

College site work starts

WORK has begun on a £20m student village.

A ceremony took place yesterday lunchtime for Alumno Developments' project to create 418 bedrooms at Neville's Cross.

The site was formerly home to New College Durham. Pictured outside Neville House are David Campbell, managing director for Alumno Developments, Mark Bell of Sheraton Park Residents Association and Brian McQuade, managing director of Kier.

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Work on bespoke accommodation for students begins

By Mark Tallentire

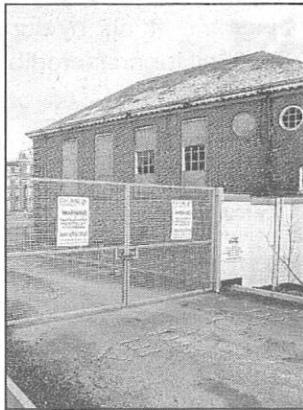
Staff Reporter

WORK began on a £20m scheme to transform a former college into accommodation for hundreds of students yesterday.

Alumno Developments won planning permission to build privately-run digs for 418 students at the former New College Durham site, in Neville's Cross, Durham, in July 2014.

A groundbreaking ceremony took place on site yesterday lunchtime. In the face of strong local opposition, consent was originally granted to demolish Sheraton House, a neo-Georgian building dating from 1922, to make way for a five-storey block with 191 bedrooms and adapt neighbouring Neville House, a red brick building from the 1900s, to accommodate 227 bedrooms.

In January 2015, the council agreed to lift a condition re-



Sheraton House

quiring Alumno to "substantially complete" the conversion of Neville House before demolishing Sheraton.

The project will include a mix of en-suite bedrooms and studios, along with a reception, communal rooms, cycle racks and a laundry. It will be delivered by Kier Construction and

be ready for students in October 2017.

David Campbell, managing director of Alumno Developments, said: "Sheraton Park is a fantastic location and is close and accessible to several of the colleges at Durham University.

"We are very pleased to only bring Neville House and this significant site back into use but also reinvigorate and sensitively integrate the buildings into the surrounding residential area.

"We've identified there is a real need for bespoke student accommodation in Durham and we can really address this at Sheraton Park – it's great to be on site.

"Specific focus is going to ensure we deliver a high grade parkland area, providing a large green open space with feature planting which will include benches and informal seating for everyone within the new community to enjoy.

"With all our developments, it

is very important to us that we engage early and bring along the local community and, we hope, improve local facilities as well as providing high quality homes for students."

Mark Bell, of Sheraton Park Residents Association, added: "We are very pleased to see the building work beginning on site. We've had many discussions with Alumno and Kier about how the building site will be run and operated.

"They have both been very understanding and we look forward to welcoming our new neighbours."

Sheraton and Neville houses, originally a teacher training college, have stood disused since 2004, when New College Durham moved to a new purpose-built £35m campus in Framwellgate Moor.

Townhouses were built on the site, just off the A167, but attempts to build apartments, homes and even a swimming pool came to nothing.