

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
9th June 2022

Emma Price,
Durham County Council Planning Development
PO BOX 274
Stanley Co Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Ms Price,

DM/25/01392/AD Lever Law, Carter House, Pelaw Leazes Lane Durham DH1 1TB

3000 x 1000mm illuminated sign.

The Trust objects to the submitted Option One for an illuminated sign on the grounds of poor design inappropriate to the building and negative impact on the conservation area.

Context

Carter House is part of a complex of 19thC institutional buildings. They form a distinctive edge to the A690. All are part of a character sub area 3 in the 2015 Gilesgate Character Area Analysis that includes University buildings and Hild and Bede College (currently relocated and awaiting major refurbishment). The edge that Carter House and adjacent buildings present to the A690 is important in positively defining this boundary against the intrusion of the A690. The buildings are free of signage on the important road faces. The recent Carter House signs and parking control signage are creating clutter in internal views and fail to uphold the architectural quality of the building. The existing Carter House signs are visible from Pelaw Leazes Lane. None of the signage respects the building or conservation area in their placement on the building, the font and design.

The building site is in the foreground of a World Heritage Site view but merges into the heavily treed surrounds of the building, Pelaw Leazes Lane, and riverbank. The Lane has its own significance as the remnant of the longer lane subsumed into the A690.

Introducing a commercial use onto the complex presents challenges. These need to be appreciated even for apparently small changes; sensitivity to the building and conservation area context is required.

Proposal

It is very clear that the applicant has failed to understand either the sensitivity of the building and its context or the planning policy requirements that help protect this. The sign (it is presumed that Option One is the only sign applied for) is too large and the font inappropriate. The position fails to respect the building, sitting on top of the window drip mould and cutting across the stone relieving arch in the wall. The lighting is wholly inappropriate in this context. There is no justification for advertising this use at nighttime in this way. There is no public benefit.

The Heritage Statement submitted makes the failure to understand the context very obvious (Our comments in brackets, the submission is in italics):

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The proposed signage has been sensitively designed to:

- *Reflect the traditional proportions and detailing of historic signage* (The sign contrasts badly with the building)
- *Use appropriate materials and finishes* (The aluminium panel and lighting are inappropriate)
- *Avoid visual clutter or dominance on the building façade* (the sign size creates façade 'clutter')
- *Preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area* (The sign size and its overly prominent lighting fail to preserve the appearance of this sensitive location)

The proposed signage respects the character, appearance, and significance of the Durham City Conservation Area and any associated listed buildings. It has been carefully designed to ensure that it is sympathetic to its historic context and preserves the visual integrity of the streetscape. (If the sign has been sympathetically designed there is nothing in the design and its detailing that demonstrate it. It is a standard sign proposed without any demonstration of understanding of the building or context.)

The Trust would also object to Option Two were it to be submitted.

For the reasons above the Trust objects to this application (policy failures are indicated in the appendix below).

Yours sincerely

John Lowe, Chair, City of Durham Trust

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Appendix – Planning Policies

The Trust considers that the proposals fail against the following planning policies:

County Durham Plan

Policy 29 Sustainable Design

- a. The proposals fail to contribute positively to an area's heritage significance and townscape.

Policy 44 Historic Environment Conservation Areas

- f. The proposals fail 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, local distinctiveness and the conservation or enhancement heritage assets.
- h. The proposal fails to show respect for, and reinforcement of, the established, positive characteristics of the area in terms of appropriate design (including, features, materials, and detailing).

Durham City Neighbourhood Plan

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

The proposal fails because it does not:

- d) Conserve the significance of the setting, character, local distinctiveness, and the contribution made to the sense of place by Our Neighbourhood's designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Policy H2: The Conservation Areas, Durham City Conservation Area

The development proposals negatively affect the Durham City Conservation Area by not taking into account, and meeting, the following requirements:

- j) Having detailing appropriate to context, and setting; and
- k) Using high quality design sympathetic to the character and context of the local area and its significance and distinctiveness.