

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

16th July 2026

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

Dear Ms Walton,

DM/26/01619/LB and DM/26/01618/FPA Ground Floor 8 Saddler Street Durham DH1 3NP

Listed Building Consent for refurbishment of the existing shopfront, together with associated external and internal works, including the installation of a rear extract flue/termination point, equipment and a carbon-filtered ventilation system

The Trust objects to the inclusion of the proposed signage in these applications. This is based on the grounds of design inappropriateness of the signage lettering and it failing to meet County Council Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) guidance and cumulative negative impact on a building, Saddler Street and the Conservation Area. It is assumed advertising consent will also be applied for following these current applications

Context

Saddler Street is one of the most important city centre historic streets and is formed from a range of different buildings of varied ages with ground floor commercial premises.

Saddler Street has retained a lot of its traditional shopfronts but the rich detail and ornamentation of the 19th/early 20th century has progressively been lost. The shopfront to this building is important because it retains much of the ornamental woodwork. This shopfront retains its earlier traditional form and quality of design. The existing Concept Eye Clinic signage is both in a modern typeface and oversize – larger in reality than it shows in drawings or photographs. It is not needed for visibility. Saddler Street has suffered visually because of the oversizing of signage, use of corporate styling and modern typefaces. Very few have been adapted to respect the street and the buildings they are on.

The County Council SPD on Shopfront Guidance notes in connection with changes over the past 60 years that: *‘These changes have often been at the expense of the original shopfront’s basic rules of scale and proportions have tended to be ignored.* The Trust has ongoing concern about the cumulative impact of inappropriate changes on Durham’s historic streets and sees the shopfront guidance as essential in achieving improvements and reducing unnecessary negative impact. It is particularly important that the guidance is applied consistently and ensures that all of the detail of applications is fully appropriate. Not all new signage in Saddler Street is in an appropriate font style and of proportionate size. Corporate signage is still very prevalent. Further inappropriate additions will cause cumulative negative impact. Observance of the Shopfront Guidance should be used to prevent this.

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Proposal

The signage proposed is a corporate styling and not adjusted to its traditional host shopfront. It is oversized and it is in modern. It is unnecessary to use such large lettering in this narrow street, a smaller size in more traditional typeface would be suitably legible.

The proposal fails to accord with the Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD guidance is: ‘...*lettering, which should not be **oversized and respect proportions of the fascia and building’s architectural features***’.

The Trust therefore objects to this application because:

1. It fails to observe the guidance in the Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) December 2024.
2. It will have a negative impact on the building; Saddler Street is an historic street and the Conservation Area.

Planning policy failures are indicated in the appendix below.

Yours sincerely

Sue Childs

Vice Chair, City of Durham Trust

trust@durhamcity.org

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).

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.