



**CITY OF DURHAM  
PARISH COUNCIL**

Learning from the past.  
Building for the future.

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30<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Ms Morina,

**DM/21/04149/AD | Display of illuminated signage to front elevation. | Pizza Punks 12 The Riverwalk Millburngate Durham DH1 4SL**

The City of Durham Parish Council Planning Committee writes to object to this application.

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) operates under a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that development proposals, which accord with the development plan, should be approved without delay. The adopted Development Plan where the site is located comprises the planning policies of the County Durham Plan (CDP) and the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan.

Material considerations include: the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF updated July 2021) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

The proposed advertisement is modern in character which, although often discouraged within the historic core of the conservation area, is well established on this particular building and the positioning of the signs broadly reflects the same aesthetic.

However, the Parish Council's concerns with these particular applications relate entirely to the externally illuminated element of the sign of the building. The applicant proposes the introduction of external signage consisting of 1No Main sign with two smaller fascia signs either side of main sign edged with red LED illuminated neon and 1No Projecting sign. In previous and similar such applications, the County's Design and Conservation team have been very clear on this type of introduction into the historic core of the city, as follows: *"the illumination seems unjustified and it would be recommended that it is omitted. There is a*

*desirability to reduce illumination rather than increase light levels in the city centre. This would then allow for a flatter form of projecting sign.”*

The Parish Council fully endorses that assessment and would add that light pollution in general is a growing and concerning issue within the City; the damaging effects of which must be mitigated through the planning system. Indeed, paragraph 5.325 of the supporting text for CDP Policy 31 is clear that: *“Light pollution is artificial light that illuminates areas that are not intended to be lit. The intrusion of overly bright or poorly directed lights can cause glare, wasted energy, have impacts on nature conservation, and affect people's right to enjoy their property. It can also severely affect our view of the night sky. Light pollution may also damage the perception of a heritage asset in its setting, especially if the asset is experienced at night or is floodlit. The NPPF is clear that planning policies should limit the impact from light pollution on local amenity.”*

In their present form, it is the Parish Council’s view that these applications would be contrary to Adopted County Durham Plan (CDP) Policy 44, which clearly states:

*“In determining applications, particular regard will be given to:*

- f. the demonstration of 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 of the asset;*
- g. the manner in which the proposal responds positively to the findings and recommendations of conservation area character appraisals and management proposals; and*
- h. respect for, and reinforcement of, the established, positive characteristics of the area in terms of appropriate design (including pattern, layout, density, massing, features, height, form, materials and detailing). “*

Furthermore, the Parish Council believes that the introduction of the externally illuminated element of this proposal renders these applications contrary to Policy H2 of the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan (DCNP), which clearly states: *“Development proposals within or affecting the setting of the Durham City Conservation Area should sustain and enhance its special interest and significance as identified within the Conservation Area Appraisals. Development proposals within and affecting the Durham City Conservation Area should take into account, and meet where relevant, the following requirements, by having materials, detailing and lighting appropriate to the vernacular, context and setting”.*

The applicant’s intended illuminated signage also appears to be at odds with the Riverwalk Centre’s Management Plan (submitted in support of application DM/21/03052/FPA for this site) which clearly states: *“External seating areas will be lit primarily using The Riverwalk’s existing lighting infrastructure, in order to avoid any impacts upon the development’s heritage context. Any additional illumination will be used only sparingly by tenants, and subject to prior agreement with Centre Management”.*

In its current form, this application should be refused because it is clearly contrary to CDP Policy 44 and DCNP Policy H2. The Parish Council would be satisfied with this application, should the proposed externally illuminated element be removed from the proposal entirely.

Yours sincerely,

**Adam Shanley**

**Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council**