

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

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

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

2 February 2026

Emma Price
Durham County Council
Planning Department
PO Box 274
Stanley
County Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Ms Price

**DM/26/00050/AD and DM/26/00055/LB Zizzi 43-44 Saddler Street
Durham DH1 3NU**

*1 non illuminated projection sign, 1 set of illuminated text behind glazing,
Retention of existing text and trough light, Retention of existing illuminated menu,
Non illuminated sign writing to door "come on in", Non illuminated sign writing to
lefthand side of entrance door.*

The Trust objects to both applications and all the proposed signage. This is based on inappropriateness, negative impact on a listed building, the historic street and the conservation area

Context

The Trust is generally concerned about the cumulative weakening of the presentation of shopfronts in the historic streets in the City centre. Within Saddler Street there are good examples where leisure businesses have restricted the amount and lighting of signage. However, there are poor examples of over large and inappropriate signs, lit signs behind windows and use of windows for large scale garish, painted displays. Branding initiatives and signage are impacting negatively on both the character of individual buildings and streetscape. The pressure on leisure businesses financially and to attract customers in a decreasing market is understood. Some businesses manage within the constraints of the historic environment, but others simply try to test the planning system to gain an edge over competitors. This competition between increasing numbers of leisure businesses leads to an over-concentration on what is incorrectly perceived to be heightened attraction to customers. It is coupled with the introduction of corporate branding irrespective of the individual circumstances. This is to the detriment of the host buildings.

What should be required is that signage should be dealt with in accordance with the County Council's Shopfronts Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document. There are the means to manage applications such as this one.

The pressure on businesses to attract custom leads also to street clutter from the use of A boards. This is especially seen in relation to the rear of lower level businesses with limited street presentation and more aggressive bars and restaurants. The effect of all these is to clutter the narrow streets and negatively alter the character of the street itself. It should be noted that Zizi's blocks its own, already narrow, section of the pavement and entrance with an A board.

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

The Trust's view is that the necessity of continuing change must be managed with sensitivity to the historic environment. In the long term maintaining the appropriate character of streets like Saddler Street, the main approach to the World Heritage Site, is the best way to safeguard the economic vitality of the city centre, customer and visitor appeal. Bad signage eats away at the character of much more than just the building it is placed upon.

This late 18thC/early 19thC building relies heavily on its shopfront and windows style for its character. The shopfront is a substantial part of the listing description. It is to the building owner's credit that the right side curved window was recently restored sympathetically. The deep blue of both shopfront and walls does very little to distinguish or enhance the building character. This is one of the best Saddler Street shopfronts and it deserves much more respect.

Proposals

The retention of the existing lit 3D metal sign is inappropriate. The text used is considerably too large for the street and alien to the building style. Each letter is about the same size as the adjacent historic style street light and the capital Z is visibly larger. Text style is informal and at odds with the shopfront classical style. The trough lighting bar is very large and is intrusive. The street is narrow and low levels of street lighting mean that signs can be smaller, with less lighting and still be readily visible. The sign dominates and unbalances the otherwise attractive building frontage.

The LED lit Zizzi sign behind the left hand window is an extremely poor introduction into the historic window with its small panes. As the application describes it the 'fairground' style of the lettering and lights is exactly the type of threat that is evident elsewhere. It is brash and exceeds any actual requirement for visibility. It will be very negatively prominent at night. To fail to refuse this will be to condone other behind the window lit signs and open the way to more with devastating effect on the historic streets. It will cause cumulative damage on the street scene together with the excessive and crudely painted window displays of 'The Library' adjacent building.

The hanging pizza shovel sign is also too large with a 700mm x 600mm main section.

Also of particular concern is the wall and door painting. The copper metallic door colour breaks the link with the other doors and the painted sign across it cuts across the door styling. The pasta serving small mural is also disruptive on the shop front. It is another poor example of business interest trying to exploit any available surface in ways that work against the form and character of the building. If approved this will also act as an encouragement for further and larger wall mural paintings that are highly damaging to historic character.

If the proposals are to follow the Shopfronts Guide (*quotes in italics*) the signage must be appropriate to the shopfront – '*Attaching a sign to the fascia of the shopfront is the most prominent place for signage but must complement the overall façade*'. The lettering must be in scale and harmonise with the design of the shopfront – '*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*'. In reference to colour the guide states that '*External paint finishes should not be excessively bold, or garish*' and '*Garish colour schemes should be avoided. Any lettering should be minimal and should not dominate the canopy area. The lettering style should co-ordinate with the design of the shop front*'. The proposals fail to observe these guidelines.

As the guide notes '*Whilst it is acknowledged that corporate branding is part of the identification of a business, **this needs to reflect the character of the area of building occupied by the business. In conservation areas and on listed build-***

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

ings some corporate colour schemes, styles and logos can be obtrusive and overbearing. The proposals are an example of this and fail to consider the building, street, and conservation area character.

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
chair@durhamcity.org

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

- 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).

Shopfronts Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

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 view-points 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.

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Celebrating, Protecting and Enhancing the City of Durham