

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

c/o Blakett, Hart & Pratt, LLP  
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Durham, DH1 1TH

29th September 2025

Clare Walton,  
Durham County Council Planning Development  
PO BOX 274  
Stanley  
County Durham  
DH8 1HG

Dear Ms Walton,

## **DM/25/02471/AD Dunelm Garage Darlington Road Durham DH1 4PE**

*One internally illuminated fascia sign and one internally illuminated projecting sign.*

The Trust objects to this application on the grounds of inappropriateness and negative impact on character and local distinctiveness. The Trust also is objecting to the two related applications - **DM/25/02470/FPA** Shopfront, Vents and Air Conditioning Plant on grounds of amenity and **DM/25/02009/FPA** Change of Use, based on concern about type of use, traffic and amenity impacts.

### **Context**

The proposal is on a former garage that is close to a very extensive and busy road junction. However, this should be seen as masking the character of the adjacent commercial premises and Crossview Terrace next to the site. The terrace is a pleasant and relatively unspoilt 19thC terraced row while Nevilles Cross Inn is a local landmark built in 1905 by a local architect. The former inn's feature corner turret is important visually, and the pub played an important community role locally. Neither the former inn buildings, now a care home, nor restaurant in part of the premises has large signage: the restaurant signs are of a relatively low level of illumination.

The former garage did not have illuminated signage, and it has a distinctive curved shaped frontage relating to its internal structure. The rear of the care home (Nevilles Court) backs onto the former garage building and caters for adults including young adults with a range of disabilities.

The parking area to the front of the building can be particularly heavily used, especially during term time drop of and pick up times for the local schools. It also has electric charging points requiring a sufficient length of stay to charge a car.

### **Proposal**

The submission does not clarify what the hours of opening are to be. The business objective in proposing the signage is not clear. Is it intended for passing vehicles? The sign is very large at over 5.0m long and the lettering also large at 0.7m high. Together with its internal illumination this seems aimed at vehicle traffic and not pedestrians. As noted above, the car parking to the frontage can often be under pressure and car based trade will present

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difficulties for the Greggs shop and local residents. There is no justification for such a large, prominent sign based on drawing in foot traffic and the hours of opening will not justify night-time illumination at this scale.

The sign is considerably larger than the adjacent restaurant sign. This will have a negative impact on the character of this area and the adjacent buildings. The sign does not respect the distinctive frontage or its shaping. It is not a high quality design. The city centre Greggs premises manage adequately with much smaller signs with no illumination.

It is reasonable to suggest that the proposals in this low key commercial/residential area where possible should meet the requirements of the shopfront guide. If the proposals are to follow the Shopfront Guide (*quotes in italics*) the signage must be appropriate to the building -*'This is of particular note in terms of colour palette and lettering, which should not be oversized and respect proportions of the fascia and building's architectural features'* and *'Modern street lighting should provide enough illumination for a shopfront or fascia. Where external lighting is to be used it should be discreet and minimal. External lighting may be achievable by trough lights to match the background colour of the fascia. Alternatively, the use of small individual spotlight units positioned appropriately and concealed as much as possible is preferred to large spotlights or swan-neck lights.'* The proposals fail to conform to this advice.

The Trust suggests that further work is needed on the design of proposed sign to ensure reduction of the sign size and the omission of the internal illumination to reinforce the character of this predominantly residential area.

The Trust objects to this application for the reasons above (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 townscape.

### **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:

- c) Harmonising with its context in terms of scale and materials.
- 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 H3: Our Neighbourhood Outside the Conservation Areas**

Development proposals within Our Neighbourhood outside the Conservation Areas should, where appropriate, demonstrate an understanding of the area of the proposed development and its relationship to Our Neighbourhood as a whole.

*The signage* proposals outside the Conservation Areas *fail to* take into account, and meet the following requirements, by:

- a) sustaining and making a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the area; and
- c) using high quality design which contributes to the quality and character of the area; and
- d) having scale, appropriate to the context and setting of the area; and
- e) using materials and finishes appropriate to the context and setting of the area.