

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---

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

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

14th October 2025

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

Dear Mr Cansfield,

**DM/25/02331/AD Durham University The Waterside Building Riverside Place  
Durham DH1 1SL**

*Ino non-illuminated external vinyl sign*

The Trust objects to this application on the grounds of design inappropriateness and negative impact on building, riverside, a sequential view to the World Heritage Site (WHS) and the conservation area.

**Context**

The building constructed as the County Council headquarters remains particularly incongruous even within the extensive range of contemporary buildings lining the riverside. Considering the design of the building on its own terms, the substantial glass block offers visual penetration into the otherwise dull, repetitive, and over extensive riverside facade. The quality of the glass extension relies both on transparency and the elegance of its supporting fins offering a subtle subdivision of the plain glass presented to the river.

**Proposal**

There is no need to emphasise signage on this facade of the building. It faces down river and the Radisson Hotel, neither of which present obvious access points heading towards the building. Staff and students will be very aware of the location of the building. This type of awareness is evidenced by the low key emphasis across the University's very complex and extensive estate. Users find their own way into buildings. Visitors need only minimal signage to access this building and it is more likely to be via the road side access where substantial signage also exists. The 24 hour usage is now to be curtailed to 11PM weekdays and 6PM weekends and was never a well-founded reason for such a large sign.

The sign breaks the subtle fin pattern supporting the glass and its size and solidity are counter to the presumed intention of allowing views to penetrate into the building interior. The size means that it becomes a substantial component of the facade itself – graphics instead of building. This is a device that is at odds with the riverside location where, despite pressures for visibility, signage is kept within controlled parameters. The Trust remains concerned about more general light spillage from the large glass frontages of the new riverside buildings, but signage is mostly well controlled.

This is in the conservation area and the view of the World Heritage Site (WHS) buildings from the opposite bank starts approximately in line with the location of the signage. It is

# THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

---

therefore within the panoramic view of the WHS and is part of the sequential views from the approach towards the WHS. It is very discordant because of its size and solidity. The signage has a negative impact within these views. Close views from the riverside path below the building are also impacted.

The impact of large scale window graphics can also be seen from the temporary window coverings on the BrewDog Unit in Phase 1 of the delayed Millburngate development. The Trust would not wish to see encouragement of larger window vinyls should this application be approved.

The Trust's objections are therefore:

1. It is functionless
2. It does not accord with the design of the building
3. It has negative impact in the Conservation Area and WHS views
4. It would be a very poor example encouraging other over-scaled signage.

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***

# 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

##### 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 across, and into 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:

- 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.