

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

Dear Ms Sephenson,

## **DM/21/02526/AD 7 - 8 Silver Street Durham DH1 3RB**

*Display of new signage comprising individual timber lettering on timber fascia illuminated by trough light; 2 no. internal window vinyls; and 1 no. projecting sign*

The Trust wishes to comment on this application. It has reservations about inappropriate sign illumination, large scale discordant window vinyls and failure to address the treatment of the whole of the shopfront

### **Context**

This building contributes to this historic street through its upper storey, a standard but interesting art deco frontage typical of Burton's shops with billiard halls above. Unfortunately, the lower shopfront has lost nearly all of its appropriate design elements, the large upper part of the fascia is crudely boarded over, and any original cladding appears to have been removed. The combination of this application and that for the upper storey conversion have yet to deliver any further information or proposals to improve the shopfront to an appropriate standard.

This is a key historic medieval street, vital to the significance of the city conservation area. Apart from the very disruptive large chain stores – this building, the former Marks and Spencer building and the current Tesco store, the rest of the street has smaller units, many of an appropriate design. Its character is dependent on its small scale, and it is essential that this is not compromised more than at present.

The shopfront shown on the submitted drawing for this application shows the upper fascia and overhang – both of which attach to the upper storey. The upper floor conversion also showed the shopfront and uses the side door at ground level, again shown on the submitted shopfront plan. Failure to achieve any improvement to the shopfront through either or both applications avoiding its condition, appearance and upgrading will be to the detriment of this important street.

### **Proposal**

The submitted proposal fails to distinguish between those parts of the frontage that attach to the upper story accommodation and the ground floor entrance. It fails to note any change or otherwise relating to that conversion that would affect this shopfront. The proposed trough lighting of the sign is unnecessary for this non-leisure use and is superfluous in this narrow street. The Trust raises no issue with the main fascia and projecting sign. The two window vinyls are significantly out of scale with the location and discordant in appearance for a historic street in the heart of a conservation area. There is no need for large wording of this type to

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notify which shop it is in this narrow street. They serve to obscure the activity within the shop that could otherwise add to both attractiveness and support the use of the street.

## **Policies**

The proposals should be assessed against against the following policies:

### **County Durham Plan**

#### **Policy 44 -Historic Environment**

##### **Conservation Areas**

f. The proposals need to demonstrate understanding of the significance, character, appearance and setting of the conservation area and how this has informed proposals to achieve high quality sustainable development, which is respectful of historic interest and local distinctiveness

g. The proposals need to demonstrate the manner in which they respond positively to the findings and recommendations of the conservation area character appraisal and management proposals.

h. The proposals need to demonstrate respect for, and reinforcement of, the established, positive characteristics of the area in terms of appropriate design form, materials, and detailing.

### **City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan**

#### **Policy S1: Sustainable Development Requirements of all Development and Redevelopment Sites Including all New Building, Renovations and Extensions**

The proposals relate to the '**Conservation, preservation and enhancement of 'Our Neighbourhood'**' and:

- c) Need to harmonise with their context in terms of scale, materials and colour,
- d) Need to conserve the significance of the setting, character, local distinctiveness, and contribute to the sense of place by the Neighbourhood's designated and non-designated heritage assets.

#### **Policy H2: The Conservation Areas - Durham City Conservation Area**

Generally, the development proposals are within and affect the setting of the Durham City Conservation Area and need to sustain and enhance its significance as identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The proposals specifically need:

- a) To Sustain and enhance the historic and architectural qualities of a building,
- e) To avoid harm to an element of an asset which makes a positive contribution to its individual significance and that of the surrounding area.
- i) To have appropriate scale.
- j) To have materials and detailing and lighting appropriate to the vernacular and context.
- k) To use high quality design sympathetic to the character and context of the local area and its significance and distinctiveness.
- l) To avoid adding to the cumulative impact of development which dominates by scale and uniform design.

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The Trust hopes that consideration can be given to these issues. Additionally it is wholly regrettable that through the combination of applications covering the conversion and new retail use of this building that even the most basic improvement of the shopfront cannot be achieved.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe,  
Chair, City of Durham Trust