

About the application

Application number: 2025/62/93140/E	
What is the application for?:	Installation of replacement shop front and roller shutter (within a Conservation
Address of the site or building:	Kami Healthcare Ltd, 8, Market Place, Birstall, Batley, WF17 9EL
Postcode:	WF17 9EL

User comments

Type of comment: An objection	
Do you wish your comments to be published on the website anonymously?	Yes
1) The premises: This is a Grade II listed building within the Birstall Conservation Area and faces directly onto the Market Place. The Market Place is an important historic focal point of Birstall and was originally designated as a conservation area in 1998, in recognition of its 'special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance, now and for future generations'. Regarding the commercial properties facing onto the Market Place (one of which is a property in this application), the Birstall Area Conservation Appraisal (https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/trees-listing-and-conservation/pdf/conservation-appraisals/Birstall.pdf) states: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• several of these commercial properties suffer from poor shop frontage. At strategic points insensitive advertising boarding is used.• a small number of properties have started to replace the original windows with UPVC and inappropriately designed windows. All these are potentially detractive features.• negative factors occur as whole buildings and areas as well as incremental change on buildings within the conservation area such as the installation of UPVC windows and doors, large satellite dishes, burglar alarms, security lighting and plastic guttering. Insensitive developments create a negative appearance in the conservation area such as extensions to buildings, dormer windows and new buildings which detract from the character of the area.• the introduction of Article 4 (2) Directions would prevent any further degradation of the environment in the future. Despite claims in the application, the historic shopfront of the former Birstall Pharmacy was removed without consent, resulting in the loss of original historic fabric, including the original timber window frames, the shop signage, the front walls and stained-glass windows. These elements were destroyed, not altered through an approved scheme. The current proposal does not fully reinstate or faithfully reproduce what was lost	

The current proposal does not fully reinstate or faithfully reproduce what was lost, notably the stained-glass windows, which were a key feature of the original frontage. As such, it cannot reasonably be said to “preserve” the historic shopfront as the application suggests.

Approving a partial redesign after unauthorised removal risks legitimising the loss of historic architecture, undermining the conservation area protections, weakening the Council’s enforcement position and setting a damaging precedent for other listed buildings in Birstall.

Conservation areas are recognised for the contribution they make to cultural heritage and economic well-being of the country and to the locality. An area with conservation area status imposes a duty on Kirklees Council to preserve and enhance the quality and character of the conservation area. Kirklees Council should therefore consider this application in line with all the above including Article 4 (2) Directions (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/596/schedule/3>) and in the context of ongoing enforcement action following unauthorised works carried out at the site last year. Only new developments in the revised Birstall conservation area which are sympathetic to the character and setting of Birstall conservation area should be considered.

2) The proposed business use:

2.1 The number of barber shops in the UK has more than doubled in the last 10 years. In Birstall Centre there are already 11 hair related establishments (namely: Louise Heaton, Fast Fades Barbers, Divine, Cabello, The Yorkshire Barbers, Nicoles Boutique, Shapers, Luxe by She, Birstall Barber, Mel’s Barbers shop, PBS). There are also 5 further hair related establishments within easy walking distance of the town centre (Lion’s Den, Level 7 Barbers, Meer Barbershop, Love Hair, and Gentz Hair Studio). I am therefore at a loss to understand any advantages of opening yet another hair related business in or close proximity to Birstall town centre. I regularly pass by the barbers in the centre when they are open with no customers - so I have often wondered how are they making sufficient money?

I believe that approving another barbershop in an area already saturated with similar businesses would offer no tangible benefits and would indeed pose several harms as it would:

- strain existing hair establishments in and around Birstall Centre
- erode the diversity of the high street
- cause a deficit in customers for the high street (reduced footfall)
- go against clear public sentiment

2.2 Potential for illegal activity - there are well documented concerns regarding barbers being used for illegal activity which should not be ignored. The National Crime Agency (NCA) estimates that £12bn of criminal cash is generated in the UK each year, which is typically smuggled out of the country or integrated into the legitimate financial system using a variety of laundering techniques. Cash-intensive businesses such as barbershops, vape shops, nail bars, American-themed sweet shops and car washes are often used by criminals to conceal the origins of illicit cash.

In one operation alone last year (2025), the UK Police investigated the boom in barbers' shops across the UK, amid suspicions they may be used as fronts for money laundering. This resulted in freezing bank accounts totalling more than £1m, 84 warrants and 35 arrests. The operation saw 55 individuals questioned about their immigration status and a further 97 individuals safeguarded in relation to potential modern slavery. In addition, officers seized more than £40,000 in cash, some 200,000 cigarettes, 7,000 packs of tobacco, over 8,000 illegal vapes and two vehicles. Two cannabis farms were also found containing a total of 150 plants.

For all the above reasons, I believe the application should be refused.