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c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
28 May 2021

Dear Ms Jennings,

DM/21/01282/FPA 93 Elvet Bridge Durham DH1 3AG

Change of Use from Retail (E class) to Drinking Establishment (Sui Generis)

The Trust objects to this application based on concern about its cumulative impact and lack of information about further implications of the change to this listed building. In our view it fails against Policy 9 of the *County Durham Plan* and Policy E4 of the *Durham City Neighbourhood Plan*.

1. Context.

The status of this property is likely to change because it is located within the proposed extension of the World Heritage Site area. This is intended to include all Elvet Bridge; while this has yet to be approved by UNESCO, the proposal indicates the high value of the Bridge in relation to the WHS and conservation area. The extension is referenced in the World Heritage Site Management Plan supported by the County Council and referenced in the County Durham Plan (Policy 45).

In addition, the County Durham Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies now both fully apply, but only the NPPF is referenced in the heritage statement.

There is a substantial cluster of drinking and eating establishments clustered around Elvet Bridge. In terms of use the combination of outdoor seating for eating and drinking along the Bridge and vehicles avoiding the nearby bridge closure is having a negative impact. This may be temporary on both counts, but this proposal will add yet another drinking establishment to the Bridge and city centre. Conventional retail uses are struggling but also being pushed out by leisure uses. No analysis of these impacts has yet been undertaken which enables the Planning Authority to properly understand and manage them to meet its NPPF obligations in achieving a balanced city centre.

2. Proposal

This is for change of use and states that there are no changes to the listed building. However, impacts of advertising or shop front changes are not yet identified, nor is any usage of external space. There remains concern that some internal adaption will be needed.

3. Conclusion

Substantial caution is required when considering this application because of its retail impact and other potential impacts. Although advertising is yet to be identified under an assumed follow on application, there may implications for the quality of the street frontage. Licensing and Highways may also be dealing with external seating and use implications but there needs to be an awareness of the cumulative impact.

4. Policies

The proposal fails against **County Durham Plan Policy 9 retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development** because it does not 'preserve the *'vitality and viability of the Primary Shopping Areas'* and *'contribute to the vitality and viability of town centres'*.

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It fails against **Durham City Neighbourhood Plan Policy E4 Evening Economy** because it does not *'contribute to the vitality and viability of the City Centre and add to, and improve, the cultural and diversity offer'* and provide *'appropriate evidence that the development will have no significant adverse effect upon local amenity'*.

The Trust therefore objects to this application.

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe
Chair, City of Durham Trust.