

Ms Michelle Hurton
Durham County Council
Planning Department
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Durham City
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10 June 2019

Dear Ms Hurton,

DM/19/01308/FPA | Change of use and subdivision of 1no A2 (financial Institution) unit to 1no sui-generis (distillery) unit and 1no A3 (cafe) unit including the installation of 4no. windows to south elevation | 30 High Street Durham DH1 3UL

I write to raise serious concerns about the above application, which I hope can be addressed. If that is not possible we wish to call this application to Committee.

Our primary concern is on the grounds of safety. Ethanol vapour is highly flammable and is one of the main fire and explosion hazards at distilleries. Ethanol can be released from leaks in tanks, casks, transfer pumps, pipes and flexible hoses. This is not just a theoretical risk: in April of this year there was a major fire at Masons Yorkshire Gin in Bedale. I have attached a newspaper report of this incident.

The distillery is proposed to be in the basement area with a bar immediately above it, in the Prince Bishops Shopping Centre which is crowded and well-used. The risks are self-evident. Distilling is an industrial process and Saved Policy Q7 applies. Its justification states that "it is important that new industrial and business areas are laid out and designed to a standard appropriate for their designation **as well as taking account of the safety and amenity of those working and visiting the area** and those living nearby." (My emphasis)

Documentation is needed to show how the risks not just to those in the premises, but also to those shopping in neighbouring premises and also passers-by, are being eliminated. There is absolutely none with this application, indeed the applicant is from Savilles, on behalf of the centre management rather than the proposed operator. There is no indication as to who will be operating the distillery, what experience they have, nor what measures will be put in place in order to comply with the relevant Health and Safety Regulations. Without this information, which would need to be assessed by a competent person, the requirements of Saved Policy Q7 cannot be met and, we maintain, the application must be refused.

But we hope that the applicant will provide additional information which will then need to be assessed by a competent person, who can provide appropriate advice. Please keep us abreast of any developments so we can reconsider our representation if necessary. Our current position is that **this application should be refused, and called to committee if you are minded to approve.**

Yours sincerely,

ADAM SHANLEY
Parish Clerk