

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

7th October 2025

Barry Cansfield,
Durham County Council Planning Development
PO BOX 274
Stanley
County Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Mr Cansfield,

DM/25/02039/LB and DM/25/02038/FPA, 19 Market Place Durham DH1 3NL

Proposed change of use of the upper floors, including internal alterations, to create two 4-bed apartments (Use Class C4) at 19 -20 Market Place Durham DH1 3NL accessed from Market Chambers (21 Market Place Durham DH1 3NJ).

The Trust objects to this application based on lack of appropriate condition assessment, information and maintenance proposals and poor fire escape provision .

Context

This building is important as part of the streetscape surrounding the Market Place . Its front façade is a formative part the appearance of the Market Place. Also important is the presentation of the rear facade and roofscape to the riverside. Together with other Silver Street and Back Silver Street buildings it forms an important part of the panoramic and sequential views to the World Heritage Site (WHS). At street level the rear boundary is significant in the approach within Back Silver Street. Unfortunately, the poor condition of the rear boundary of this and the adjacent two buildings is a significant detractor from the quality of Back Silver Street and the path up to Silver Street. The rear boundary also has the poor quality gates for the fire escapes from the ground floor retail/commercial premises of the application and adjacent building. The fire escape from the adjacent building is currently partly blocked by construction debris and weed growth.

The application building is part of an ownership with the two adjacent buildings also converted for rental accommodation of the upper floors. It shares an entrance with its neighbouring building to the upper storeys. The adjacent building remains unmaintained on its Market Place frontage. There is peeling paint to the chimneys and roof cornice. All three buildings are Grade II listed.

The rear of the application building has minimal intrusions from drainage or interior use but does have bars across the windows related to its bank use.

Proposal

The Trust's principal concern is for the treatment of the external façades for both this and the adjacent two buildings. There is no indication yet that the adjacent building will be properly maintained and there are no proposals the Trust is aware of to improve the detrimental condition of the rear boundary area. There are no condition surveys submitted that cover the roof, guttering or window condition, significance and maintenance if needed. Given the condition of the adjacent property that is involved with this application because

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

of the shared entrance, there is substantial doubt that maintenance of this listed building will be adequate.

The ground floor retail use and commercial use plus the upper storey conversions represent a very significant holding occupying an important section of the Market Place. The Trust view is that, as this is last major change within the ownership across the three listed buildings, that this is final opportunity to ensure adequate treatment of these listed buildings. Substantial benefit is to be derived from the buildings, and they are important to the City.

The proposals also show a substantial number of internal changes required to achieve sub division into flats. There is a concerning failure to adequately detail retention and repair of original features and windows. The Trust considers that this detail is required because of the listed building status of the property and number of internal changes to provide bathrooms and multiple kitchen facilities. A particular concern is that the rear elevation is free of intrusion and that new plumbing and vents may well reduce the quality of the rear. Also, are the bars to be retained from the upper windows?

There is an extended fire escape route for the property, particularly for the first floor living room. This is complicated by merging onto one staircase escape from both this and the adjacent building to exit through the same door. The Trust considers that this will present difficulties in an emergency evacuation as the residents of both premises merge together

Condition survey and maintenance proposals are required as well as detail on alterations to the external elevations or roof before alterations to this listed building are accepted. The rear gardens as the setting to the listed buildings should be included as they are part of the ownership. 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, its features and its setting (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

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

The submission fails to demonstrate:

- b. respect for the historic form, setting, fabric, materials, detailing, and, any other aspects including curtilage, which contribute to the significance of the building or structure; and
- c. the retention of the character and special interest of buildings when considering alternative viable uses.

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:

- 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.