

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
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Dear Mr Hopper,

20-21 Silver Street Durham DH1 3RB

Planning applications DM/21/00376/FPA and DM/21/00377/AD Alterations to existing shop front and installation of external extraction equipment in association with a change of use from Retail to Restaurant

The City of Durham Trust wishes to comment on this application based on its signage and negative impact on the World Heritage Site.

1. Context.

The building is especially prominent on the riverside sitting underneath the Castle in one of its key views, notably from Framwellgate Bridge. Confirmation from UNESCO that the area surrounding and including the building is to be part of an extended WHS area is awaited. It is not a particularly well designed building and it is best dealt with in relation to the WHS and setting by ensuring it is as a recessive as possible. This should include ensuring that there is nothing, particularly on its riverside flank, that draws attention away from the Castle.

2. Proposal

The application is confusingly presented, being based on the previous Café Rouge frontage and with concerning references in the Design and Access (D & A) Statement to a roof terrace. The D & A Statement also seems to refer to flats above the first floor. The repeat of Psyche size and position of signage is particularly concerning.

3. Comment

The Trust understands that the amended plans submitted without roof terrace are those to be considered but would raise a strong objection because of negative impact on the WHS if this is to be included. This should be dealt with in any reporting on the application.

The position on the riverside signage also seems tangled. The Psyche sign caused concern because of its over-prominent size and that it was also backlit (seen during Lumiere). This seems not to have planning permission. The position on the grey wall finish also seems confused; it is inappropriate but difficult to return to the original brickwork.

The original Café Rouge signage was let down by the extensive window decals on prominent windows that followed the otherwise suitable signage agreed through the planning process.

There is no concern with the bi-fold door frontage or return to restaurant use and the use of the building is open to beneficial change. The Trust is also concerned with the size and

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

prominence if the new signage is erected at the same size as the Psyche sign as proposed. It should be unlit and much smaller – the Trust suggests no more than 250mm in height. There should also be a condition that prevents any further advertising over the windows on the riverside façade.

4. Policies

The signage part of the proposal fails against **County Durham Plan Policy 45, Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site a)** by not sustaining and enhancing the significance of the Castle as a key part of the WHS, and **c)** by not protecting or enhancing the immediate setting and important views into the site.

The signage fails against the **Durham City Neighbourhood Plan, H1 Protection and Enhancement of the World Heritage Site b)** by not proposing high quality design which contributes to the quality and significance of the World Heritage Site, and **f)** by not protecting important views.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe
Chair, City of Durham Trust