

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Web site: <http://www.DurhamCity.org>

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

15th October 2025

David Richards,
Durham County Council Planning Development
PO BOX 274
Stanley
County Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Mr Richards,

DM/25/02602/FPA 13 - 15 Silver Street Durham DH1 3RB

Change of use of the upper floors to create a 5-bed HMO (use class C4) and alteration to shop front to create separate access to HMO.

The Trust objects to this application based on lack of appropriate condition assessment, information, maintenance proposals, and design of ground floor entrance.

Context

This building is important as part of the streetscape of Silver Street. Also important is the rear facade and roofscape that forms the boundary of Moatside Lane. The Lane is significant as it defines the World Heritage Site (WHS) boundary and has its origins in the development of the Castle. The Castle North Terrace will offer a partial view of the roofscape.

The shop frontage is an appropriate traditional style, but the existing glass double door is a poor design fit to the older sections of window.

There are difficulties in maintaining the rear because of leaf fall, access, and the need for security to deter rear break-ins to retail premises. There is a rear entrance door opening outwards into the Lane that is unsuitably metal clad and prone to graffiti. There is a large outdoor light that appears to be permanently switched on. The guttering on the courtyard elevation has failed and the wall shows signs of water damage. The courtyard fencing is inappropriate but is not within this application area.

The windows facing into the small sunken courtyard at the rear are covered with fine mesh grilles make it difficult to assess the condition of the frames or maintain them. At present, the front facade windows appear suitable but need maintenance. The small adjacent block that is within the ownership has its upper windows blocked causing concern over internal condition and maintenance. They are also blacked out, reducing the quality of their appearance in the street.

Proposal

The Trust's principal concern is for the treatment of the external façades and roof. There are no condition surveys submitted that cover the roof, guttering or window condition, significance and maintenance if needed.

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There are two design versions submitted for the altered shopfront. One showing a solid accommodation entrance door and glass door and the other two solid doors. A section of stained glass and section of traditional window will be lost. The solid door options are particularly poor. The new proposal does attempt to pick up the line of the stained glass, but the heavier framing weakens the design link. There is also potentially a sign added above the shop door.

The proposals also show internal changes required to achieve sub-division into accommodation. The kitchen and showers face out onto Moatside Lane. There is concern that venting may be introduced directly into the Lane and plumbing further complicate the rear elevations. The rear window grilles are not shown as removed and the door is presumed to remain as unsuitably metal clad. The Trust is concerned that the rear needs further attention, maintenance, and appropriate treatment for avoiding new intrusions from plumbing or vents. There is a failure to adequately detail retention and repair of windows. The Trust considers that these details are required because of the importance of both Silver Street and Moatside Lane.

Condition survey and maintenance proposals are required as well as detail on alterations to the external elevations before alterations to this building are accepted. Revised and more appropriate details are needed for the shopfront alterations to insert the entrance. The Trust objects to this application for the reasons above until sufficient assessment and detail are submitted to ensure the appropriate treatment of the building and its features (policy failures are indicated in the appendix below).

Yours sincerely

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust

Celebrating, protecting, and enhancing the City of Durham

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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 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).

Policy 45 Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site

The Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site is a designated asset of the highest significance. *These proposals* affecting the World Heritage Site setting fail to:

- a. Sustain and enhance the significance of the designated asset.
- c. Protect and enhance wider setting and important views *from the site*.

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:

- a) sustaining and enhancing the historic and architectural qualities of buildings, and
- e) avoiding loss of, or harm to, an element of an asset which makes a positive contribution to its individual significance and that of the surrounding area; and
- j) having materials, detailing, and lighting appropriate to the vernacular, context and setting; and
- k) using high quality design sympathetic to the character and context of the local area and its significance and distinctiveness, and to the immediate landscape.