning application for a 2.5 storey building for offices and associated uses for the operation of for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue and accommodation for the North East Ambulance Service plus associated works including a new access road, external lighting, parking area, landscaping, PV panels and wind turbine
NAME OF APPLICANT:	Mr James Gilbert
ADDRESS:	County Durham And Darlington Fire And Rescue Service, Durham Community Fire Station, Durham, DH1 5RA
ELECTORAL DIVISION:	Esh and Witton Gilbert
CASE OFFICER:	Richard Laughton Senior Planning Officer richard.laughton@durham.gov.uk

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSALS

The Site

1. The application site relates to the County Durham and Darlington Community Fire Station, situated off the A691 to the west of Sniperley Park and Ride. The site comprises of the existing fire station building with a large operational area of hard standing and training facilities to the north; a car park to the east and the remaining land being undeveloped bounded and hedgerow and a line of trees to the southern boundary. Sniperley Farm is situated to the north west of the site and the allocated Sniperley Park Housing development is situated to the north.
2. Access to the site is taken from two access points on the A691, the first leading to a car park and large operational hardstanding area to the rear of the existing building and the second directly into the fire station for emergency vehicles.
3. The site lies within the designation of the locally listed Sniperley Hall Historic Parks and Garden. There are no ecological designations on or in the direct vicinity of the site although the site is bounded by surrounding Green Belt and an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) to the west and south. The site is in flood zone 1. A Public Right of Way (Footpath no. 9 (Witton Gilbert)) lies to northern site boundary, following the line of the existing car park access.

The Proposal

4. The application is seeking full planning permission for the extension of the existing Fire Station for a mix of offices, dining, break out spaces, store facilities and a workshop. The development also proposes ambulance bays, car parking, landscaping and new access and erection of 7.5kW wind turbine (25m tip height). The new building extension would enhance the existing facilities on site, provide accommodation and stationing for the North East Ambulance Service and would serve as the headquarters for the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) which is currently located in Belmont Business Park.
5. The new building would be 2.5 storeys (13.3m to ridge and 8.1m to eaves) and would be constructed from materials such as brickwork, aluminium frames windows, timber cladding, standing seam metal cladding. The design includes solar panels to the roof. The ground floor would have a floor area of 471m² and would contain the dining and breakout areas, meeting room, IT, offices, plant, store facilities and a workshop. The first floor would have an area of 471m² that would provide large office space, meeting places and kitchen facilities. The second floor of 393m² would allocate space for separate offices for the Deputy Chief, Directors and Chief Fire Officer. The wind turbine would be located on the southern boundary.
6. Due to the location of the new building and new access arrangements, there would be a loss of some hedgerow and re-positioning of some existing trees. The application includes a landscape plan that proposed landscape and biodiversity compensation and enhancements such as native grass seed mix; tree planting; new hedgerows and retention of existing scrub on the northern boundary.
7. In addition to the two existing access points to the site, a new access and junction is proposed from the A691 to separate traffic from the existing operational and training space at rear of the fire station. This new access would only be used by cars only with emergency vehicles utilising the existing arrangement. The proposed parking arrangement would provide 97 spaces for the entire site which would serve the HQ, North East Ambulance staff and visitors, Fire Station Crew and Search and Rescue Team, On-Call Team and act as overflow parking. There are currently 55 spaces on site.
8. This application is being report to the Central & East committee in accordance with the scheme of delegations.

PLANNING HISTORY

9. DM/22/03237/FPA Extension to Sniperley Park and Ride by 262 total bays accommodating 29 disabled bays, 18 electric charging bays and 4 motorhome bays. [now completed]
10. DM/22/03712/OUT Demolition of existing buildings adjacent to B6532 and outline planning permission (all matters reserved except for access) for a maximum of 1,550 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), a local centre (Use Classes E and F2), public house (Use Class Sui Generis) and primary school (Use Class F1), compensatory improvements to the Green Belt, associated infrastructure and landscaping (resubmission). Land At Sniperley Park Pity Me DH1 5DZ.
11. DM/23/00591/OUT Outline planning application (with all matters reserved apart from access) for the development of up to 370 dwellings, an extension to Sniperley park and

ride, demolition of former farm buildings and associated infrastructure works. | Land North And East Of Sniperley Farm Durham DH1 5RA

12. DM/22/03686/FPA | Conversion of existing farm buildings to form 4no residential units (Use Class C3) (resubmission). Sniperley Farm Durham DH1 5RA
13. DM/22/03778/FPA DM/22/03778/FPA Hybrid planning application consisting of outline planning permission (all matters reserved) for an extension to the Sniperley Park and Ride and full planning permission for the development of 368 dwellings associated access and works and demolition of former farm buildings (resubmission) Land North And East Of Sniperley Farm Durham DH1 5RA
14. APP/X1355/W/22/3330836 Land at Sniperley Park, Pity Me, Durham, DH1 5DZ, DH1 5RH – Application Ref DM/22/03712/OUT. Allowed 2024. b: App/X1355/W/22/3331745 land north and east of Sniperley Farm, Durham City, County Durham – Application Ref DM/23/00591/OUT. Allowed 2024. c: APP/X1355/W/22/3331801 Sniperley Farm buildings, Durham – Application Ref DM/22/03686/FPA. Allowed 2024. d: APP/X1355/W/22/3333600 land north and east of Sniperley Farm, Durham, County Durham - DM/22/03778/FPA. allowed 2024.

PLANNING POLICY

NATIONAL POLICY

15. The following elements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are considered relevant to this proposal:
16. *NPPF Part 2 - Achieving sustainable development.* The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It defines the role of planning in achieving sustainable development under three overarching objectives – economic, social and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. The application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development for plan-making and decision-taking is outlined.
17. *NPPF Part 4 - Decision-making.* Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
18. *NPPF Part 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy:* The Government is committed to ensuring the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.
19. *NPPF Part 7 Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres -* Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period.
20. *NPPF Part 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities.* The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Developments should be safe and accessible; Local Planning Authorities

should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space and community facilities. An integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and services should be adopted.

21. *NPPF Part 9 – Promoting sustainable transport.* Encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. Developments that generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes maximised.
22. *NPPF Part 11 Making Effective Use of Land.* Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.
23. *NPPF Part 12 Achieving Well-Designed Places.* The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, with good design a key aspect of sustainable development, indivisible from good planning.
24. *NPPF Part 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.* The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
25. *NPPF Part 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.* Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
26. *NPPF Part 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.* Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

27. The Government has consolidated a number of planning practice guidance notes, circulars and other guidance documents into a single Planning Practice Guidance Suite. This document provides planning guidance on a wide range of matters. Of particular relevance to this application is the practice guidance with regards to; air quality; historic environment; design process and tools; determining a planning application; flood risk; healthy and safe communities; land affected by contamination; housing and economic development needs assessments; housing and economic land availability assessment; light pollution; natural environment; neighbourhood planning; noise; open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space; planning obligations; travel plans, transport assessments and statements; use of planning conditions; and; water supply, wastewater and water quality.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

LOCAL PLAN POLICY:

The County Durham Plan (October 2020)

28. *Policy 6 (Development on Unallocated Sites)* states the development on sites not allocated in the Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, but which are either within the built-up area or outside the built up area but well related to a settlement will be permitted provided it: is compatible with use on adjacent land; does not result in coalescence with neighbouring settlements; does not result in loss of land of recreational, ecological, or heritage value; is appropriate in scale, design etc to character of the settlement; it is not prejudicial to highway safety; provides access to sustainable modes of transport; retains the settlement's valued facilities; considers climate change implications; makes use of previously developed land and reflects priorities for urban regeneration.
29. *Policy 9 (Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development)* states that the council will protect and enhance the following hierarchy of Sub Regional, Large Town, Small Town, District and Local retail centres in the county. The Plan will look to support new town centre development across all of the county's centres that will improve choice and bring about regeneration and environmental improvements. In all other locations outside of those identified in the retail hierarchy the loss of essential shops and services will be resisted.
30. *Policy 10 (Development in the Countryside)* States that development in the countryside will not be permitted unless allowed for by specific policies in the Plan, relevant policies within an adopted neighbourhood plan relating to the application site or where the proposal relates to one or more of the following exceptions; economic development, infrastructure development or the development of existing buildings. New development in the countryside must accord with all other relevant development plan policies and general design principles.
31. *Policy 21 (Delivering Sustainable Transport)* states that all development shall deliver sustainable transport by (in part) ensuring that any vehicular traffic generated by new development, following the implementation of sustainable transport measures, can be safely accommodated on the local and strategic highway network and does not cause an unacceptable increase in congestions or air pollution and that severe congestion can be overcome by appropriate transport improvements.
32. *Policy 25 (Developer Contributions)* advises that any mitigation necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms will be secured through appropriate planning conditions or planning obligations. Planning conditions will be imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. Planning obligations must be directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
33. *Policy 26 (Green Infrastructure)* states that development will be expected to maintain and protect, and where appropriate improve, the County's green infrastructure network. Advice is provided on the circumstances in which existing green infrastructure may be lost to development, the requirements of new provision within development proposals and advice in regard to public rights of way.
34. *Policy 27 (Utilities, Telecommunications and Other Broadcast Infrastructure)* requires all residential and commercial development to be served by a high-speed broadband connection, where this is not appropriate, practical or economically viable developers should provide appropriate infrastructure to enable future installation.

35. *Policy 29 (Sustainable Design)* Requires all development proposals to achieve well designed buildings and places having regard to SPD advice and sets out detailed criteria which sets out that where relevant development is required to meet including; making a positive contribution to an areas character and identity; provide adaptable buildings; minimise greenhouse gas emissions and use of non-renewable resources; providing high standards of amenity and privacy; contributing to healthy neighbourhoods; providing suitable landscape proposals; provide convenient access for all users; adhere to the Nationally Described Space Standards (subject to transition period).
36. *Policy 31 (Amenity and Pollution)* Sets out that development will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there will be no unacceptable impact, either individually or cumulatively, on health, living or working conditions or the natural environment and that they can be integrated effectively with any existing business and community facilities. Development will not be permitted where inappropriate odours, noise, vibration and other sources of pollution cannot be suitably mitigated against, as well as where light pollution is not suitably minimised. Permission will not be granted for sensitive land uses near to potentially polluting development. Similarly, potentially polluting development will not be permitted near sensitive uses unless the effects can be mitigated.
37. *Policy 32 (Despoiled, Degraded, Derelict, Contaminated and Unstable Land)* states [in part] that development will not be permitted unless the developer can demonstrate that the site is suitable for the proposed use, and does not result in unacceptable risks which would adversely impact on the environment, human health and the amenity of local communities.
38. *Policy 34 (Wind Turbine Development)* States wind turbine development will only be permitted in the areas identified as suitable for development on the policies map and where the applicant is able to demonstrate that, following consultation, those planning-related impacts identified by any affected local communities have been fully addressed and that the proposal has their backing. This includes a criteria to assess impacts to amenity, landscape, noise, traffic and protected species.
39. *Policy 35 (Water Management)* Requires all development proposals to consider the effect of the proposed development on flood risk, both on-site and off-site, commensurate with the scale and impact of the development and taking into account the predicted impacts of climate change for the lifetime of the proposal. All new development must ensure there is no net increase in surface water runoff for the lifetime of the development. Amongst its advice, the policy advocates the use of SuDS and aims to protect the quality of water.
40. *Policy 36 (Water Infrastructure)*. Advocates a hierarchy of drainage options for the disposal of foul water. Applications involving the use of non-mains methods of drainage will not be permitted in areas where public sewerage exists. New sewage and waste water infrastructure will be approved unless the adverse impacts outweigh the benefits of the infrastructure. Proposals seeking to mitigate flooding in appropriate locations will be permitted though flood defence infrastructure will only be permitted where it is demonstrated as being the most sustainable response to the flood threat.
41. *Policy 39 (Landscape)* states that proposals for new development will be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views and that development affecting valued landscapes will only be permitted where it conserves,

and where appropriate enhances, the special qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the harm.

42. *Policy 40 (Trees, Woodlands and Hedges)* states that proposals will be expected to retain existing trees where they can make a positive contribution to the locality or to the development, maintain adequate standoff distances between them and new land-uses, including root protection areas where necessary, to avoid future conflicts, and integrate them fully into the design having regard to their future management requirements and growth potential.
43. *Policy 41 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)* states that proposal for new development will not be permitted if significant harm to biodiversity or geodiversity resulting from the development cannot be avoided, or appropriately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for.
44. *Policy 43 (Protected Species and Nationally and Locally Protected Sites)* Development proposals that would adversely impact upon nationally protected sites will only be permitted where the benefits clearly outweigh the impacts whilst adverse impacts upon locally designated sites will only be permitted where the benefits outweigh the adverse impacts. Appropriate mitigation or, as a last resort, compensation must be provided where adverse impacts are expected. In relation to protected species and their habitats, all development likely to have an adverse impact on the species' abilities to survive and maintain their distribution will not be permitted unless appropriate mitigation is provided or the proposal meets licensing criteria in relation to European protected species.
45. *Policy 44 (Historic Environment)*. Seeks to ensure that developments should contribute positively to the built and historic environment and seek opportunities to enhance and, where appropriate, better reveal the significance and understanding of heritage assets. The policy advises on when harm or total loss of the significance of heritage assets can be accepted and the circumstances/levels of public benefit which must apply in those instances.
46. *Policy 45 (Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site)*. Both are designated heritage assets of the highest significance. New development should sustain and enhance the significance and be based upon Outstanding Universal Value, protecting and enhancing it in the immediate and wider setting and important views across, out of and into the site. Harmful development is only permitted in wholly exception circumstances.
47. *Policy 56 (Safeguarding Mineral Resources)*. Sets out that planning permission will not be granted for non-mineral development that would lead to the sterilisation of mineral resources within a Mineral Safeguarding Area unless certain exception criteria apply.

Supplementary Planning Documents

48. The following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) form part of the development plan in County Durham:
49. Development Viability, Affordable Housing and Financial Contributions SPD (2024) – Provides guidance on how CDP Policy 25 and other relevant policies requiring planning obligations for affordable housing or other infrastructure will be interpreted and applied.
50. Trees, Woodlands and Hedges SPD (2024) – Provides guidance on good practice when considering the impacts of development on trees, woodlands, and hedgerows, as well as new planting proposals.

51. Residential Amenity Standards SPD (2023) – Provides guidance on the space/amenity standards that would normally be expected where new dwellings are proposed.
52. Parking and Accessibility SPD (2023) – Provides guidance on parking requirements and standards.

The above represents a summary of those policies considered relevant. The full text, criteria, and justifications can be accessed at: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/3266/Development-Plan-for-County-Durham> (Adopted County Durham Plan)

Neighbourhood Plan:

53. The site falls within the defined boundary of the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan. The neighbourhood Plan was adopted in 2018 and extends up to 2033. Relevant policies include:-
54. *WG Policy 6 – Sustainable Design.* Design should contribute positively to place-making and sustainable design and should be developed in response to a robust analysis of the character of the built environment and local landscape character.

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES

STATUTORY RESPONSES:

55. *Highways Authority* – Advise that currently, the section of the A691 in front of the development has a 60mph speed limit. The proposed access to the proposed development has been designed to 40mph standards for junction separation and visibility.
56. However, as part of the adjacent Sniperley housing planning application which has been granted planning permission, changes would be made to this section of the A691 including provision of a new access roundabout, and dropping of the speed limit to 40mph. A hybrid plan showing both the works associated with the Sniperley application, and this development are shown on the submitted drawings.
57. Given the existing speed limits in force, until such time as the works associated with the Sniperley development have been undertaken, including the dropping of the speed limit to 40mph, then this proposed development could not open or use their proposed new access to the A691. Once the works are completed and the speed limit dropped to 40mph, then the proposed access to the office development could then be opened and used. Should permission be granted for this development, this would need to be secured through a condition to control this.
58. Due to the volumes of traffic being carried by the A691, and at the request of the Local Highway Authority, the applicant has now made provision of a protected right turn to serve the new access. This would allow for the safe accessing of the site from the A691, and prevent the potential for traffic to stack back to the Park & Ride roundabout due to right turners being sat in the running lane waiting to turn into the site.
59. Until the works are carried out allowing the applicant to use the proposed new access, the applicant would use the existing Fire Station access to serve the office building. This is considered acceptable. Sufficient car parking is provided to serve the development. A condition securing a Construction Management Plan is recommended.

60. *Public Right of Way* – No objection. General vehicle access (excluding appliances) to the fire station from the A691 is currently via public footpath no. 9 Witton Gilbert Parish. The proposals do not appear to alter this arrangement to any significant degree.

INTERNAL CONSULTEE RESPONSES:

61. *Design and Conservation* - Advise that the proposed building and turbine would both be prominent roadside additions alongside the A 691. However, the building especially will read as part of the operational fire station site and subject to the careful control of materials will be readily assimilated. Careful consideration has been given to the impact of the turbine in relation especially to the wider setting of the World Heritage Site.
62. It is considered there would be no direct intervisibility between the mast and the WHS. No clear views from the A691 near or approaching the site nor from higher elevation moving further northwards, no views from the B6532 in the east. It falls outside the inner setting boundary with visual effects neutralised by topography, mature tree cover and extensive built development between the site and WHS. It is considered the WHS and wider setting are preserved.
63. *Ecology* – No objections subject to ensuring a final version of the EclA and BNG Report is submitted and corresponds with the amended metric and landscaping plans. It is acknowledged that the risk to protected species is low.
64. *Lead Local Flood Authority* - No objections. We accept the filter strip filter drain as being a suitable solution to draining and treating surface water from the access road. The hydraulic calculations has also been submitted in digital format which ensure the drainage scheme is achievable.
65. *Landscape Officer* - No objections, advising that the proposals would ensure that there would continue to be a green frontage onto the A691
66. *Tree Officer* - No objections, but conditions should be attached to any approval to refine the landscaping plan and ensure that appropriate protection measures are erected before development commences.
67. *Environmental Health (Air Quality)* - No objections. A dust management plan incorporated into a CMP would suffice for dust emissions in relation to AQ.
68. *Environmental Health (Nuisance)* - No objections subject to controlling the working hours during construction.
69. *Environmental Health (Land Contamination)* - No objections subject to a condition requiring the submission of a Phase 4 verification report on completion of the development.
70. *Spatial Policy* – The proposal is considered to be in accordance with CDP Policy 6 provided that there are no issues raised in regard to the new HQs design and layout, or any potential adverse amenity impacts on the residential dwellings to be built the north. The proposed development is also in accordance with criterion b.) of CDP Policy 10 as it is accepted that the CDDRS is a public body/emergency service and does not need to show any financial viability given it provides an essential community service. It is considered the proposed development would be in accordance with the other relevant criteria in CDP Policy 10 given there are no issues raised by the other relevant statutory consultees.

PUBLIC RESPONSES:

71. There has been one representations received in response to the consultation exercise involving individual letters, press and site notices. The main reasons for objection are as follows:
72. The proposed new roundabout for the Sniperley development will result in a series of three roundabouts in rapid succession which will all have entrances situated between them. This would create a third entrance relating to the fire station between two of these roundabouts. The roundabout on the A167 is already incredibly difficult to cross as a pedestrian or cyclist and while traffic lights may help some it is unclear if this would be motorists, cyclists or pedestrians, if any. Road entrances for cyclists are always more problematic as not only do you have to worry about someone pulling out in front of you but also those overtaking to immediately turn in.

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT:

73. County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) currently have their headquarters located in Belmont Business Park, DH1 1TW. The lease for this building is due to end in 2027. The number of staff that the HQ now accommodates is significantly lower than it was when the building was first occupied by CDDFRS in 2012, having approximately halved from 120 to 60. CDDFRS have therefore been looking at alternative options that are generally more economically advantageous and offer better operational adjacencies with other departments. The reduced size requirement of the headquarters building provides the opportunity to share facilities with another building within the estate. Utilising land currently owned by CDDFRS is also beneficial from an economical point of view. The proposal is for a new headquarters at the existing Durham Community Fire Station site at Sniperley. This location was chosen for the following reasons:
 - The site is large and is able to accommodate the headquarters.
 - The location of the site on the outskirts of Durham city provides good links for staff and visitors to and from both the city centre and to the road network to the wider county.
 - There is scope to share facilities between the fire station and the headquarters, for example the existing gym for use by all staff and the multi-purpose room for use by the Combined Fire Authority.
 - There is scope to promote the partnership between the CDDFRS and the North East Ambulance Service by accommodating both in the new building. In addition the Search and Mountain Rescue Team are already accommodated on site. This all creates a true base for emergency services where collaboration can more effectively happen.
 - The site is ideally located on the edge of Durham City with good road access enabling the emergency services staff operating from the site to respond quickly to emergency incidents, maximising the opportunity for a positive outcome for those requiring assistance.
 - Having a greater number of operational and corporate staff onsite will increase the availability of the Retained Duty System appliance located at Sniperley during day time hours when availability has traditionally been low. This will improve the fire cover and response times across Durham City and the neighbouring area.
 - It is therefore considered that accommodating a HQ building at the Sniperley site is by far the best option available to the CDDFRS and to the greater population it serves.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

74. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that if regard is to be had to the development plan, decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
75. In accordance with advice within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the policies contained therein are material considerations that should be taken into account in decision making. Other material considerations include representations received.
76. In this context, it is considered that the main planning issues in this instance relate to: the principle of the development, highway safety and access, layout and design, landscape and visual impact, residential amenity, ecology, flooding and drainage, and other matters.

Principle of the Development

The Development Plan

77. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material planning consideration. The County Durham Plan (CDP) is the statutory development plan and the starting point for determining applications as set out in the Planning Act and reinforced at Paragraph 12 of the NPPF. The CDP was adopted in October 2020 and provides the policy framework for the County up until 2035 and is therefore considered up to date.
78. NPPF Paragraph 11c requires applications for development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan to be approved without delay. NPPF Paragraph 12 states that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.
79. The site is located in the open countryside, CDP Policy 10 states that development in the countryside will not be permitted unless allowed for by specific policies in the CDP, by relevant policies within an adopted neighbourhood plan relating to the application site, or where the proposal relates to one or more of a number of exceptions stated in the Policy. CDP Policy 6 (Unallocated Sites) is a specific policy listed in CDP Policy 10, and in this respect the site is situated in close proximity to the Durham City's Sustainable Urban Extension, and Housing Land Allocation (Ref H5: Sniperley Park). The residential development DM/22/03712/OUT was allowed on appeal on August 21st 2024 and as a result, the CDDFRS site will now become enclosed by a housing estate once the dwellings have been constructed. Due to this, it is considered that locationally and physically the site will be well related to the built-up area and therefore CDP Policy 6 would apply. However, as the site is within the countryside for policy purposes the general design principals set out in Policy 10 apply.
80. CDP Policy 6 requires that development on unallocated sites must meet the following criteria:

a) Development should be compatible with, and not prejudicial to, any existing, allocated or permitted use of adjacent land;

81. As the Fire Station was already located and established on the site prior to the neighbouring residential development, it is considered to be compatible with the adjacent land. It is therefore considered the proposed development which is in effect an expansion of the existing facilities of the site is compatible to the adjacent land uses to the east, south and west, therefore according with criterion a.) of CDP Policy 6. The proposed building is complimentary to the buildings and use established on site.
82. The development would not result in the coalescence of neighbouring settlements, therefore it accords with CDP Policy 6 criterion b). While there is a loss of open land it is not considered to be of recreational, therefore the proposal also complies with CDP Policy 6 criterion c). The ecological and heritage impacts are assessed in detail later in this report.
83. To be found in accordance with CDP Policy 6 criterion d), the proposed development must ensure it's appropriate in terms of scale, design, layout, and location to the character, function, form and setting of the settlement. This is appraised later in the report.
84. CDP Policy 6 Criteria e) and f) are in relation to sustainable transport and impacts on the highways network. This is appraised later in the report with consultations with the Highways Authority.
85. CDP Policy 6 criterion i) highlights how proposals on previously developed land will be favoured. As the site is located on previously developed land it is in accordance with criterion i). There is part of the site that is undeveloped but the use is all part of the existing Fire Station site.
86. Notwithstanding this, although the application of CDP Policy 6 is considered appropriate, in this instance the development also does draw support from CDP Policy 10 which permits essential infrastructure where the need can be demonstrated for that location. In this instance the development proposes a mix of uses that are intrinsically linked to the fire station operation, such as dining facilities, store and operational rooms, the proposed offices also have a synergy with and complements the established use on site. Further to this the proposed ambulance bays, for the same reason that the location fire station was chosen, operationally allows ready access to surrounding development in case of an emergency.
87. The relevant criteria laid out in the 'General Design Principles for all Development in the Countryside' in CDP Policy 10 should also be given consideration. Criterion l) is particularly relevant where it highlights that proposals must not:
 - l) give rise to unacceptable harm to the heritage, biodiversity, geodiversity, intrinsic character, beauty or tranquillity of the countryside either individually or cumulatively, which cannot be adequately mitigated or compensated for;
88. The relevant statutory consultees (Ecology Team, Landscape Team, and Design and Conservation Team) have been consulted to help determine whether the proposal is compliance with criterion l) and is appraised later in the relevant sections of the report.
89. CDP Policy 9 seeks to protect the vitality and viability of town centres, accordingly proposals for town centres uses as defined in the NPPF, not located in a defined centre, will be required to provide a sequential assessment. This requirement is replicated a by Part 7 of the NPPF. Town centre uses include offices, however in this instance while

it is recognised that offices are proposed to allow the HQ function of the fire service to be operated from the site, it is considered that there is a clear synergy with the existing use on the site and the office use will complement this. It is also recognised that the development also proposes other elements that are intrinsically linked to the operation of the fire station operation, such as dining facilities, store and operational rooms. The development also proposes the formation of ambulance bays and a facilities to allow a combined operation of the site with the North East Ambulance Service. It is therefore considered that in this instance it would not be appropriate to disaggregate the office uses from the wider sui generis use of the site and a sequential assessment would therefore not be required.

90. A 25 high wind turbine is proposed and in accordance with CDP Policy 34, it is supported in principle with it being located in an area suitable for 'small' wind turbine development as identified in the policies map. The potential impact to amenity, landscape, visual intrusion, ecology will be assessed against the remaining criteria of this policy later in the report.
91. Overall, for the reasons above, the proposed development is considered to accord with CDP Policies 6, 9 and 10, and Part 7 of the NPPF, and is therefore deemed acceptable in principle, subject to further considerations below..

Highways Safety and Access

92. CDP Policy 21 (Sustainable Transport) requires that the transport implications of development must be addressed as part of any planning application, where relevant this could include through Transport Assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans. Criterion c) requires that any vehicular traffic generated by new development, following the implementation of sustainable transport measures, can be safely accommodated on the local and strategic highway network and does not cause an unacceptable increase in congestion or air pollution and that severe congestion can be overcome by appropriate transport improvements. The proposal will need to be in accordance with CDP Policy 21 and meet the requirements of the Council's Parking Standards, set out in the Council's adopted Parking and Accessibility SPD, along with any potential highway's safety concerns. CDP Policies 6 and 10 also seek to protect highway safety and to ensure that there is not a severe residual cumulative impact on the network capacity.
93. Part 9 of the NPPF also sets out that encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. Developments that generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes maximised.
94. The submitted Planning Statement sets out that the proposed development would be served via a new access onto the A691, south east of the existing building. This access point would allow office-based staff and visitors to utilise a separate access, with the existing one primarily serving emergency vehicles. Smaller vehicles would therefore not need to negotiate the drill yard to the north of the existing building which is frequently used for training activities and manoeuvring of larger vehicles.
95. In its consideration of the proposals, the Highways Authority advise that the proposed access to this development has been designed to 40mph standards for junction separation and visibility. However, the proposal has to consider the approved highway works as part of the neighbouring Sniperley residential development as this secured changes to this section of the A691 including provision of a new access roundabout, and dropping of the speed limit to 40mph. Currently, this section of the A691 is 60mph.

The current applicant has to consider the existing arrangement and also the future changes to the highway, with the latter beyond their control.

96. A hybrid plan showing both the works associated with the Sniperley application, and the current proposals has been submitted as part of this planning application. The Highways Authority advise that due to the design of the proposed access and its location, until such time as the works associated with the Sniperley development has been implemented, including the dropping of the speed limit to 40mph, then this proposed development could not open or use their proposed new access to the A691. It has been considered reasonable to agree a phased approach due to the circumstances with the neighbouring residential development. Once the highway works to the A691 are completed and the speed limit dropped to 40mph, then the proposed access to the new Fire HQ building office could then be opened and used. The same access point can be used temporarily for construction vehicles and provisions have been put in place to ensure safe access and egress during this time. A construction Management Plan can also be imposed to confirm layout and design of construction access and egress points.
97. Due to the volumes of traffic being carried by the A691, the applicant has now made provision of a protected right turn to serve the new access. This would allow for the safe accessing of the site from the A691 and prevent the potential for traffic to stack back to the Park & Ride roundabout to the east.
98. The proposed new access and protected right turn would require works to be undertaken to the adopted highway and so the applicant would need to enter into a S278 agreement with the Local Highway Authority beyond the planning process.
99. As highlighted, until the works are carried out allowing the applicant to use the proposed new entrance, the existing Fire Station access would serve the office building. This is considered acceptable from a highway safety perspective.
100. In terms of parking, 56 allocated spaces are proposed as part of this development. Given there would be approximately 45 staff working within the office, this level of provision is considered acceptable. 14 EV spaces would be provided, and 4 spaces would be accessible. There are also 41 existing parking spaces across the existing Fire Station and training yard site in the applicant's control, so the total number of spaces available across the site is 97.
101. Overall, the Highway Authority raises no objection to this development subject to conditions limiting when the new access can be brought into operation and the delivery of off-site highway works being completed. It is therefore considered that this development would prejudice road safety, or that the cumulative impact of the scheme would be severe, and therefore the proposal would be in accordance with CDP Policies 6, 10 and 21 and NPPF Paragraph 116.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

102. Collectively CDP Policies 6, 10 and 29 outline that development proposals should contribute positively to an area's character, identity, heritage significance, townscape and landscape features, helping to create and reinforce locally distinctive and sustainable communities. Parts 12 and 15 of the NPPF also seek to promote good design, while protecting and enhancing local environments. NPPF Paragraph 130 also states that planning decisions should aim to ensure developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area and establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.

103. A Design and Access Statement, has been submitted by the applicant, which highlights that the new building aims to compliment the existing adjacent buildings on the site and will utilise a similar palette of muted natural materials to that of the existing fire station.
104. The proposed building and turbine will both be prominent roadside additions alongside the A691. That said, the building especially will read as part of the operational fire station site.
105. In terms of the design qualities of the building, the scale is appropriate for its intended use and is proportionate with the site and existing Fire Station. The use of materials of brickwork, and features of timber and metal cladding provides a contemporary appearance and to also be consistent with the style of the existing building on site. There are no concerns with the proposed design and scale in this location and specific materials can be conditioned to provide further details. As such, the application accords with CDP Policy 29.
106. CDP Policy 39 states proposals for new development will be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views. Proposals would be expected to incorporate appropriate measures to mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects. CDP Policy 26 outlines developments are expected to provide new green infrastructure and ensure provision for its long-term management and maintenance. Similar requirements are outlined in CDP Policy 29.
107. CDP Policy 40 seeks to avoid the loss of existing trees and hedgerows unless suitable replacement planting is provided.
108. Parts 12 and 15 of the NPPF promotes good design and sets out that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (amongst other things) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
109. The site is located adjacent to both the Green Belt and the Area of Higher Landscape Value (AHLV). CDP Policy 20 (Green Belt) highlights that proposals within the Green Belt will be determined in accordance with national planning policy. As the development does not consist within the Green Belt boundary, and is located on an already existing developed site, it is considered that any impacts would be minimal.
110. The site lies in National Character Area (NCA 14). It lies in the Urban Broad Character Area the Wear Lowlands County Character Area which forms part of the larger Tyne & Wear Lowlands which belongs to the Lowland Valley Terraces Broad Landscape Type and is made up of Urban (Urban Local Landscape Type).
111. The proposed eastern wing extension to the building would increase the extent of urban form on the site, which is already developed and characterised as urban. The building would be proportionate in terms of size and areas of car parking and access arrangements would impact upon existing landscape features making the site more open in character. The proposed wind turbine would potentially create an industrial character close to a housing site to the north but has been sited to the eastern boundary. Landscape effects are anticipated as localised moderate and adverse at site level.
112. The Landscape Officer has acknowledged that the harm to the landscape from additional development on the site is considered in the context of the permanent presence of the existing facility and would be localised in extent. Based on the urban

environment with the Fire Station and future residential development at Sniperley, the current application can offer landscaping features so to not adversely impact upon the surroundings and the adjacent designated AHLV landscape. The submitted Landscape Plan shows the retention of sections of existing hedgerows and proposals to plant new native hedgerows and trees. The proposals would ensure that there would continue to be a green frontage onto the A691 road, and the fastigate oaks currently on the site will be translocated, rather than destroyed, to accommodate the external hard 'breakout area'. The retention of existing hedgerows would also provide adequate screening of parked cars when viewed outside the site. While there could be heritage issues regarding the setting of Sniperley Hall locally listed Park/garden, the proposals would not physically encroach upon a layout of the remaining designed/ parkland landscape associated with the hall as the proposals lie within the grounds of the Fire Station which have taken on a more urban character.

113. It is acknowledged that the wind turbine would be a visible feature in the landscape given it is 25m high, however it would not provide a dominating presence amongst the changing character of the area near the park and ride and existing and future urban developments. It also promotes a renewable energy source.
114. The scheme proposes the loss of some trees and hedgerow due to the new building and access works. An arboricultural report (AIA) has been submitted at the request of the Tree Officer and 14 trees were proposed to be removed however these are now to be translocated within the site. In particular, 9 existing trees are *Quercus robur* 'fastigiata' and are part of a linear planting design of the original development running parallel to the highway. It will be necessary for the contractor undertaking this work to provide a method statement for their particular tree spade and methodology. The applicant has confirmed that the translocation would not occur until later summer/autumn and are in agreement to a condition to provide further details within a method statement as requested. The Landscape Plan also identifies 11 new trees on site.
115. Where hedges are lost, CDP Policy 40 requires that suitable replacement planting or restoration of existing hedges, is carried out within the site or the locality including appropriate provision for maintenance and management. The aim of replacement planting or restoration should be to ensure that there is no overall reduction in hedgerow length and canopy in the locality. The landscape plan confirms that existing hedgerow will be retained but some hedge removal is necessary due to the construction of the new access. However, there are new sections proposed and reinstated to compensate this loss. In addition, it was initially proposed to remove 71m of hedgerow on the eastern boundary to rectify drainage and localised flooding issues, however this section is now to remain with surrounding land levels to be altered.
116. A condition will be imposed to any approval to ensure tree and hedge protection prior to construction as identified in the arboricultural report.
117. Overall, there would be some localised landscape harm with the addition of further development on an open area of land however, the proposed landscaping softens the visual effects. Given the urban context of the area with future residential development and an existing Fire Station on site, it is not considered the landscaping harm would cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape and therefore not conflict with CDP Policy 39. The application has also demonstrated that there would be adequate replanting and re-location of trees and boundary hedging to the satisfaction of the Tree Officer to retain the visual character of the area which adds to screening and biodiversity gains. Subject to the condition identified for translocation methodology and a root protection strategy, the application accords with CDP Policy 40.

Heritage and Archaeology

118. CDP Policy 44 sets out development will be expected to sustain the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting. Development proposals should contribute positively to the built and historic environment and should seek opportunities to enhance and, where appropriate, better reveal the significance and understanding of heritage assets whilst improving access where appropriate. CDP Policy 45 (Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site). New development should sustain and enhance the significance and be based upon Outstanding Universal Value, protecting and enhancing it in the immediate and wider setting and important views across, out of and into the site. Harmful development is only permitted in wholly exceptional circumstances.
119. The NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
120. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a statutory duty that, when considering whether to grant planning permission for a development which affects a listed building or its setting, the decision maker shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Any such harm must be given considerable importance and weight by the decision-maker. Under the Act also, special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a conservation area must be equally considered.
121. The Design and Conservation Officer have been consulted and careful consideration has been given to the impact of the turbine in relation especially to the wider setting of the World Heritage Site (WHS). It is considered there would be no direct intervisibility between the mast and the WHS. There are no clear views from the A691 near or approaching the site nor from higher elevation moving further northwards, no views from the B6532 in the east. It falls outside the inner setting boundary with visual effects neutralised by topography, mature tree cover and extensive built development between the site and WHS. It is considered the wider setting is preserved and therefore the development accords with CDP Policies 44 and 56, and NPPF Part 16 in this respect.
122. In addition, as part of the planning process the local authority can identify additional non-designated heritage assets that are not currently statutorily protected. The site is within the Sniperley Hall Local Park/Garden although the Conservation Officer has not identified the impact to the Designated Heritage Asset as it would not physically encroach upon its layout. The new HQ office would also be sited in between the existing Fire Station building, Park and Ride facility and the approved Sniperley residential development and recognised as within an area in which the character is changing to a more urban environment. In accordance with CDP Policy 44, a balanced judgement has been applied and development does not impact upon the significance and setting of a non-designated heritage asset.

Residential Amenity

123. CDP Policies 29 and 31 outline that developments should provide high standards of amenity and privacy, minimise the impact of development upon the occupants of existing adjacent and nearby properties and not lead to unacceptable levels of pollution.

A Residential Amenity Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has also been adopted by the Council. The aforementioned policies and SPD can be afforded significant weight. Parts 12 and 15 of the NPPF, which require that a good standard of amenity for existing and future users be ensured, whilst seeking to prevent both new and existing development from contributing to, or being put at unacceptable risk from, unacceptable levels of pollution.

124. The proposal consists of office facilities on an already existing site, with the use and buildings on site already given prior consideration to the approval of the adjacent housing development. The new building is similar in scale and height to existing buildings and retains approximately 36m to the northern boundary. Taking into the account the 13m high ridge height, the distance to the future residential to the north would not present and overbearing impact to new residents and the intensification of the site with office space is not it is considered to present a conflict of uses to generate any impacts amenity impacts.
125. The 7.5kW wind turbine would measure 25m high and be considered a 'Small' turbine within the preamble of CDP Policy 34. This policy covers all scales and heights development and the proposed single turbine is considered a minor addition in the area. It would be located in the south eastern boundary and as there are currently no dwellings in the vicinity, it would have negligible impact. The distance to the permitted Sniperley housing development is approximately 68m to the north which is adequate separation for a small wind turbine to ensure no adverse impact to future residents in terms of noise and visual intrusion. No concerns have been raised from Environmental Health (Nuisance). CDP Policy 34 also states that wind turbine development should be backed by the local community, however this is not considered necessary given the scale of the turbine and lack of nearby residential properties that could be impacted.
126. The Environmental Health (Nuisance) Officer has been consulted and no issues were identified with the proposed use and surrounding areas that the development is unlikely to cause a statutory nuisance. The scale of the development and construction works should be kept within suitable hours via an appropriate planning condition and a Construction Management Plan to mitigate disturbance. Environmental Health (Air Quality) Officer has also been consulted and has no objections subject to a Dust Management Plan being secured with the Construction Management Plan.
127. The application therefore accords with CDP Policies 29 and 31 and Parts 12 and 15 of the NPPF.

Ecology

128. CDP Policy 41 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) states proposals for new development will be expected to minimise impacts on biodiversity by retaining and enhancing existing biodiversity assets and features and provide net gains for biodiversity including by establishing coherent ecological networks.
129. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers are required to deliver a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10%. The biodiversity gain objective is measured against the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat for the development using a metric developed by Defra.
130. The application has been supported by the appropriate surveys that conclude there are limited foraging habitats onsite for bats and existing trees and existing buildings on site have negligible suitability for roosting. There are small areas of suitable terrestrial habitat present for Great Crested Newts (GCN) due to drainage ditches connected to

a pond located 380m south of the site although the risk that this species will move to the site is low given the distance and intervening A-road). Whilst there are discrepancies in the Ecology and BNG Report reflecting the amended metric details and landscaping plans, it is sufficient enough to be able to understand the low impacts to protected species and habitats on site and BNG is to be secured off site.

131. Despite on site enhancements, the submitted Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment concluded a net loss of -1.26 biodiversity units will occur (equating to an overall loss of -36.45%), therefore below the required net gain of 10%. It is proposed that the applicant would purchase necessary units from a habitat bank that can be secured by an appropriately worded condition.
132. The proposed acquisition of off-site BNG credits to achieve the required 10% is acceptable which will also need to compensate for the net loss on site. The ecology report acknowledges offsetting and potential compensation sites are subject to field surveys. The granting of planning permission would be subject to the standard biodiversity gain condition which requires the developer to submit and agree a Biodiversity Gain Plan and a The Habitat and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) with the Local Planning Authority. Planning conditions are normally imposed on the grant of planning permission under section 70 (1) and section 72 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. However, the biodiversity gain condition has its own separate statutory basis as a planning condition under Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and would be included separately to the list of conditions recommended by Officers on the decision notice.
133. A S106 is required to secure a monitoring fee of £2,485 to assess the reports provided by the applicant over the 30 lifetime of the HMMP.
134. Subject to the use of relevant conditions, it is considered that the proposal would achieve at least a 10% BNG through some on-site measures and through acquiring BNG credits. The proposal accords with Policy 41 of the CDP and with Part 15 of the CDP in this respect. The proposal will not result in significant adverse ecological impacts and the application accords with CDP Policy 41 and Part 15 of the NPPF.

Flooding and Drainage

135. Policies 35 and 36 of the emerging CDP relate to flood water management and infrastructure. Policy 35 requires development proposals to consider the effects of the scheme on flood risk and ensure that it incorporates a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDs) to manage surface water drainage. Development should not have an adverse impact on water quality.
136. Policy 36 seeks to ensure that suitable arrangements are made for the disposal of foul water. National advice within the NPPF and PPG with regard to flood risk advises that a sequential approach to the location of development should be taken with the objective of steering new development to flood zone 1 (areas with the lowest probability of river or sea flooding). When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and only consider development appropriate in areas at risk of flooding where a sequential test and some instances exception test are passed, informed by a site-specific flood risk assessment.
137. The site is within low risk Flood Zone 1 and the submitted Drainage Strategy demonstrates that the site can be suitably and appropriately drained with flows managed on site without introducing additional flood risk to the buildings, site and surrounding area. The site is already subject to an existing surface water network, including attenuation tank, which will be retained and modified to suit the proposed

development. The application concludes that discharge rates have been calculated for storms up to 1 in 100 years, plus 45% for climate change and will be attenuated below ground within the network on site to ensure there is no flooding of buildings and flooding off site. The LLFA has checked these calculations and recommend no objection or conditions

138. The LLFA has been consulted and has no objection subject to conditions and the application therefore, accords with CDP Policies 35 and 36 and Part 14 of the NPPF

Land Contamination

139. Policy 32 addresses contaminated or unstable land. Development will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that any land issues can be addressed by appropriate mitigation measures prior to the construction or occupation of the proposed development; the site is suitable for the proposed use; and all investigations and risk assessments have been undertaken by an appropriately qualified person.
140. Ground Investigation works have been undertaken and no further investigative works are recommended. The Environmental Health (Land Contamination) Officer has been consulted and acknowledges these findings. The remediation works need to be carried out and validated in accordance with the submitted strategy to ensure that the remediation works are fully implemented as agreed and the site is suitable for use. Subject to this condition the application accords with CDP Policy 32.

Other Considerations

141. The site lies within a Mineral Safeguarding Area. Policy 56 of the CDP states that planning permission will not be granted for non-mineral development that would lead to the sterilisation of mineral resources within such areas unless specific criteria apply. The application site is underlain by deposits of coal, forming part of a larger deposit to surrounding area east of Durham City. Whilst some sterilisation could occur, it is considered the proposed development would have minimal impact on the future working of the more extensive deposit. In addition, given the nature of the development and the proximity of the resource to the existing building and future housing development then extraction is neither practicable or desirable and one would not be required. This outweighs the need to safeguard the mineral thereby satisfying Policy 56 criterion d) and Paragraph 204 c) of the NPPF.
142. Policy 27 (Utilities, Telecommunications and Other Broadcast Infrastructure) of the CDP requires all new residential and commercial development to be served by a high-speed broadband connection. This would need to be directly accessed from the nearest exchange and threaded through resistant tubing to enable easy access to the cable for future repair, replacement and upgrading. Where it can be demonstrated that this is not appropriate, practical, or economically viable, developers would be encouraged to provide appropriate infrastructure to enable future installation. It is anticipated that the existing fire station will already be served by high speed broadband, and the offices which are to be relocated to the site are likely to require it as a basic necessity.

CONCLUSION

143. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

144. The proposed development would complement and support the existing uses on the site operated by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is in accordance with CDP Policies 6, 9 and 10.
145. Subject to conditions and off-site highways works being completed preventing use of the permanent new access until the consented highways works for the neighbouring residential development have been implemented and off site highway works the development would prejudice road safety, in accordance with CDP Policies 6, 10 and 21 and NPPF paragraph 116.
146. There would be some localised visual harm with the addition of further development on an open area of land and due to the proposed wind turbine, however it is concluded that the proposed landscaping softens the visual effects. Furthermore, given the urban context of the area with future residential development and an existing Fire Station on site, it is not considered the landscaping harm would cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape and therefore not conflict with CDP Policies 6, 10, 34 39. There would be no impact to the wider setting of the World Heritage Site (WHS) in accordance with CDP Policies 44 and 46
147. The scheme is considered to minimal impacts to nearby existing and future residents in accordance with CDP Polices 31 and 34.
148. The application also ensures the site is not at risk to flooding and land contamination subject to appropriate conditions.
149. The proposal would not result in significant adverse ecological impacts, in order to secure a Biodiversity Net Gain the applicant proposes on site provision and also to purchase BNG credits, this approach can be secured by condition. A fee of £2485 (to be secured by legal agreement) is however required to enable the Council to monitor the delivery of onsite provision. As such, the application accords with CDP Policy 41.
150. Overall the proposal is considered to comply with the development plan as a whole, there are no material planning considerations which indicate that a decision should be otherwise and therefore it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

Public Sector Equality Duty

151. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities when exercising their functions to have due regard to the need to i) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct, ii) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share that characteristic.
152. In this instance, officers have assessed all relevant factors and do not consider that there are any equality impacts identified.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be **APPROVED** subject to:-

- A legal agreement to secure £2485 for the monitoring of onsite BNG provision
- and 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 in accordance with the following plans:

Plan	Drawing No.	Date Received
Ground Floor Plan	ZZ-00-DR-A-01000 P8	10/01/25
External Stores Elevations	ZZ-00-DR-A-02020 P2	10/01/25
Substation Elevations	ZZ-00-DR-A-02021 P1	10/01/25
First Floor Plan	ZZ-01-DR-A-01001 P8	10/01/25
Second Floor Plan	ZZ-02-DR-A-01002 P8	10/01/25
Roof Plan	ZZ-RF-DR-A-01003 P3	10/01/25
Elevations 1 of 2	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-02000 P5	10/01/25
Elevations 2 of 2	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-02001 P3	10/01/25
Mast Elevations	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-02002 P3	10/01/25
GA Section 2 of 2	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-03001 P3	10/01/25
Planning Mast Perspective 1	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-09010 P3	10/01/25
Planning Mast Perspective 2	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-09011 P3	10/01/25
Planning Mast Perspective 3	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-09012 P3	10/01/25
Site Constraints Plan	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-900010 P5	12/03/25
Existing Trees Shown On Existing Layout	AIA & AMS Exi Rev A	26/02/25
Retained Trees Shown On Proposed Layout With Protective Measures Indicated	AIA & AMS TPP Rev A	26/02/25
Site Plan	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-90000 P10	12/03/25
Landscaping Plan	ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-90001 P7	24/03/25
Proposed Roundabout and Ghost Island	24-071/SK05	06/03/25
Fire Station Site Access General Arrangement	24-071/SK04	27/02/25
Fire Station Site Access Swept Path Analysis	24-071/TK02	27/02/25
Fire Station Site Access Pavement	24-071/SK02	27/02/25
Construction Extents And Visibility		
Fire Station Site Temporary Access	24-071/SK03	27/02/25
Drainage Strategy	JCC24-122-02	24/02/25

Reason: To define the consent and ensure that a satisfactory form of development is obtained in accordance with Policies the County Durham Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. No development, including demolition, shall commence until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Construction Management Plan shall include as a minimum, but not restricted to, the following:

1. A Dust Action Plan including measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction.
2. Details of methods and means of noise reduction and suppression.

3. Where construction involves penetrative piling, details of methods for piling of foundations including measures to suppress any associated noise and vibration.
4. Details of measures to prevent mud and other such material migrating onto the highway from all vehicles entering and leaving the site.
5. Designation, layout and design of construction access and egress points.
6. Details for the provision of directional signage (on and off site).
7. Plan based details of the position, and heights relative to ground level, of security fencing, contractors' compounds, and temporary infrastructure, including cranes, plant, and other equipment, and storage arrangements for materials.
8. Details of provision for all site operatives for the loading and unloading of plant, machinery and materials, to including the timings of deliveries and the types of delivery vehicle(s) to be used.
9. Details of provision for all site operatives, including visitors and construction vehicles, for parking and turning within the site during the construction period.
10. Routing agreements for construction traffic.
11. Details of the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate.
12. Waste audit and scheme for waste minimisation and recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.
13. Management measures for the control of pest species as a result of demolition or construction works.
14. Details of measures for liaison with the local community and procedures to deal with any complaints received.

The management strategy shall have regard to BS 5228 "Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites" (or an equivalent British Standard if replaced) during the planning and implementation of site activities and operations.

The approved Construction Management Plan shall be adhered to throughout the construction period of the development and the approved measures shall be retained for the duration of the construction works.

Reason: To protect the residential amenity of existing and future residents from the development in accordance with Policy 31 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Required to be pre commencement to ensure that the whole construction phase is undertaken in an acceptable way.

4. Remediation works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved remediation strategy. The development shall not be brought into use until such time a Phase 4 verification report related to that part of the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the remediation works are fully implemented as agreed and the site is suitable for use, in accordance with Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. Notwithstanding any details of materials submitted with the application, no development above damp proof course shall commence until details of the make, colour and texture of all external walling and roofing materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development relates acceptably to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and to comply with Policy 29 of the County Durham Plan and Part 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. In undertaking the development that is hereby approved: No external construction works, works of demolition, deliveries, external running of plant and equipment shall take place other than between the hours of 0800 to 1800 on Monday to Friday and 0800 to 1400 on Saturday.

No internal works audible outside the site boundary shall take place on the site other than between the hours of 0730 to 1800 on Monday to Friday and 0800 to 1700 on Saturday.

No construction works or works of demolition whatsoever, including deliveries, external running of plant and equipment, internal works whether audible or not outside the site boundary, shall take place on Sundays, Public or Bank Holidays.

For the purposes of this condition, construction works are defined as: The carrying out of any building, civil engineering or engineering construction work involving the use of plant and machinery including hand tools.

Reason: To protect the residential amenity of existing and future residents from the development in accordance with Policy 31 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. The proposed access shown on MTP plan 24-071/SK04 shall not be brought into use until such time as the speed limit on the A691 is permanently reduced to 40mph as shown on plan 24-071/SK05. Until that time, the 'Phase 1' temporary access arrangements, shown on MTP plan 24-071/SK03 shall be used by all vehicles to access the development for the purposes of construction, and access for all other vehicles shall be via the existing Fire Station access road.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety, in accordance with Policy 21 of the County Durham Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. The proposed access shown on MTP plan 24-071/SK04 shall not be brought into use until such time as the provision of the Protected Right Turn facility to the A691 as detailed on plan 24-071/SK04 has been completed

Reason: In the interest of highway safety, in accordance with Policy 21 of the County Durham Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

9. The development shall not be brought into use until the cycle parking provision as detailed on the approved plans has been made available for use. Thereafter, the cycle parking shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and shall be made available for the parking of cycles at all times.

Reason: In the interest of sustainable development, in accordance with Policies 21 and 29 of the County Durham Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.
21.

10. The development shall not be brought into use until the car parking area depicted on the approved plans have been hard surfaced, sealed and marked out as parking bays in accordance with the approved plans. Thereafter, the car parking area shall

be retained in accordance with the approved plans and shall not be used for any purpose other than the parking of vehicles associated with the development.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety, in accordance with Policy 21 of the County Durham Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

11. No site clearance, preparatory work, or development shall take place, nor any site cabins, materials or machinery brought on site, until the tree and hedge protection fencing, and any other protection measures, contained within the submitted Tree Protection Plan AIA & AMS TPP Rev A have been erected on site in accordance with these approved details. Fencing shall be placed as indicated on the approved plan and comprise a vertical and horizontal framework of scaffolding, well braced to resist impacts, and supporting temporary welded mesh fencing panels or similar in accordance with British Standard BS 5837 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction - Recommendations (or in an equivalent British Standard if replaced).

If any access is required into the root protection area of any tree or hedge this shall only take place where in accordance with the approved details. Otherwise, there shall be no access, storage, parking, excavation of trenches, or alteration of ground levels within the root protection area of any tree or hedge to be retained.

No removal of limbs of trees or other works shall be carried out to any tree or hedge to be retained on site during the construction phase of the development, unless in accordance with an approved arboricultural report.

The fencing, and any other protection measures, shall be retained for the duration of the construction works.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the appropriate best practice guidance to enable the long term retention of trees and hedges on site, in the interests of protecting the character and appearance of the area and to comply with Policies 29 and 40 of the County Durham Plan and Parts 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

12. No site clearance, preparatory work, or development shall take place, nor any site cabins, materials or machinery brought on site, until a scheme for a translocation methodology report for trees T1C-T9C identified within Landscape Plan ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-90001 P7, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the tree works shall be conducted in accordance with the approved timings and methodology. Trees T6C-T9C shall be translocated prior to the construction of the new access road.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the appropriate best practice guidance to enable the long term retention of trees on site, in the interests of protecting the character and appearance of the area and to comply with Policies 29 and 40 of the County Durham Plan and Parts 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The details are required to be submitted and approved in advance of works commencing on site to ensure the trees and hedges on the site are protected against damage throughout the construction phase of the development.

13. Prior to commencement of development an updated and final report of the 'EclA and Biodiversity Net Gain Durham Fire HQ Nov 2024 ref: ECN24098' shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall thereafter be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To conserve protected species and their habitat and biodiversity and to ensure the proposed habitat creation and/or enhancements are carried out so the development delivers a biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 41 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

14. The Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be prepared in accordance with the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment approved under condition 13.

Reason: To ensure the Biodiversity Gain Plan submitted for approval accords with the biodiversity information submitted with the planning application and the development delivers a biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 41 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

15. No development shall commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) has been prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan and has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The HMMP shall include:

- (a) a non-technical summary;
- (b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
- (c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
- (d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the practical completion of the development or the first occupation of the development, whichever is the sooner; and
- (e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the proposed habitat creation and/or enhancements are suitably managed and monitored to ensure development delivers a biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 41 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Required to be pre-commencement to ensure the habitat creation and/or enhancements can be suitably delivered before any existing habitats are affected.

16. Notice in writing shall be given to the Local Planning Authority when:

- (a) the approved HMMP has been implemented; and
- (b) the habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the HMMP have been completed.

Reason: To ensure the proposed habitat creation and/or enhancements are carried out so the development delivers a biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 41 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

17. Unless agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority that planting shall be completed within the first planting season following completion, the development shall not be occupied or brought into use until such time that:

(b) the habitat creation and enhancement works set out in the approved HMMP have been completed; and

(c) a completion report, evidencing the completed habitat enhancements, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the proposed habitat creation and/or enhancements are carried out so the development delivers a biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 41 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

18. The created and/or enhanced habitat(s) specified in the approved HMMP shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the proposed habitat creation and/or enhancements are appropriately managed and maintained for the required 30 year period so the development delivers a biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 41 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

19. Monitoring reports shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the proposed habitat creation and/or enhancements are appropriately managed and maintained for the required 30 year period development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy 41 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

STATEMENT OF PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with Article 35(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the Local Planning Authority has, without prejudice to a fair and objective assessment of the proposals, issues raised and representations received, sought to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner with the objective of delivering high quality sustainable development to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area in accordance with the NPPF.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Submitted application form, plans, supporting documents and subsequent information provided by the applicant

Statutory, internal and public consultation responses

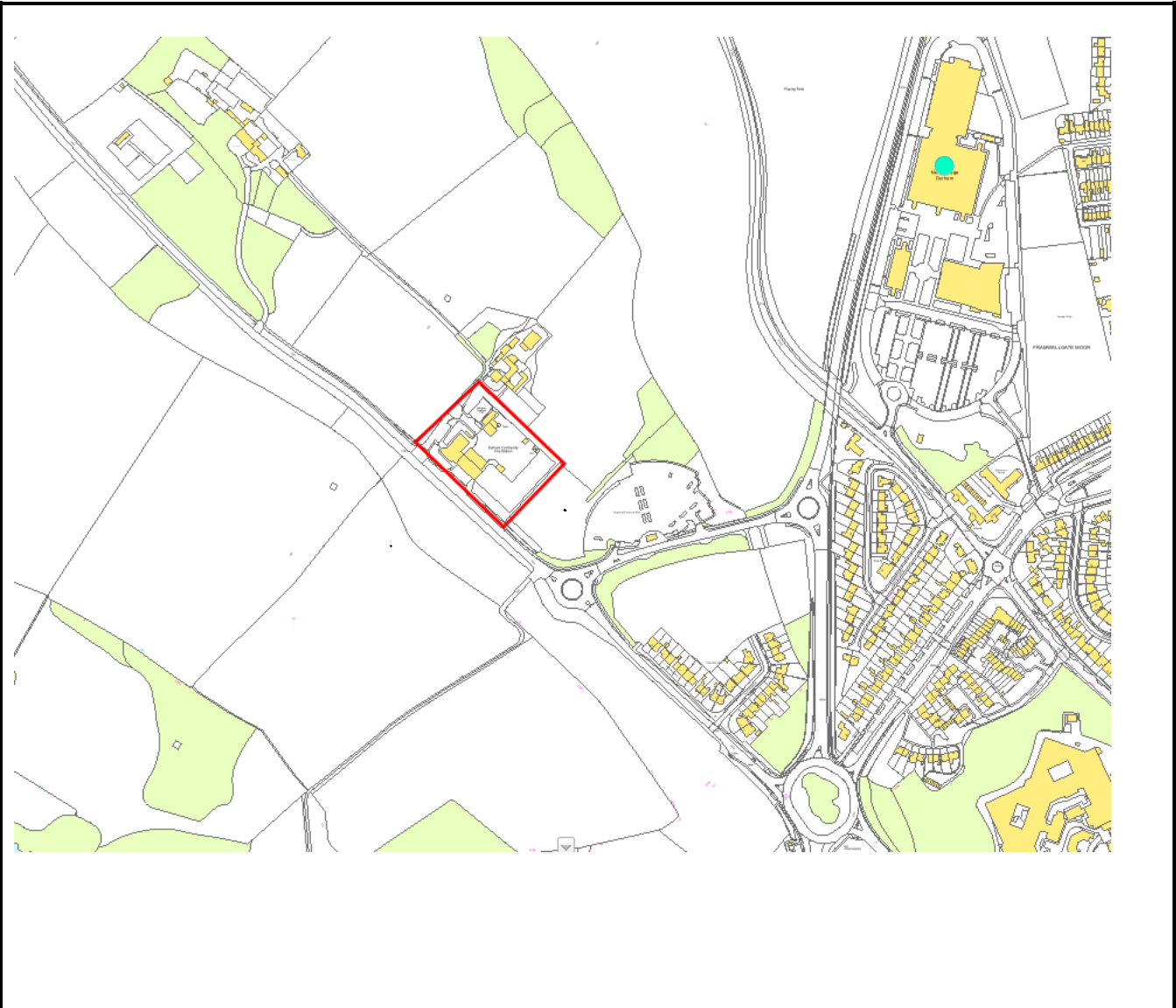
The National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance Notes

County Durham Plan

Residential Amenity Standards SPD (2022)

County Durham Landscape Strategy (2008)



<p>Planning Services</p>	<p>DM/24/03318/FPA</p> <p>Full planning application for a 2.5 storey building for a new office headquarters (Use Class E(g)(i)) for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue and accommodation for the North East Ambulance Service plus associated works including a new access road, external lighting, parking area, landscaping, PV panels and wind turbine.</p> <p>County Durham And Darlington Fire And Rescue Service, Durham Community Fire Station, Durham</p>	
<p>This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of Her Majesty's Stationary Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceeding. Durham County Council Licence No. 100022202 2005</p>	<p>Date 25.03.2025</p>	<p>Scale NTS</p>