

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Web site: <https://durhamcity.org/>

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

22nd August 2025

Allan Fenwick,
Durham County Council Planning Development
PO BOX 274
Stanley
County Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Mr Fenwick,

DM/25/02016/FPA Court Inn Court Lane Durham DH1 3AW

Ground floor external lighting

The Trust objects to this application on the grounds of inappropriateness and negative impact on the conservation area. It is also based on cumulative negative impact with the associated lit signage application, DM/25/01913/AD.

Context

This building and the rear of the buildings surrounding the Crown Court open space form a gateway into the historic and architecturally impressive Court buildings and onward to Old Elvet. The Court Inn frames the view towards the Courts area and, importantly the view to the Cathedral in the opposite direction. Being prominent, its external treatments matter because of the significance of the views. The Elvet Crescent facade is the truncated face of a larger 19thC building altered by the 20thC building of Elvet Crescent and the semidetached houses. It plays a role in the Conservation Area as the break point between the attractive Courts character area and the negative impact of the 20thC housing.

The Elvet Crescent facade has been weakened visually by a larger second floor window than that shown on the previously approved application. It is a 20thC wall and the windows are now of four different styles and appear confused and do not enhance the 19thC building.

The Trust's view is that any lighting or signage should positively enhance the building and not overemphasise it on the approach into the courts area or the view back towards the Cathedral. It is inappropriate to draw too much attention in particular to the altered 20thC facade aspect that is the building's weakest aspect.

Proposal

The Trust acknowledges that the creation of the new hotel operation in conjunction with the public house needs identification of its entrances. The key points of concern for the Trust are the cumulative negative impact from lighting in this application and signage in the accompanying application. There is potential for excessive lighting of the exterior and overemphasised signage. This is in respect of all facades but especially the north and east facades that frame the view of the Cathedral at night. The wall down/uplighters will create an unsympathetic wash of light across the walls drawing too much attention to the building. Stylistically the proposals are an awkward combination of differing retro styles

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

and contemporary design. There is yet to be an application for lit pub signage indicated as a possibility on the submitted drawings and this may well add to the stylistic confusion. This will add to the cumulative impact and the full package is not assessed for impact on views.

The Trust is also objecting to the projecting sign with halo lighting as an inappropriately contemporary technique. It does not positively contribute to this already confused façade. It considers that the building by virtue of its age and position in the conservation area deserves more coordinated and better assessed sympathetic treatment.

The Trust suggests that further work is needed on the design of proposed lighting to ensure appropriate treatment sympathetic the building and to reinforce the character of the approach the Courts area. It also needs full assessment in relation to the halo lit sign and pub signage proposals.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Childs,
Vice Chair, City of Durham Trust
Celebrating, protecting, and enhancing the City of Durham
chair@durhamcity.org

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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

Listed Buildings

- b. The proposals fail to respect the historic form, setting, and aspects including curtilage, which contribute to the significance of the building.

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 proposals fail 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 proposals fail because they do 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 proposals negatively affect the Durham City Conservation Area by not taking into account, and meeting, the following requirements:

- g) Protecting important views of the Durham City Conservation Area from viewpoints within and outside the Conservation Area
- 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.