

# Durham City Conservation Area



## Executive Summary

July 2016



# CONTENTS

Contents.....	3
Executive Summary.....	1
1 Overview.....	1
1.1 Summary of Special Interest & Significance.....	1
Key Elements of Significance .....	5
1.2 Tool Kit and Project Background .....	17
2 Planning Context .....	20
2.1 Public Consultation.....	20
2.2 Planning Legislation and Policy Context.....	20
2.3 Conservation Area Character Appraisals.....	21
3 Overall Character Assessment .....	23
3.1 Brief Introduction to the Conservation Area .....	23
3.2 How the Conservation Area has been divided.....	23
3.3 General Character Overview .....	28
Character Area 1 - Peninsula .....	30
Character Area 2 - Framwellgate.....	30
Character Area 3 - Crossgate.....	31
Character Area 4 - Elvet .....	32
Character Area 5 - Gilesgate.....	33
3.4 Summary of significance.....	34
Character Area 1 – The Peninsula Key Elements.....	34
Character Area 2 – Framwellgate Key Elements.....	35
Character Area 3 – Crossgate Key Elements.....	37
Character Area 4 – Elvet Key Elements .....	38
Character Area 5 – Gilesgate Key Elements.....	40
3.5 Summary of Future Challenges.....	43
3.6 Boundary Changes.....	52
3.7 Article 4 Directions .....	56

## Key Dates

Original Designation	7 August 1968
Boundary Amended	25 November 1980
Boundary Amended	14 July 2016
Character Area Appraisal Approved	14 July 2016



# Executive Summary

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1 OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 Summary of Special Interest & Significance

The appraisal is an important part of the Council's statutory duty to prepare and publish proposals to preserve and enhance the Durham (City Centre) Conservation Area. It does so by defining the unique characteristics which make the historic city centre so special and by identifying negative aspects, threats and opportunities to its preservation and enhancement. This provides the foundation for developing practical policies and proposals for the management of the conservation area which will enable it to play a positive role in shaping an economically and socially successful city.

Durham City was designated as a conservation area on the 9th August 1968. This original designation included the peninsula with Durham Castle and cathedral, the Market Place and the Medieval streets leading out from Silver Street to the west, Claypath to the northeast, Elvet to the east and the slightly more distant Medieval suburb of Gilesgate.

The original conservation area boundary concentrated on the historic core of the city but did not include the larger areas abutting the Medieval core which possess separate identities of interest and diversity worthy of conservation area designation.

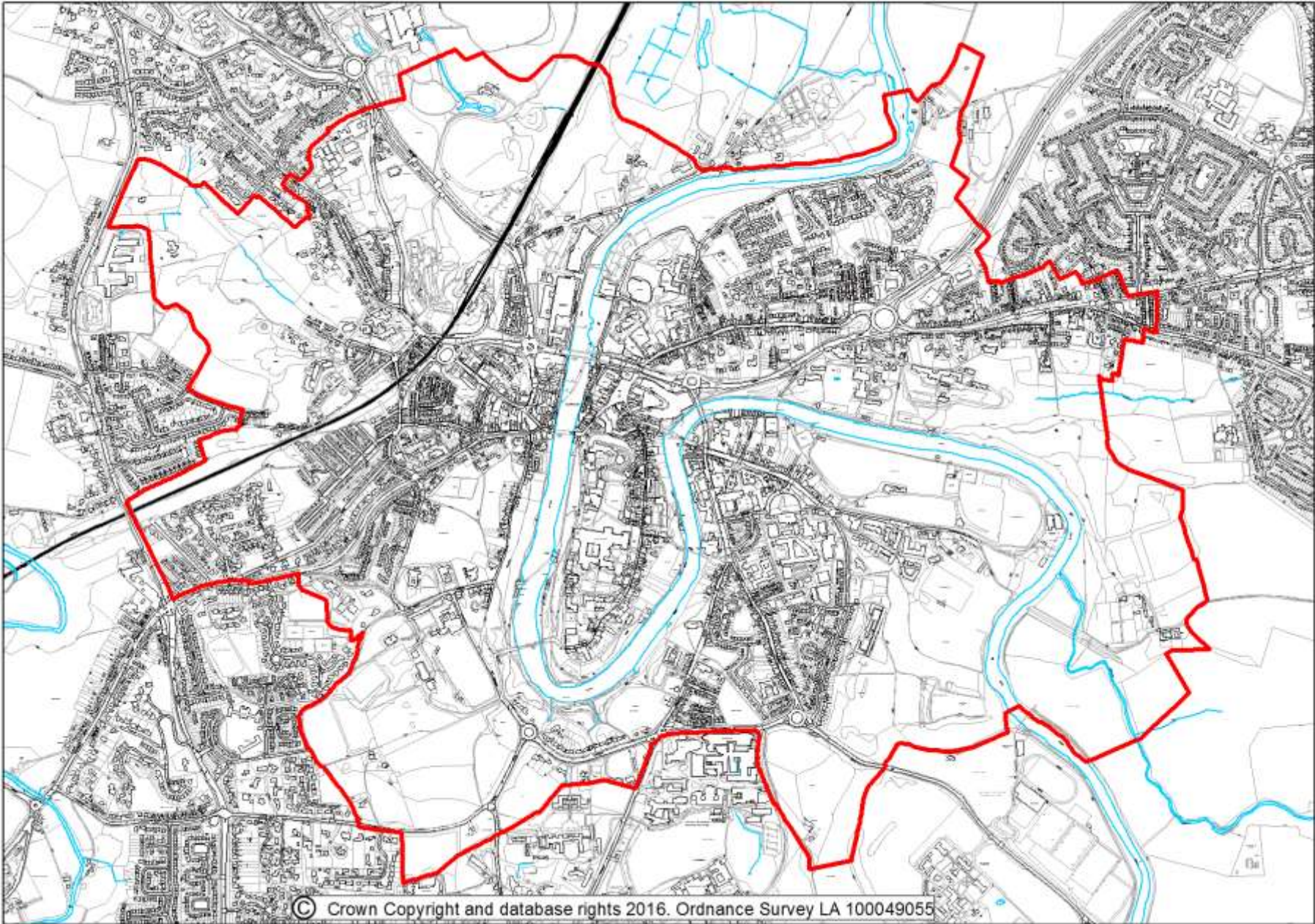
Subsequently on the 25th November 1980 the conservation area boundary was significantly enlarged to incorporate a much wider section of the city centre encompassing the pre-1900 expansion of the city and the majority of the natural 'bowl' (the upper slopes of which present a largely rural backdrop to views of Durham Cathedral), the important green wedges of open countryside and other significant green spaces which contribute to and enhance the setting of the historic buildings and the city as a whole.

The 30 year old boundary forms the principal area of study for this appraisal but adjoining areas have also been investigated to assess whether the boundary should be further extended.

The central area of the City of Durham is one of the most important historic city's in Britain. The time-depth, quality and architectural coherence of the historic buildings and the preserved Medieval street pattern, centred on the peninsula and expanding outwards with a dramatic topography and extensive greenery make Durham (City Centre) Conservation Area exceptional.



*Image 1 Cathedral from Prebends Bridge*



map 1 Durham (City Centre) Conservation Area Boundary

### Durham World Heritage Site

Durham Castle and cathedral stand high on the lofty peninsula, and in 1986 these monuments, along with The College and Prebends Bridge, were designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site. World Heritage Sites are cultural and/or natural sites considered being of outstanding universal value. They are considered to represent the most significant, unique or best examples of the world's cultural and/or natural heritage and are inscribed on the World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee.

In considering the management and understanding of Durham's architectural heritage it became apparent that the original boundary of Durham World Heritage Site had been drawn too tightly as it did not fully encompass all the important relevant historical and landscape components of the site. The Durham site was therefore re-evaluated to logically include the buildings and spaces around the cathedral and castle. The extended site now includes many of the non-religious components of the Prince-Bishops complex, among these are Palace Green, formerly a market place, the former almshouses, a grammar school, a courthouse, and a library. The current Durham World Heritage Site boundaries were formerly approved by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in August 2008.



*Image 2 Durham peninsula and the main outer suburbs*

The justification for inclusion in the World Heritage List comes from Durham Cathedral being the finest example of early Norman architecture in Europe. Although the cathedral is Romanesque in style, the use of architectural mechanisms such as rib vaults, structural pointed arches and lateral abutments were pioneering constructional techniques of their day.



In architectural terms Durham Castle visually illustrates the unique secular and ecclesiastic power base it became and the concept of the motte and bailey castle, the oldest castle form prevalent in the Norman period. It includes features of notable high historic and architectural value such as the Norman Chapel (the oldest building in the city), the Norman Gallery and the richly decorated Great Hall. The building also physically demonstrates the change in use and function of the site over time, from castle and protector to Bishops Palace then to University. While Palace Green is an integral component of the Medieval fortified castle and cathedral complex, created in the 12th century for the purpose of unifying the two buildings and used as former processional route.



*Image 3 Durham Cathedral and Castle viewed from Milburngate Bridge*

### **Key Elements of Significance**

The following key elements define Durham City's 'special architectural or historic interest' which warrants its designation and conservation area status, the 'character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance', these underlying themes have been identified and drawn from the five individual character area assessments:

#### **Landscape and Topography**

The wider setting of the conservation area is formed by Durham's 'outer bowl' comprising of the surrounding hills and ridgelines which provide important wider visual context to the whole city. To the south the character of the outer bowl is essentially rural with the city confined to the foreground and with distant settlements situated below the horizons. To the north the character differs to one of more developed but with large areas of open countryside.

This results in many vantage points from which the World Heritage Site monuments can be viewed but the degree of visibility varies considerably. Nevertheless the interplay of the natural and built environment, with the varied surroundings that this creates, is a significant attribute to the character of Durham City.



*Image 4 Durham Cathedral in its wider setting of the Durham Bowl*

The more immediate setting consists of the intimate landscape bowl, known as the Durham 'inner bowl'; this features moderately steep slopes, surrounding hilltops, and green fringes penetrating into the city which contribute significantly to the setting, character and appearance of the conservation area.

The inner setting is formed by the geological formation of the River Wear gorge. This is a distinctive natural feature of regional importance, recognised as such by its designation as a County Geological Site, and where the topography and geography created a naturally defensible position which resulted in its original selection, military function, and the subsequent development of the entire city.

The river and its banks are a distinctive historic environment in their own right, part derived from their historic development and change in function, forming a moat for the castle and cathedral complex, a working quarry, power source for the military and monastic communities then into gardens and terraces for the Prebendaries; and part derived from their visual contrast with the harder urban environment of the city; in particular the visual contrast of the dense woodland canopy with the solidity of Durham Castle and cathedral achieving a visually sophisticated landscape.



*Image 5 The western part of the conservation area in its wider landscape setting*

The area is also significant as a green space in the heart of the city which provides a very important local amenity as a unique place of tranquillity, a valuable recreational resource, and a

highly significant wildlife habitat and landscape asset of regional importance with a strong visual richness that the public can enjoy.

### Green spaces, open spaces, trees and woodland

The areas of open countryside and green spaces which exist around the outskirts of the city and penetrate inwards are of high scenic value generating green backdrops, in places enveloping and enhancing the setting of the historic buildings, and are a key characteristic of the conservation areas sense of place. Within the city there is great diversity and volumes of green spaces including for example the formal leisure provision at Wharton Park, informal large elevated open spaces at Aykley Heads, the expanse of the floodplain at The Sands and The Racecourse, and dense areas of historic wooded such as Pelew Woods and Maiden Castle Wood.



*Image 6 Examples of the larger areas of green spaces within the conservation area at the Racecourse and Wharton Park (opposite)*

Open spaces exist alongside an abundance of street greenery such as grassed verges, embankments, corner plots, open sports pitches, trees, hedgerows, and private frontage gardens etc. which possess significant visual amenity value, enhance the appearance of the townscape, and in places create a semi-rural character with notable green corridors along the principle approaches into the city creating an impressive introduction. Other public areas such as Palace Green and the Market Place are also special historical open spaces of high significance within the conservation area.



*Image 7 Examples of smaller areas of open space and street greenery*

### The skyline and roofscape

The combination of building form, height, architectural composition and local topography is most evident where historic streets cascade down the various hills, generating striking silhouettes of changing roof form. These include steeply pitched roofs, hipped roofs, castellated parapets,

domes, towers and spires etc. Ridge lines are commonly punctured by brick chimney stacks and pots, some roof slopes incorporate traditional dormer windows, half-dormers, and eaves broken by gabled bays adding further variety and interest.

The mixture of traditional natural materials such as Welsh slate and red pantiles is a further defining characteristic of the city's historic roofscape, the variants adding differing colours and textures.

The Victorian terraced developments are at the modest end of the built form spectrum but the well planned streets with a an interesting blend of colliding and interlocking grid patterns, uniformity of design and roofscape create a very strong positive character to the residential parts of the city. This is demonstrated in views from many vantage points in and around the city towards the core of the conservation area which are characterised by an undulating distinctive roofscape of considerable significance. Examples of this can be found at Claypath, Crossgate, Allergate, Old Elvet, Gilesgate and The Avenue.



*Image 8 Right, The rich and varied roofscape of Old Elvet with the copper dome of Old Shire Hall and the spire of Elvet Methodist Church prominent*

### Views and Vistas

Durham is a city of views; at a distance these are generated by the topography where there are many outstanding open public views towards Durham Cathedral, castle and the surrounding townscape. At street level there are many significance views within the conservation area itself, where the narrow winding historic street pattern creates endlessly evolving, surprising and glimpsed views highlighting the city's historic, architectural and natural interest with many key local focal points.

In the dense townscape, the rivers and crossings provide welcome and sometimes unexpected open panoramas most notably the 'classic' view from Prebends Bridge and from Framwellgate Bridge where the full extent of Durham Castles West Range can be seen. Milburngate Bridge is also significant in demonstrating the form and evolution of the entire peninsula with Durham Castle and cathedral dominating, the Market Place visible at the lower northern end and the built form cascading down to the river level and including Silver Street dropping down to Framwellgate Bridge.

There are a high number of significant open and framed views of historic streetscapes, roofscapes, landmark buildings and structures and the interplay with the built form and landscape; a number of the views being world renowned. Examples of this can be found at The Sands, The Racecourse and from Wharton Park.

These views are of national and local importance some exhibiting the individual significance of heritage asset and others seen in combination with many designed views.



Image 9 The classic view of Durham Cathedral and the Fulling Mill

### The Medieval town and street pattern

The city is a significant example of a Medieval town within a defended complex dominated by the church, castle and bridges designed for protective measures. It has a simple responsive layout within the landscape, with roads and streets radiating out from the Market Place, and this Medieval infrastructure forms the historic core of the conservation area. The post Medieval development of the city has maintained the Medieval core, which remains clearly distinguishable within the modern city.

The street plan combining Medieval elements, with Georgian and Victorian interventions expresses architectural diversity, visible and invisible archaeology. The Medieval streets mainly comprise of narrow, but deep rectilinear building plots, reflecting historic burgage plot patterns, with historic buildings pressed hard up against the back of the pavements. The formal terraces lying immediately outside of the Castle Walls on the peninsula such as Prebends Walk, Bishops Walk and Principles Walls with the associated platforms and various connections pathways are also a significant contributing factor to the historic plan form.



*Image 10 Part of the medieval infrastructure of the city including the Market Place and the entrances to Saddler Street and Silver Street*



*Image 11 Old Elvet linking to the peninsula via Elvet Bridge*

Continuous street frontages generate a sense of physical and visual enclosure and an intimate atmosphere which is a key characteristic of the sense of place. Other key components of the Medieval town plan are the historic bridges which are significant landmarks both in their contribution to the Medieval layout and the development spread of the city, and the surviving historic vennels linking key streets and the main urban area within the outer green spaces.

This street layout has a direct influence upon the character of the city, its surroundings, and determines how the city is viewed and appreciated.

### Architectural Character

The conservation area has a rich variety of built form as a result of its evolution through time. Its historic and architectural diversity and interest however is not always appreciable as the time-depth of buildings is often hidden from view but the continuity and integrity of phased historic built fabric is very strong throughout the conservation area. The built form embodies buildings with early Medieval origins to the present day, varying in age, use and character, including monastic, ecclesiastical, educational, industrial and domestic, many iconic and providing pivotal focal points. This creates an interesting combination of styles of architecture, in addition to differing size, scale, function and orientation of the buildings.

For example buildings range from the stone built Durham embellished University buildings on Palace Green, to the modest traditional red brick Victorian terraced properties uniformed in design as seen in Hawthorn Terrace, to larger detached and semi-detached Victorian Villas seen along Crossgate Peth with colourful joinery details and the exceptionally fine townhouses and cottages from the Georgian period found in the Bailey, Claypath, Elvet and Hallgarth Street.

The above buildings are intermingled with other buildings of individual historic interest and architectural quality such as the many churches, industrial buildings and former agricultural buildings and other stand out buildings/structures with high influence such as the Viaduct etc. A high number of the buildings are listed, Grade I, II and II\* and many more are considered to be non-designated heritage assets or of local interest.

The juxtaposition of the historic buildings with contemporary developments emphasizing the development of the modern city is also often a positive characteristic in places for example the Pace Building on Palace Green, contrasting effectively with the historic grain and adding to the organic time-deep architectural history of the conservation area.



Image 12 Examples of the conservation areas rich and varied architectural character including timber framed buildings, Georgian townhouses, Victorian villas and Victorian terraces

### Materials and surviving historic/architectural features

The special interest of the historic buildings also derives from the traditional building materials used in the conservation area such as locally available buff sandstone and red brickwork for external wall construction and natural slate roof coverings.



Image 13 A selection of windows from the conservation area including 16-pane and 4-pane sliding sash, Victorian bays and a decorative dormer



Image 14 A selection of doors from the conservation area



The extensive survival of original architectural details including timber sliding sash windows, panelled timber doors with pilasters, over-lights and hoods, and cast iron rainwater goods, along with additional architectural features and decoration such as plinths, quoins, floor banding, stone window and door surrounds, bargeboards, finials, and parapets etc. add colours, textures and patterns into the streets.

These features contribute significantly to the distinctiveness and identity of individual buildings and groups of building while generating rich and diverse historic streetscapes. The physical integrity of the historic building stock and their architectural features is particularly high within the conservation area with many surviving features of interest preserved.

### Archaeology

The conservation area encompasses the core of the Medieval settlement where the street pattern, property plots, buildings and archaeology each constitute different but complimentary elements attesting and representing its historical development. There is in addition tantalising hints of pre-Roman and Roman occupation of some form on the peninsula.

That the ground occupied by the castle and by the cathedral contains archaeology of international importance relating to the structural development two complexes is self-evident.

Excavation in recent years has demonstrated the presence of rich archaeological deposits across the peninsula as a whole.

The ground to the rear of the street frontage properties has been shown to contain significant assemblages of artefacts illustrating the quality and range of everyday objects used by the inhabitants and how these changed over time. Similarly, the presence of animal bone and other paleo-environmental materials can illustrate the diet of the residents.

The ground adjacent to the line of the Castle Walls is of archaeological importance not only with respect to their structural and historical development but also to landscaping of the slopes of the peninsula both within individual property plots and more generally. There is slight evidence for some form of fortification of the peninsula prior to the construction of the Castle Walls.

The bed of the River Wear itself is also known to be of archaeological significance. Not only does it contain the foundations, and collapsed fabric, of previous bridges and other riverside structures but recent investigations have disclosed the presence of important collections of artefacts (e.g. the second largest assemblage of Medieval cloth seals in England).

### Boundary Treatments

Within the conservation area there are many surviving historic sandstone walls, brick built garden walls and other significant means of enclosure such as decorative wrought iron railings and hedgerows etc. which reinforce the linear nature in many

streets, interlinking and enhance the setting of the historic buildings, and adding to the overall distinctive character of the area.



*Image 15 Examples of the variety in boundary treatments including stone walls, brick walls, hedgerows and railings*

Some have a strong associative value with the Durham Castle defensive complex, and have higher historic, evidential and aesthetic values, forming part of the setting and context of the World Heritage Site, while others are of value in creating narrow vennels, small informal yards and courtyard areas and forming boundaries of historic garden spaces. Rear walls are also important in defining historic burgage plots, and within

the Victorian terraces they create a very distinctive close-knit rear environment of distinctive character.

### Floorscape

A number of the historic streets and spaces include surviving historic floorscapes examples such as river cobbles, York stone and granite setts etc. These areas greatly enhance the setting of the buildings that surround them and add a great deal of texture, detail and visual interest into the streetscene. Historic surface are important characteristics of the city which add to the overall quality of the townscape.



*Image 16 Examples of traditional floorscapes*

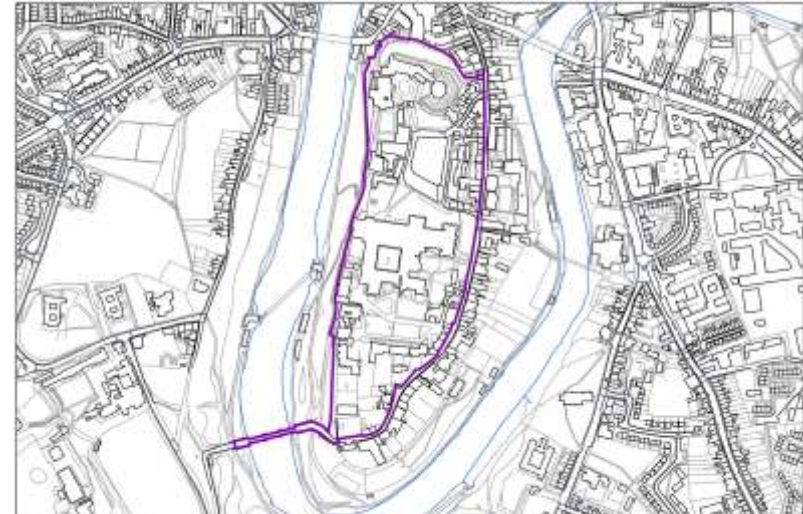
### The World Heritage Site

The World Heritage Sites significance lies in the fact that it represents the foundation stone of the city and the relationship between Durham Cathedral and the wider city is an important one because it was the cathedral and associated pilgrimage that stimulated the development of the Saxon and Medieval communities.

Architecturally, Durham Cathedral and castle are among the greatest monuments of the Norman Conquest of Britain. Durham Cathedral, built between 1093 and 1133, is one of the finest examples of Norman architecture in Europe. The site displays exceptional and innovative architecture demonstrating a high point in the history of Medieval architecture in England.

The sites significance is also due to its continuity of use and ownership over the past 1000 years as a place of religious worship, learning and residence which remains to this day.

The siting of Durham Castle and cathedral in relation to the surrounding city has been sustained as has its setting above the wooded River Wear valley both of which allow an understanding and appreciation of its Medieval form which is far reaching.



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map 2 World Heritage Site boundary



Image 17 Components of the World Heritage Site, Durham Cathedral, Durham Castle Gatehouse, Owengate and Palace Green Library

### Castle Walls

The Castle Walls have prominent, historic, evidential and architectural significance in their own right as they are a major component of the context of the Durham Cathedral and castle World Heritage Site and also include associated historic promenades, terraces and walkways etc.

The oldest walls were constructed along with the castle with clear military objectives in mind and were the city's second line of defence after the river itself. They were constructed in different phases between 1099 and 1128 and included flanking towers, buttresses, and guard gates at key points. Although today they are no longer a complete fortification as originally intended, demonstrable Medieval fabric exists in a number of places and elsewhere there is archaeological and/or historical evidence the above features, and there are significant sections remaining sufficiently so for the original course to be identified and followed.

The latest element in the walled complex relates to the surviving fabric of the 18th and 19th century gardens the remains of which illustrate the collective wealth of the occupants of the Baileys. The Castle Walls become redundant as defences, as they fell into disrepair they were reused as garden retaining walls and landscape features.

The walls are major elements of the peninsula as individual historic features, and in having significant cumulative value.

Their dramatic form imposes itself on the landscape and they are an important symbol of the complex history of the area whilst also providing excellent evidential value of the phases of development and changing aspirations and priorities of the different owners.

### Religious Significance

Durham Cathedral has religious and historic significance that equals its architectural value as it is home to the relics and material culture of three saints; St Cuthbert, (the reason it exists) who was instrumental in spreading Christianity in the north of England; the Venerable Bede, who lived in the 7th century, and is considered to be 'the father of English history' and St Oswald, the saintly King who spread Christianity in Northumberland. Elsewhere within the city there are many surviving pilgrimage routes, other notable religiously significant sites, and a high number of churches included within the Medieval boroughs.



Image 18 Walls beneath the cathedral

## 1.2 Tool Kit and Project Background

The Durham Character Assessment Toolkit (CAT) is based on the Oxford Toolkit developed by Oxford City Council working in partnership with English Heritage (now Historic England).

In May 2012 officers from Oxford City Council and representatives from English Heritage attended a public meeting with professional staff from Durham County Council and approximately 40 representatives from local groups and residents to explain the Toolkit methodology and structure and to explore how it could be best used within the County, and in particular Durham (City Centre) Conservation Area.

As a result of this meeting, the Toolkit has been used successfully (August 2012-July 2013) by officers from the County Council working closely with local residents to carry out a survey of the whole conservation area.

The toolkit is essentially a character assessment survey designed to assess the character of spaces, buildings and places, and to identify the features that contribute to the distinctiveness, interest and amenity of the area. It is a detailed survey in the form of a structured questionnaire with six themes;

- 1 Initial reaction
- 2 Spaces
- 3 Buildings
- 4 Views
- 5 Landscape
- 6 Ambience

The toolkit included identifying positive features as well as issues that detract from the character of areas, spaces and buildings.

The toolkit was carried out on a street by street basis. The survey work involved carrying out a site visit of the streets, researching the area by looking through archive material and historic mapping and filling the questionnaire/toolkit form.

This was followed by a meeting with residents to discuss the comments and scores; assigning a number or score provided a mechanism for analysing and interpreting the results over a wider area. The contribution a feature makes to the character of an area is scored positive, negative or neutral, the scoring is summarised below:

- +1 to +5** positive features that add to the character or special nature of an area
- +1** slightly adds to the character
- +5** significantly adds to the character
- 0** **neutral features.** They neither detract from nor add to the character

- 5 to -1** negative features that detract from the area. This ranges from
- 5** significantly detracts to
- 1** slightly detracts

Due to the sheer size of Durham (City Centre) Conservation Area it was decided to break the city centre down into five key areas based on character and the ancient borough boundaries, these are;

- 1 Peninsula
- 2 Framwellgate
- 3 Crossgate
- 4 Elvet
- 5 Gilesgate

Five separate groups were formed made up of residents and representatives from local interest groups in the particular areas. The survey information for the five different areas has helped to provide an overall picture of the different character areas and what is uniquely special about them.

The survey of each area was carried out street by street in considerable detail; as such the five main character areas have been subdivided. The Peninsula Character Area has for example 11 sub-character areas each one resulting in approximately 250 decisions/responses being made by residents/officers in the scoring and comment sheets.

The data has then been entered on spreadsheets and annotated coloured maps.

The Toolkit scoring, spreadsheets, maps and comments have made it possible to draw some conclusions from the whole Toolkit process and provided greater knowledge and clearer understanding of the character and very essence of the whole conservation area. This information is important up to date evidence which has been used to form the basis of the appraisal document.

The process has also identified how these places relate to each other in the wider context and setting of Durham (City Centre) Conservation Area and relationship between the important elements. In addition consideration is given in this document to reducing some of the negative impacts identified with suggestions for possible change and how positive features can be best positioned and placed in the future.



*Image 19 Dun Cow Lane in the immediate environs of the cathedral*

## 2 PLANNING CONTEXT

### 2.1 Public Consultation

Public consultation is an integral part of the appraisal process. The draft conservation area character appraisal was subject to a public consultation exercise with six informal drop-in sessions undertaken across the city between the 29th September 2015 to the 15th October 2015 which were all well attended. Many written responses were received from local residents and other interested parties. After collation of the response the document was amended to incorporate comments and suggested improvement where considered necessary to form this final version of the document.

### 2.2 Planning Legislation and Policy Context

A conservation area is defined in the 1967 Civic Amenities Act as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. It is not the purpose of a Conservation area to prevent development, but to manage change in a positive and proactive way that benefits current and future generations.

Conservation area status means Planning Permission is required for the total or substantial demolition of any building over 115m<sup>3</sup> in size, the demolition of a boundary wall over 1m in height next to the highway or 2m elsewhere. There is a general presumption in favour of preservation of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or

appearance of the conservation area. Additional controls are also placed over trees within the area, meaning that an owner must submit a formal notification of works to the Council six weeks before starting work. Permitted development rights (works that can be done without Planning Permission) are also slightly different within designated conservation areas.

The primary legislation governing Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This legislation includes certain statutory duties which the Council as Local Planning Authority must uphold. s69(1) of the Act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate any areas which they consider to be of special architectural or historic interest as conservation areas, and under s69(2) to review such designations from time to time.

The Council has a further duty under s71(1) to formulate and prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas from time to time.

When assessing applications for development, the Local Planning Authority must pay special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation areas under s72(1) of the Act. This does not mean that development will necessarily be opposed, only that this should not be detrimental to the special interest of the wider conservation area.



Specific guidance relating to development within conservation areas and in relation to development affecting World Heritage Sites can be found within the NPPF, Section 12 Conservation and Enhancement of the Historic Environment and its accompanying practice guide which are published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, specifically paragraphs 137 and 138 which state:

Para.137 - Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

Para.138 - Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

### **2.3 Conservation Area Character Appraisals**

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal represents the first phase of a dynamic process aimed at the conservation and enhancement of the conservation area. It is an assessment of those features and qualities that make an individual conservation area special and add to the distinctive character and sense of place. Every area is different, derived from its topography, historic development, land uses and features such as street plans, hedges, trees, individual buildings and groups of buildings, architectural details and materials public spaces, open spaces and landscaping, and the relationships between all of these.

In a large conservation area such as Durham City which is a complex multi-period area the character varies considerable within its boundary, for example the medieval town core, with Georgian phases of grander houses, the arrival of the railway and subsequent Victorian residential expansions along with modern housing and leisure facilities. This appraisal will help to raise awareness and appreciation of Durham City's special character, while also providing a consistent and evidential basis on which to determine planning applications affecting the city.

The appraisal also seeks to identify any factors which detract from the conservation area's special qualities, and to present outline proposals for improvements which could lead to the preservation or enhancement of those qualities.

This appraisal discusses a wide range of structures and features within Durham City which define its 'special interest' and add to its significance, but no appraisal can ever be entirely comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest or adds value to the character of the area.

### 3 OVERALL CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 Brief Introduction to the Conservation Area

The City of Durham is one of the principal historic towns of Britain with its establishment intrinsically linked to the arrival of monks from Lindisfarne in Northumberland. However, there is evidence of human settlement on the peninsula and in the vicinity from around 2000BC onwards. This is not surprising given the defensible feature of the incised meander of the River Wear.

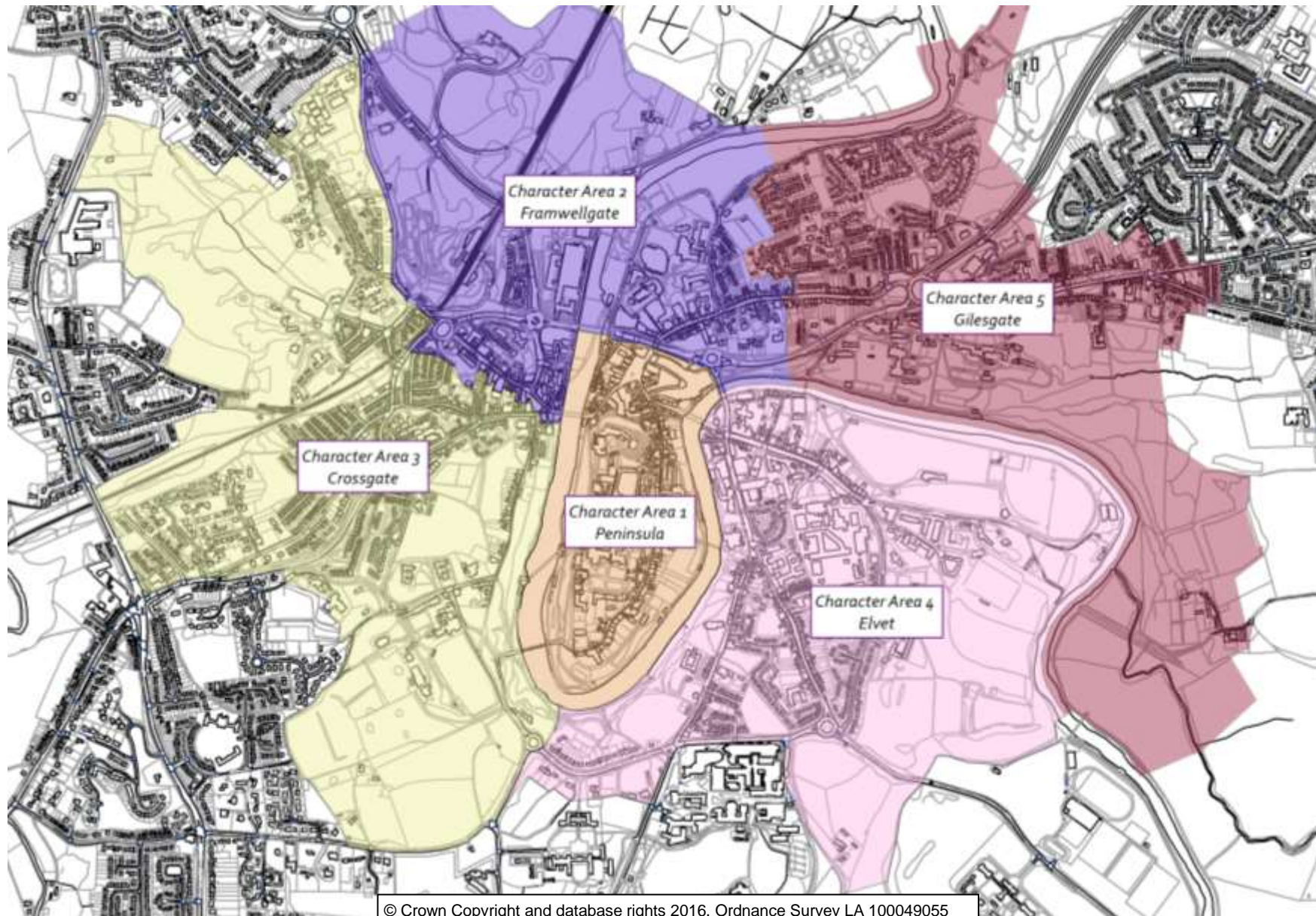
The relative value of the whole conservation area is substantial, containing as it does the World Heritage Site buildings of the castle, cathedral and Prebends Bridge. This raises Durham to international significance. Its value is further enhanced by the Medieval layout of the city centre and its many characterful and historic buildings contained in the dominating river loop and linked into the surrounding countryside.

The city's development was determined by religion and defence. The character and development of the city is formed from the topography of the city and the cathedral and castle on the peninsula. The developing town supported this community.

#### 3.2 How the Conservation Area has been divided

The City Centre is a large and very complex environment with many different functions evident including commercial, residential, cultural and recreational and multiple periods of historic development, as such it would not be possible to undertake a coherent appraisal that covered the whole of the city in one attempt. The outcome of a single appraisal covering the whole conservation area would likely to be a very long and unmanageable document that would not be user friendly and therefore impractical. Therefore, the Conservation Area is divided into what are termed 'Character Areas' smaller more manageable areas to help understand and manage the whole, these are essentially derived from the outcome of the Toolkit assessment and city's Medieval borough boundaries.

One of the key features in understanding the character of Durham City is its existing subdivision into separate and distinctive parts which have developed alongside each other over time. In the late Medieval period the city centre was divided up into separate boroughs or baronies owned and administered by the Bishop of Durham. The city was at that time divided into 6 areas: The Peninsula, The Bishops Borough, The Old Borough, Elvet Borough Barony and St Giles Borough.



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map 3 Character Area Division

The historic borough divisions above were used to form the basis of the five character areas. The selected character areas form groups of a similar nature which broadly correlate with the land use and townscape character plans illustrated in the overview but there are inevitable compromises, but the divisions have proved of practical benefit for organising the study and analysis of the city. The five main character areas are described below:

### 1 The Peninsula (Durham Castle and fortifications)

Along with the castle fortifications, the whole of the peninsula was also protected by an enclosing wall. These walls followed the lines of the banks of the peninsula on all sides, except on the north where there was an outer moat within which was a great wall. It is to Bishop Ranulf Flambard (1099–1128) that the enclosure of the city is attributed.

The walls also feature three gates, the King's Gate at the bottom of Bow Lane, the Water Gate or Porte-du-Bayle, at the south end of the Bailey, and the North Gate, which stood at the top of Saddler Street.



*Image 20 Saddler Street, North Bailey, Market Place and Palace Green*

This area encompasses the fortifications of the city at their fullest extent and contained Durham Castle, cathedral and University Buildings around Palace Green, The College, North and South Bailey, Saddler Street, Silver Street, Market Place and the river crossing points of Framwellgate Bridge and Elvet Bridge and the peninsula riverbanks.

### 2 Framwelgate (Bishops Borough)

Early in the 12th century an area called the Bishops Borough was built to the north of the peninsula by Bishop Flambard. The Bishops Borough contained the suburb of Framwellgate across the River Wear at its junction with Milburngate and included part of St Nicholas Parish. The exact extent of the lands within the jurisdiction is uncertain, but it did include large pasture areas within Framwellgate.



Image 21 North Road, Tenter Terrace, Durham Viaduct and Diamond Terrace

### 3 Crossgate/Allergate (The Old Borough)

The Old Borough included the part of the city lying on the west bank of the River Wear to the south of Framwellgate. It was divided from the latter by Milburn, a small stream rising from Flass Bogg and now covered by the modern North Road. From Elvet it was divided by the small stream running parallel to Potters Bank. These physical features still exist today and the extent of the Old Borough can be accurately pinpointed by their survival.



Image 22 Crossgate, South Street, St Margaret's and The Avenue

The Old Borough comprised of South Street, Crossgate and Allergate, a considerable area of arable ground known as "Bellasys" whilst a large pasture area extended over Crossgate Moor and over the adjoining Elvet Moor.

#### 4 Elvet (Elvet Borough and the Barony of Elvet)

The former Borough and Barony of Elvet lies in the loop of the River Wear south-east of the Market Place. It comprised of Old Elvet and New Elvet and the two continuations of the latter, namely Church Street, leading to the south road to Darlington, and Hallgarth Street. In addition to the urban area, Elvet formerly included a considerable area of arable land and a small moor. Until 1835 Elvet was divided into the Borough and Barony (the southern part).



Image 23 Old Elvet, New Elvet, the Tithe Barn and Elvet Bridge

#### 5 Gilesgate (St Giles Borough)

St Giles borough to the northeast of the peninsula developed around St Giles hospital which was founded in 1112. Houses gradually appeared around this hamlet and connected to the city. The area extended south to Old Durham; anciently the area may have had strong links with Maiden Castle as evidence suggests that Old Durham was a Roman site. The western boundary of the area was marked by a leaden cross standing in the middle of the street until at least 1754; from this point the boundary followed Tinkler's Lane southward to the Wear.



Image 24 Gilesgate Village Green, Lower Gilesgate, Kepier and Old Durham Gardens

### 3.3 General Character Overview

The 5 main character areas have been divided into further sub-character areas, to assist in defining the detailed features that contribute to the wider character area's special interest and significance. These sub-areas share some common themes and consistent elements but the assessment process has identified them as having a degree of individual character in themselves.

There are some instances for example, where buildings of a similar style, scale and period are located in different sub-areas but the overriding character alters as a result of the streets and spaces they define. There are also sub areas where some overlapping occurs as some streets may contribute to the historical and physical context of more than one sub area.

For example within the Elvet Character Area further sub-divisions can be formed from a combination of Old Elvet, New Elvet, Hallgarth Street and Church Street. These are the streets that fan out from Elvet Bridge clearly discernible from Speeds map of Durham from 1610 and therefore form Elvet's historic core. The above mentioned area is distinctive from the residential areas such as Whinney Hill, Mavin Street and Elvet Crescent, which are 20th century infill developments.

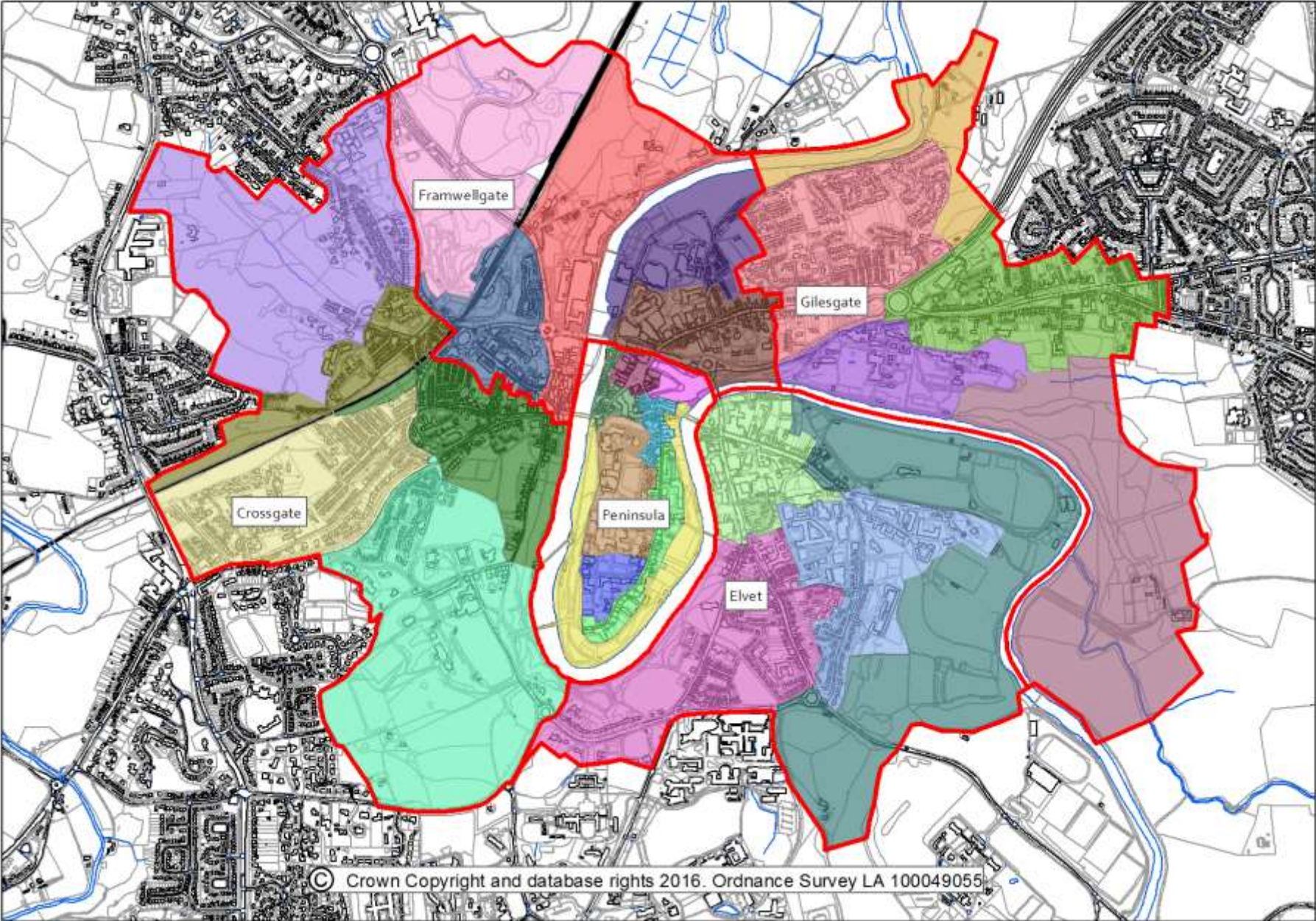
A further sub-character area is created within the eastern part of Elvet along the riverbanks; this area is more open and rural in nature with the racecourse sweeping round the bend in the river southwards to meet the playing fields and allotment gardens at the end of Green Lane and continuing to the densely wooded Maiden Castle Wood.

This process clearly identifies the two parts of the city, the older historic core lying inside and outside of the Peninsula, and the more recent or less historic development areas. They intertwine but essentially offer two strongly contrasting images of Durham. However, they relate intimately at their boundaries with each other.

These sub-areas have been identified either through historical and / or topographical analysis. Some divisions are more logical than others, often they are the result of weighing up different themes and identifying the stronger.

It should be noted that the division between old and new is not one of architectural quality but is based on age and scale of development.





map 4 Sub Character Area Division

The 5 main character areas and their break down into sub-areas are given below (the numbers in bracket relate to the Toolkit Character Assessments):

### Character Area 1 - Peninsula

- 1 **Palace Green Area**  
Palace Green (Area 4); Dunn Cow Lane (Area 5);  
Owengate (part of) (Area 2)
- 2 **The College**  
The College (Area 5)
- 3 **The Baileys**  
Bow Lane (part of) (Area 1)
- 4 **Saddler Street**  
Saddler Street / Owengate (Area 2)
- 5 **Market Place**  
Market Place (Area 9)
- 6 **High Street, Bishopgate**  
High Street, Bishopgate (Area 11)
- 7 **Silver Street / Fowlers**  
Silver Street / Fowlers Yard / Vennels (Area 10)

8. **Riverbanks**  
Riverbank Bridges (Area 7); South Bailey Riverbanks  
(part of) (Area 8); Bow Lane Riverbanks (part of) (Area  
1)

### Character Area 2 - Framwellgate

- 1 **Aykley Heads Wharton Park/Green Spaces**  
Aykley Heads (Area 1)  
*Wharton Park*  
Wharton Park / St Cuthbert's (Area 2)
- 2 **Station Area/North Road**  
Aykley Heads (part of) (Area 1); Highgate (part of) (Area  
3)  
*Highgate*  
Highgate (part of) (Area 3)  
*North Road Area*  
North Road (Area 7); St Godrics North Road (Area 6)
- 3 **Milburngate Area**  
*Sidegate / Crook Hall*  
Sidegate / Crook Hall River (Area 5)  
*Milburngate House / Radisson*  
Milburngate House / Radisson / River (Area 4)

*Milburngate Shopping Centre*

The Gates / Milburngate Shopping Entrance (Area 8)

4 *The Sands*

*The Sands / Ice Rink Area*

The Sands / Ice Rink (Area 10); The Sands / Cemetery (Area 12)

*Providence Row / Sports Centre / Sixth Form Area*

Sports Centre (Area 11); Wanless Terrace (part of) (Area 13)

5 *Claypath Area*

*Millennium Square*

Millennium Square & buildings (Area 9)

*Claypath*

Millennium Place (part of) (Area 9); Claypath Wanless Terrace (part of) (Area 13); Claypath Leazes Place (Area 14)

*Hillcrest*

Hillcrest / Bakehouse Lane (Area 15)

**Character Area 3 - Crossgate**

1 *Western Hill/Flass Vale*

*Western Hill*

Western Hill, Obelisk Lane (Area 1); Back of Western Hill (part of) (Area 2)

*Flass Vale*

Back Western Hill, Flass Vale (Area 2); Fred Henderson Site (part of) (Area 3)

2 *Viaduct Area*

*Mowbray Street Area*

Ainsley Street, Fred Henderson Site (part of) (Area 3); Mowbray Street, Waddington (Area 4)

*Redhills / Miners Hall*

Redhills Miners Hall (part of) (Area 5)

*Viaduct Area*

Viaduct, Sutton Street (part of) (Area 5); Atherton Street, Sutton Street (part of) (Area 6)

3 *Crossgate Area*

*Crossgate Area*

Atherton Street, Sutton Street (part of) (Area 6); Crossgate St Antioch (Area 7); Crossgate, Grape Lane St Margaret's (Area 8)

*South Street Riverbanks*

St Margaret Allotment (part of) (Area 14); South Street / Riverbanks (Area 16)

4 Hawthorn Terrace Area

*Hawthorn Terrace*

Hawthorn Terrace / John Street (Area 9); Byland Lodge, May Street (Area 10)

*Percy Street Area*

Percy Street (Area 12); St. Johns Road (Area 12a)

*The Avenue Area*

The Avenue (Area 11); Crossgate Peth (part of) (Area 13)

5 Pimlico/St Margaret Allotment/green spaces

*Briar Dene Area*

Crossgate Peth / Briar Dene (Area 13); Blind Lane / Clay Lane (part of) (Area 7a)

*St Margaret's Allotments*

St Margaret's Allotment (Area 14)

*Pimlico Area*

Pimlico (Area 16); Durham School (Area 7b); Blind / Clay Lane (part of) (Area 7c)

*Riverbanks*

Riverbanks (Area 14); South Street (part of) (Area 16)

*Observatory Hill*

Observatory Hill (Area 7c)

**Character Area 4 - Elvet**

1 New Elvet/Old Elvet

*New Elvet*

New Elvet/Kingsgate Bridge/Dunelm House (Area 1); Old Elvet (Area 4); Old Elvet Waterside (Area 2); Crown Court (Part of) (Area 7)

2 River/Racecourse /Rowing Club

*Racecourse Area*

Racecourse Area Area/Play Area (Area 3); Old Elvet Waterside (part of) (Area 2)

*Rowing Club Area*

Rowing Club, Cricket Club (Area 8); Allotments/River (Area 8A)

*Maiden Castle /Mount Joy Area*

Maiden Castle (Area 6); Mount Joy Farm Area (Area 5)

3 Prison/Green Lane/Whinney Hill

Crown Court/ Prison (part of) (Area 7 and 11); Green Lane Area (Area 12)

*Whinney Hill*

Whinney Hill/East (Area 13); Whinney Hill /West (Area 14)

- 4 Hallgarth Street/Church St  
*Hallgarth St*  
Hallgarth St East (Area 10b); Hallgarth St West (area 10 a); Palmers Green/Quarryheads Lane (Area 15)
- Church Street*  
Church Street (Area 9); Stockton Road (Area 17)

### Character Area 5 - Gilesgate

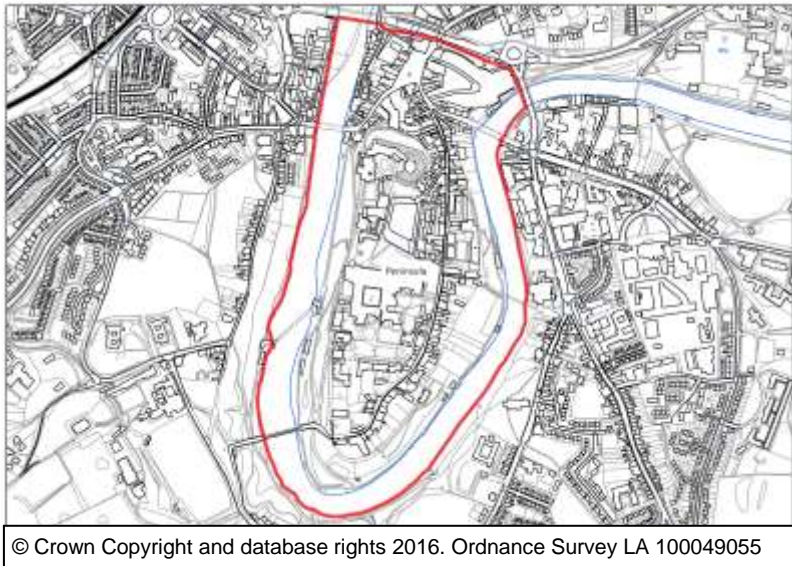
- 1 Old Durham Gardens/Riverbanks/Pelaw Woods  
*Old Durham Gardens*  
Old Durham Gardens/Old Gardens (Area 1); Riverbanks, Meadows (Area 2); Pelaw Woods (Area 3)
- 2 Gilesgate  
*Vane Tempest/Wynyard Grove*  
Vane Tempest (Area 4); Wynyard Grove (Area 5/7)
- Gilesgate Green*  
Vane Tempest, Gilesgate Green (part of) (Area 4); Wynyard Grove, Gilesgate Green (part of) (Area 5/7); Gilesgate Green, South (Area 6); Gilesgate Green, North (Area 8)
- Station Area/Hotel, Station Lane*  
Gilesgate Green (Area 8)

- 3 Hild and Bede Colleges/River  
*Hild and Bede*  
Hilde and Bede (Area 11); South St. Hild's Lanes and Leazes (Area 12)
- 4 Claypath Area  
*North of Leazes, Claypath and Gilesgate*  
North of Leazes Road, Gilesgate (Area 14)
- Orchard Drive/Wearside Drive*  
Orchard Drive (Area 13); Wearside Drive (Area 16); Douglas Villas (part of) (Area 15)
- Leazes Lane/Douglas View*  
Leazes Lane/Douglas View (Area 15)
- 5 KEPHIR Hospital/River/Green Spaces  
KEPHIR Hospital (Area 9); Orchard Drive (part of) (Area 13); Wearside Drive (part of) Area 16); Mary Magdalene (Area 10)

### 3.4 Summary of significance

The sum of the 5 individual character areas defines the special interest and significance of the Conservation Area as a whole (as identified in Section 1 of this document). The key elements of the special interest and significance of the individual character areas identified by the appraisal are given below.

#### Character Area 1 – The Peninsula Key Elements



map 5 Character Area 1 boundary

- The topography and geological formation of the River Wear gorge is a distinctive natural feature of regional importance and forms the dramatic setting of Durham

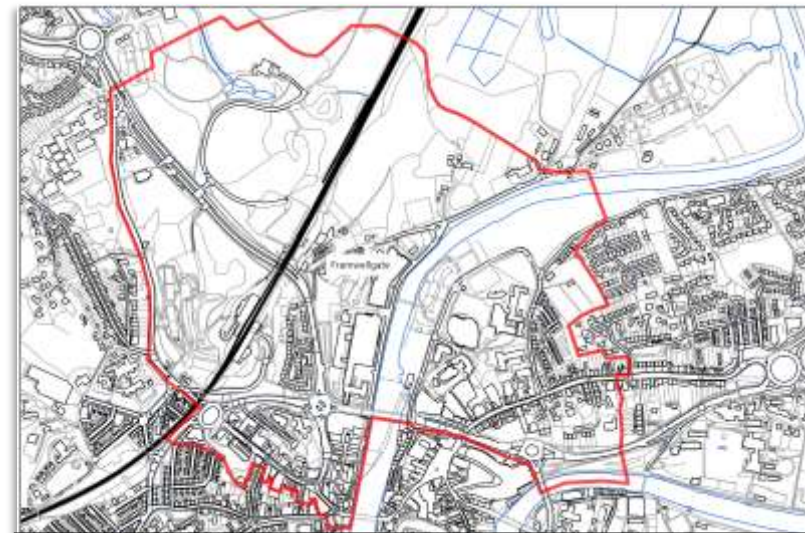
Cathedral and castle World Heritage Site and the wider townscape of the city;

- The inner peninsula riverbanks and their evolution through time from being an integral part of the Medieval defensive complex to the 'romantic' landscape of the 18th century which is still evident today;
- The historical development of the peninsula as a defensive location, place of worship, Bishops Palace, centre of education and the continued religious and educational function which remains today;
- The cultural, religious and historic significance of Durham Cathedral that transcends its architectural value as a resting place for relics of St Cuthbert, the Venerable Bede and St Oswald;
- The surviving Medieval town plan which has remained largely unaltered;
- A rich archaeological resource containing important information relating to human occupation of the peninsula over a period of at least one thousand years.
- The experience of physical and visual enclosure within the Medieval streets;
- The scale and form of the buildings and other structures pressed tightly together directly onto the public footways;

- Durham World Heritage Site's exceptional architecture demonstrating innovation, a high point in the history of Medieval architecture in England;
- The great variety in scale, character and age of the historic buildings providing rich architectural diversity and changing historic streetscapes;
- The surviving Castle Walls and the associated terraced promenades which have high evidential, historic and aesthetic value and are of national significance;
- The high percentage of Grade I, II and II\* Listed Buildings, a number of Scheduled Monuments and other non-designated heritage assets;
- The prevailing use of traditional building materials creating a uniformity of patina, and the extensive survival of original architectural detailing and decorative features;
- The high quality of the public realm including surviving historic floorscapes which enhance the setting of the historic buildings and add value to the overall high quality of the townscape;
- The varied use of boundary treatments ranging from sandstone walls, brick garden walls and wrought-iron railings, interlinking historic buildings and informing historic spaces;

- The visual drama and far-reaching impact of Durham Cathedral and castle dominating the skyline of the city and the varied views from the inner and outer Durham Bowls;
- The high number of significant open and framed views of historic streetscapes, roofscapes, landmark buildings and structures and the interplay with the landscape; a number of the views being world renowned.

### Character Area 2 – Framwellgate Key Elements



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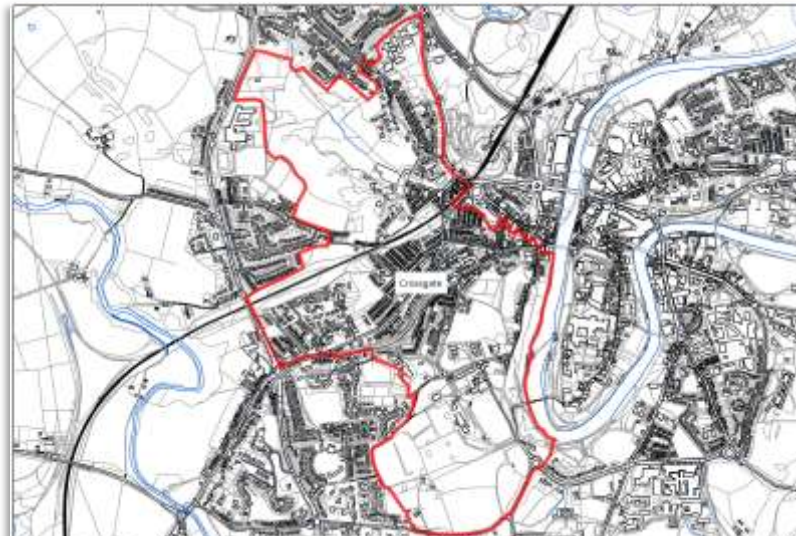
map 6 Character Area 2 boundary

- The architectural diversity of the historic building stock from Medieval Halls and barns to modest Victorian terraced houses;
- The juxtaposition of traditional buildings with contemporary developments emphasises the development of the modern city;
- Variation in scale and the strong visual contrasts between large keynote buildings and humble properties;
- A number of Grade I, II and Grade II\* Listed Buildings in the Crook Hall, Claypath and North Road areas ranging from the Medieval, Georgian and Victorian periods;
- Important clusters of non-designated heritage assets throughout the area that add character to the townscape;
- The surviving architectural features and details and the consistent use of the traditional materials within the historic buildings;
- The surviving Medieval streets that add to the existing built form and character of the city in Sidegate and Claypath;
- Archaeological deposits associated with Medieval and Post-Medieval occupation along North Street and Claypath.
- The development of the main station at Windy Hill and the impact that the railway has had on this part of the city;
- The still predominantly non-residential character of the area, with a close grouping of commercial, leisure, cultural and recreations uses at its centre, which originated from the medieval land uses of the Bishop's Borough;
- The topography of the area from the low lying flood plain of the River Wear to the sloping woodland and fields rising to Aykley Heads to the drama of the steep slopes at Wharton Park, part of the lower reaches of Durham Bowl and its visual relationship to setting of the Medieval city;
- The importance of the River Wear in terms of its visual and recreational value, but also the previous industrial developments on the riverbanks at Walkergate and Framwellgate;
- The varied use of boundary treatments in the semi-rural/less developed areas, mature trees, hedgerows and stone walls that provide sylvan entrances to the city centre and a scenic backdrop to the buildings;
- The importance of recreational space; the more formal leisure provision at Wharton Park to the more informal large elevated open spaces at Aykley Heads and the expanse of the floodplain at The Sands riverbanks;



- The dramatic and wide variety of views across the city and towards the Durham Cathedral and Castle World Heritage Site;
- The tangible links between development here, the river, major road connections and the rest of the city in particular the Market Place and peninsula.

### Character Area 3 – Crossgate Key Elements



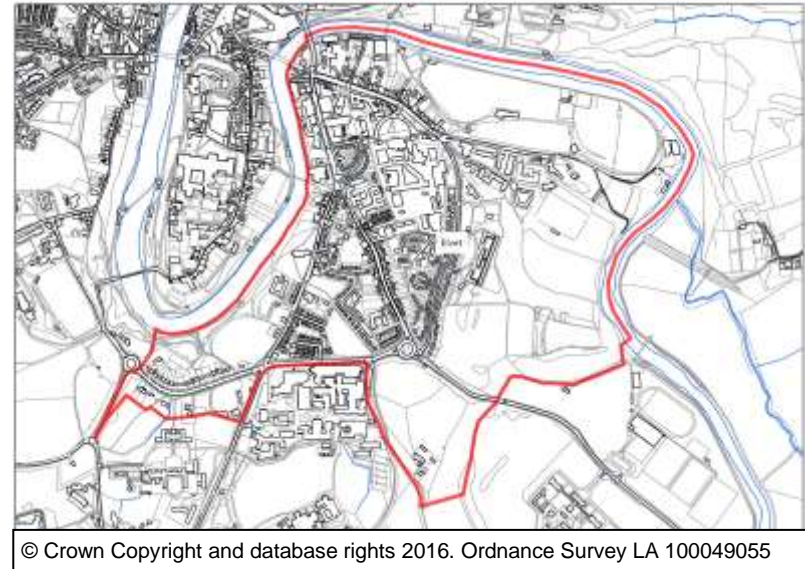
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map 7 Character Area 3 boundary

- South Street and Crossgate representing the original Medieval road plan of the area;
- The great variety in the scale, character and age of the historic properties, their architectural character, with surviving architectural details, traditional/vernacular materials;
- The simple, uniformed Victorian terraces and the intimate grid street patterns along with their distinctive enclosed back lane environments which are significant in the wider townscape;
- The Grade II \* Listed Viaduct spanning across this part of the city and the associated Victorian development below;
- The Grade I, II\* and II Listed Buildings in Crossgate, South Street and Pimlico area, from the Medieval and Georgian periods;
- The sense of grandeur created by the collection of listed and non-listed academic buildings at Durham School set in fine expansive grounds;
- The social history and historic development of the area;
- Archaeological deposits associated with Medieval and Post-Medieval occupation along Crossgate and South Street areas.
- The varied use of boundary treatments ranging from historic stone walls, cast iron railings, hedges, to tight brick rear boundary walls in the Victorian streets;
- The surviving remnants of historic floorscapes;

- The river gorge providing a natural boundary to the Crossgate area and superb setting for the elevated terrace townhouses in South Street;
- The topography of the area climbing steeply away from the river gorge and Flass Burn, yet sloping more gently in other areas providing a very interesting and varied townscape;
- The long linear finger of open space extending out from the riverbanks to St Margaret allotments and the churchyard into the wooded slopes of Durham School and Flass Vale;
- The open elevated areas such as Flass Vale and Observatory Hill which are part of the Durham Bowl and contribute significantly to the area and the wider city;
- Views and vistas with much of the area looking back towards the peninsula and Durham World Heritage Site, with stunning panoramic views and also glimpse views of the city and vice versa.

### Character Area 4 – Elvet Key Elements

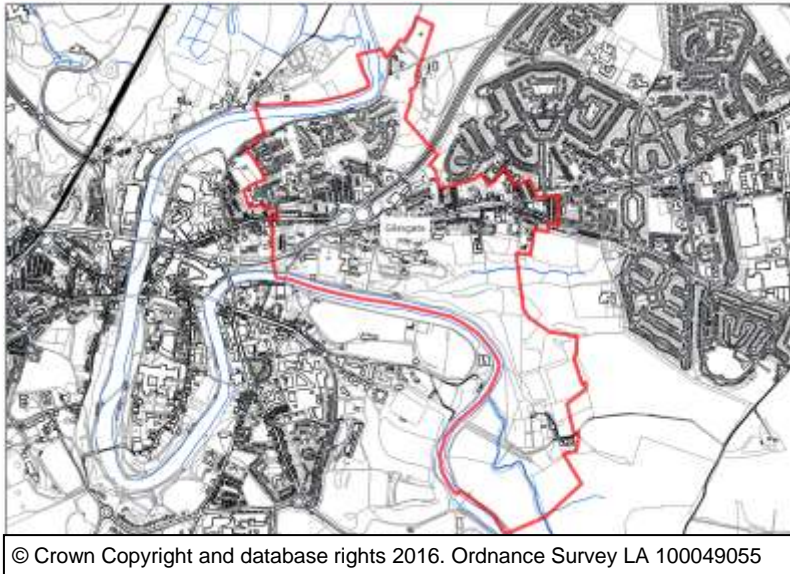


map 8 Character Area 4 boundary

- The local topography with the River Wear and its steep gorge forming a natural boundary of high landscape and its physical and visual relationship with the urban form creating changing views;
- The historic significance of Elvet as a result of the written and physical evidence that the area was occupied and settled on prior to the arrival of the community of St Cuthbert on the peninsula in 995AD;
- The surviving Medieval street pattern which has remained largely unaltered and which is clearly distinguishable against the modern day town plan;

- Archaeological deposits associated with Medieval (potentially early Medieval) and post-Medieval occupation in this area especially though not exclusively in plots behind properties along frontages of principally streets.
- The physical and visual enclosure experienced within the Medieval streets and the intimate atmosphere that this creates;
- The form of the historic buildings pressed tightly together directly onto the back of the pavements with surviving evidence of Medieval tenement plots;
- The great variety in age, form, function, scale and character of the historic buildings which creates varied and rich historic street scenes and changing roofscapes;
- The exceptional value of the Medieval Priory farm group which is a rare survival in the centre of the city of great historical significance;
- The high number of Grade I, II and Grade II\* Listed Buildings and other buildings considered to be non-designated heritage assets;
- The prevailing use of traditional building materials and the extensive survival of original architectural detailing and decorative features;
- The high visual and recreational value of the green open space of the racecourse area and the more incidental green spaces along Green Lane;
- The abundance of street greenery including grassed verges, embankments, corner plots, trees and hedgerows, and private frontage gardens etc. creating a semi-rural character and green corridors along the principle approaches;
- The landscape and wildlife value of the larger public open spaces;
- The high number of significant local and channelled views of historic streetscapes, roofscapes, landmark buildings and wider panoramic views which can be experienced towards Durham Cathedral and Durham Castle.

### Character Area 5 – Gilesgate Key Elements



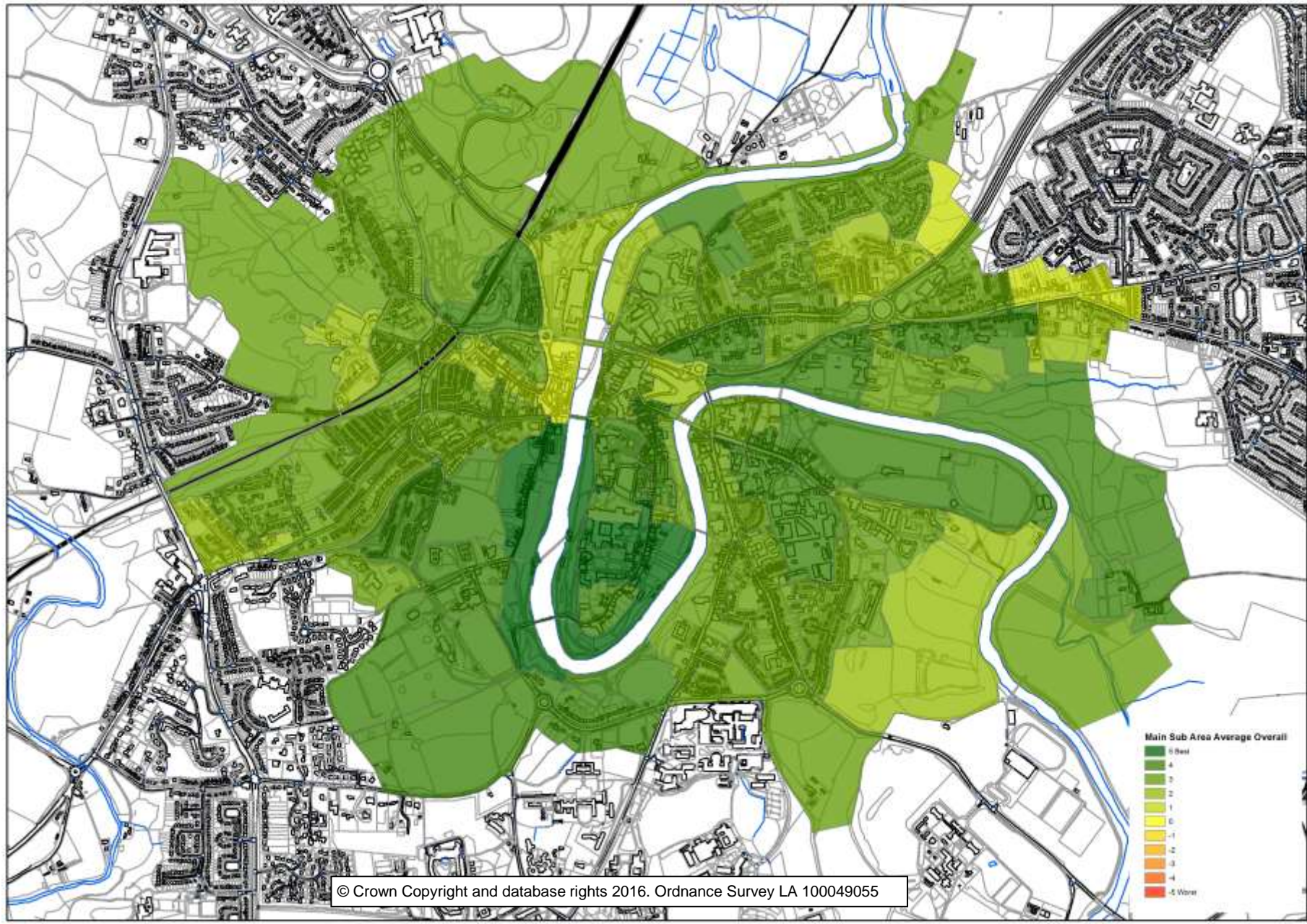
map 9 Character Area 5 boundary

- The area's historical origins as a small linear settlement which grew up along the route from the northeast to the city centre and around the hospital of St Giles and St Giles Church;
- Its historic links with the city centre, forming part of an important ancient route connecting Durham Priory on the peninsula with its estates at Sherburn and Pitlington;
- The designated village green forms a scenic landscaped setting to the built development of the area and provides a vital green space in this part of the city;

- The surviving historic street pattern, with buildings on either side of the main road and stepping down the bank towards the city;
- Archaeological deposits associated with Medieval and Post-Medieval occupation along principal streets, St Giles Church and Hospital, the Chapel of St Mary Magdalen and the Kepier hospital site. Also possibility of archaeological deposits associated with Old Durham and perhaps fragments of the nearby Roman villa that may have survived gravel extraction in the 1940s/50s.
- The historic buildings surrounding the village green, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, collectively forming an important and notable historic group;
- The sense of visual enclosure formed by the continuous street form, with buildings set directly onto public space at back of pavement;
- The narrow but deep rectilinear form of the building plots reflecting the historic burgage plots, many of which still survive;
- The relationship between buildings of various styles and periods, unified by fine prominent green spaces and public footways;
- The topography, with the streets rising steeply out of the city;

- The variation in views towards Durham World Heritage Site;
- The open spaces which vary in type and extent and together with important green roadside and footway verges enhanced by trees and planting;
- The ancient woodland of Pelaw Woods which is a designated nature reserve.
- Old Durham, which is thought to date from Roman Times and Old Durham Gardens, which were principally developed from the 17th and 18th centuries.
- The historic Kepier hospital site, which includes the Grade I Gatehouse and Loggia and the grade II\* farmhouse and former hospital buildings (now farm buildings)
- The historic remains of the Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene
- The important college buildings and parkland setting of St. Hild & Bede.

The map on the following page illustrates the overall final Toolkit scoring based upon the value of the landscape, spaces, buildings, views, townscape and ambience. This demonstrates that Durham (City Centre) Conservation Area scores highly generally and remains worthy of its designated status.



### 3.5 Summary of Future Challenges

The individual character area assessments have identified a number of recurring themes across the whole conservation area which are considered as being harmful or a threat to the special qualities and character and potentially damaging to the conservation area's significance as a designated heritage asset in the long-term, these are summarized below.

#### *Loss of historic fabric and architectural features*

Overall, the conservation area retains a high proportion of originality in terms of fenestration patterns, original windows, doors, rainwater goods and other architectural features and there is evidence that some buildings have been restored. However, many unlisted buildings of interest have been adversely affected by the loss of original features and insensitive replacements such as modern uPVC doors and windows, loss of cast iron rain water goods, and other notable harmful alterations such as the loss of original shop fronts infilled with an insensitive choice of brickwork. This has not only degraded the historic building fabric, but has diminished the overall quality and appearance of the individual properties and in some cases the visual cohesion and overall quality of whole streets.

#### *Condition/upkeep of historic building fabric*

There is visible evidence of neglect, or a lack of routine maintenance and repair of a number of the historic buildings within the conservation area.

These generally relate to basic maintenance issues such as areas of missing render and flaking paintwork to walls and dressings, rotten joinery, displaced roof slates and failing rain water goods resulting in water staining. These issues detrimentally affect the building aesthetic qualities and where more significant harm the street scene.



*Image 25 Example of a lack of building maintenance*

#### *Inappropriate repairs/materials*

The use of inappropriate materials or repair methods can be harmful to buildings, both to their appearance and their structure, e.g. the use of cement pointing can be particularly damaging trapping water within the stone and speeding up the rate of decay. Equally, incorrect pointing, such as smear or

ribbon pointing has both a negative visual and structural impact.

### *Insensitive roof alterations*

The conservation area has a rich and varied roofscape which is visible from many public vantage points and contributes significantly to its character.

Although, generally the historic roofs on view remain predominantly unaltered, in some areas modern interventions are slowly emerging for instance large 'box' style and flat-roofed dormer windows and obtrusive roof-lights.



Image 26 Example of insensitive and overbearing roof extension

There are also instances of chimney stack being truncated and where pots have been lost. These changes break up the uniformity of the roof design and harm the individual aesthetic qualities of the buildings and are detrimental to the wider historic roofscape.

Although there is likely to be continued pressure to create accommodation in the roof-spaces should unsympathetic alterations continue then the quality of the historic roofscapes will diminish further.

### *Building clutter*

Many of the principle elevations of the historic buildings within the conservation area have become cluttered by various modern additions and insertions such as prominent alarm boxes, extraction units/vents, light units, cables and wiring snaking across prominent elevations, roofs and decorative features, and redundant wall fixings. These occurrences are more commonly found in the properties in use as accommodation to let.





*Image 27 A cluttered elevation with prominent alarm box, service box and wiring*

There are also examples of a large number of aerials and satellite dishes prominent on chimneys or projecting above ridge lines, and some on building facades which are harmful to the historic roofscapes and the buildings appearance respectively. All such minor alterations/interventions have a collective and detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the individual property and the overall appearance of the streetscene.

### *Archaeology*

The peninsula contains a rich archaeological resource as do extensive portions of the neighbouring character areas. Even minor ground disturbance can have a significant impact on archaeology. Leaving archaeological deposits in situ is

generally the preferred option but where this is deemed not to be possible then a programme of excavation, recording, analysis and reporting must be undertaken. A similar process of investigation and analytical recording should be undertaken both before and during alterations to the fabric of historic buildings and structures. The archaeology of the city has been little explored in comparison with that of other urban centres. It is essential that any archaeological investigations take full account of and as far as possible address the research priorities set out in the North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment (Petts & Gerrard 2006 and updates).

### *Shop fronts, advertisements and illumination*

The conservation area has a vibrant commercial core around the Market Place, Lower Claypath, Saddler Street, Old Elvet, Silver Street and North Road. These areas feature a number of surviving historic shop frontages, public house frontages, and former dwellings which have been sensitively adapted to a commercial/retail use. Over time some of the historic shop fronts have been insensitively altered mainly due to modern and unsympathetic advertisements (fascia and projecting/hanging signs), harsh corporate colour schemes and too many signs. In other instances modern signs obscure the shop front detailing and regrettably some historic shops have been completely removed.

In places illuminated signs have an adverse impact on visual amenity while signs are often illuminated by insensitive measures or lit internally creating heavy obtrusive advertisements, furthermore paving signs add to the overly cluttered overall appearance many commercial properties having more than one pavement sign; all of which can harm the aesthetic qualities of the individual buildings as well as the historic character and visual amenity of the locality.

The city has a unique night-time character with dark areas of natural landscape in close proximity to an illuminated core of activity which needs to be carefully managed; inappropriate lighting can have a negative impact on these qualities.



*Image 28 Modern shop frontages and unsympathetic corporate signage*

### *Redundancy*

Within the conservation area there are a number of vacant historic buildings, these include full levels of vacancy, or in part, empty ground floor retail units or the upper floors. Some of these neglected properties are beginning to deteriorate to varying degrees as a result of their medium/long term vacant status. As some of these buildings can be adapted and are capable of beneficial use, but are long-term vacant and in a deteriorating physical condition, they are deemed to be 'at risk'. These include for example Nos. 30 to 33 Church Street and Nos. 35 to 35a Saddler Street.

There are other significant buildings, such as The County Hospital and the former Durham Johnson School Whinney Hill, which although not presently considered to be at risk require continued monitoring until a suitable new-use materialises with the possibility of remediation works to preserve their character and special interest.

### *Condition of boundary treatments*

There are many traditional forms of boundary treatments to properties within the conservation area which are important components of the townscape. But, there are sections of walling which are in a deteriorating physical condition such as the stone walls along the roadside in Church Street, those around the Prison Officers Club (Elvethall Manor) which are severely weathered in parts, missing stones and suffering from failure of the mortar joints as well as inappropriate past repairs.



*Image 29 Example of erosion to historic stone wall and loss of part of brick boundary wall*

In High Wood Terrace and High Wood View, Boyd Street, Hawthorn Terrace etc. there are many instances where brick walls have been completely lost which has opened up the rear of the street compromising the enclosed nature and distinctive back land character, and where notable sections of decorative wrought-iron railings and hedgerows have been removed harming the appearance of the street. Pressure for off-street parking as seen at The Avenue and in Gilesgate, large rear extensions, along with a lack of maintenance and general care continue to threaten the walls, fences and hedges to the detriment of the character and streetscene.

### *Street clutter*

In general terms across the conservation area street furniture including seating, refuse bins, cycle racks, bollards, road side railings, street lighting etc. is relatively un-coordinated, some items are out-dated, and others inappropriately positioned,

which gives a negative first impression of some areas. Examples of this can be seen in the lower part of Claypath, Saddler Street and in North Road. Additionally, approaching and around the main road junctions and busy crossing points there is an abundance of standardised traffic, warning and parking signs, utility boxes and other supplementary items creating additional street clutter.



*Image 30 Street clutter in the lower part of North Road*

The collective extent of visual clutter causes significant visual intrusion in some historic part of the city, is harmful to important views, and can also be obstructive to pedestrians.

### *Floorscape and surface treatments*

In the conservation area sections of historic floorscape survive which enhance the setting of the surrounding buildings and the

overall quality of the public realm, but in places they are in a degrading condition as a result of age, general wear and tear and a lack of regular maintenance and insensitive repairs. The majority of the surfacing is standardised i.e. concrete pavements and tarmac roads and hard standing parking areas.

In places these are severely degrading with failing materials, cracking and unevenness and inappropriate repairs creating a patchwork appearance etc.



*Image 31 Insensitive patch repairs to historic floorscape*

Such issues can be seen around the Crown Courts, which affect the setting of the group of listed buildings; at Old Elvet Bridge and in Mavin Street, where the surviving cobbled surfacing and

stone sets are missing and displaced. These problems, taken together, harm the aesthetic quality of the area and the continued decline would cause significant further harm in the future.

### *Vennels and informal lanes*

Some of the historic vennels, informal lanes and courtyards within the conservation area are uninviting environments for pedestrians. Traditional surfaces have sometimes been replaced by insensitive tarmac or concrete setts, or historic surfacing can sometimes be loose or uneven. The enclosing walls to the vennels are sometimes heavily graffitied and in some instances heavily overgrown which erodes their townscape value further. This occurs in places such as Drury Lane, Moatside Lane and in the vennels on the north side of Old Elvet.



*Image 32 Graffiti within a historic vennel*

### Green spaces

The conservation area incorporates an abundance and wide variety of green spaces which enhances its character and appearance and many of the larger areas such as The Sands, The Racecourse, the DLI grounds and Wharton Park are regularly maintained.

Other significant area such as the Gilesgate Village Green, an instantly recognisable and long standing feature which defines the character of the local historic environment, has been eroded by informal parking areas and other parts have been damaged by parked vehicles.



Image 33 Vehicle damage to Gilesgate Village Green

Some of the smaller yet important incidental spaces such as the grassed verge and corner green open spaces have also

been neglected over time; areas have been damaged by vehicles and or by works carried out by service providers.

This lack of active or management devalues the visual amenity worth of these spaces and this continues to be a threat.

### Trees

Trees within the conservation area have significant visual amenity value enhancing the setting of the buildings and the townscape in general and in help create the city's distinctive semi-rural character in places. Some trees are more at risk than others; they are largely self-seeded so are often unmaintained and in a deteriorating condition and frequently under pressure from new development with little or no reassurances over further maintenance when retained. It is therefore important that these issues are controlled through the Development Management process. Rampant tree growth on the peninsula has obliterated key designated views into and out of the area this losing the connection with the wider setting, in particular the WHS and opposite banks, with views from Prebends Bridge and the opposite bank now almost entirely lost due to heavy tree cover. Historic maps show the riverside path with an open aspect allowing views to the Castle Walls, Prebends' Bridge and Elvet Banks on the opposite riverbank. Such views have now been largely lost. Tracts of uncontrolled tree growth have thus compromised the picturesque landscape.

### *Parking and Traffic Management*

The conservation area is a busy environment that experiences very high volumes of traffic, certain roads are also used as 'rat runs' to shorten journey times, and certain parts can become very congested at rush hour and school run times etc. This has a crucial influence on the physical environment and the area's character and appearance.



*Image 34 Visual clutter generated by traffic management at a key junction of medieval streets*

The proliferation of standard traffic signs, posts, road markings, parking pay-points, and safety rails etc. in parts of the city inevitably introduces alien features and visual clutter, which detracts from the character or appearance of the designated area.

Traffic calming measures have gone some way to reducing traffic speed and controlling traffic but the accompanying items do not always sit well with the strong historic character and appearance of the area because of their locations, uncompromisingly modern materials, colour and design.

### *Changes in use and sub-division*

There is an ever increasing demand for rented accommodation within the city centre. This has resulted in many single-occupancy dwellings being converted into houses of multiple occupation (HMO's). There will be continued pressure for the change of use of buildings within the conservation area some of the buildings may be suitable for conversion, others less so, and it is imperative that the growth and distribution of HMO's is carefully considered.

Future conversions should seek to retain and emphasise features relating to the original function of the building and its special character, and external appearance and interest, otherwise the building loses its identity.

Conversions can also lead to proposals to extend properties, to allow a higher number of residents, which can have a detrimental impact on the character of the individual properties and collectively the spaces. Increased pressure for the residential use of underused or redundant upper floor space is an issue as proposals may require alterations to external elevations.



*Image 35 Examples of issues surrounding the sub-division of properties in historic streets*

Changes of use can also negatively impact upon the surrounding physical environment and some harm has already occurred with long term to-let signs, refuse and recycling bins left out in the public realm and windows divided by internal partitions etc. which has a negative impact on the appearance and character of the street scene.



*Image 36 Examples of low quality modern developments visually prominent in North Road and Hallgarth Street*

### *Extensions*

Over time a number of rear extensions have been constructed which overwhelm the original identity and uniformed character of the rear street scenes with no counterbalance in quality, and it is imperative that this does not continue into the future. Low quality existing extensions should not inform the design or justify the construction of others. Development needs to be closely controlled and where there is a potential for a negative visual impact this should be resisted or appropriate mitigation implemented to preserve the character, appearance and special significance of the area.

### *Modern/New developments*

Within the conservation area a number of infill developments have occurred over time, some of which contrast negatively with the historic grain and do not blend in with the local vernacular. In considering proposals for redevelopment of such sites, amongst the primary concerns should be the principle of

development or use in the first instance, the overall scale and of any new building, the architectural concept and detailing and its relationship with its context. A good new building should be in positive contrast with, or complementary to, its neighbours having regard to the pattern, rhythm, details and materials of the surrounding built form. Major developments can impact upon significant views of Durham World Heritage Site, and other heritage assets, and so need to be considered in the short, medium, and long distance context, and with regards to the cumulative impact.

### *Management Proposals*

Following on from the above the challenge is to manage the conservation area in ways that maintain and reinforce the special character, appearance and significance of the place. As such management proposals have been drawn to help address the various issues identified in the previous section and to set out a framework for the future preservation and enhancement of the conservation area; full details can be found in the management proposal section of the relevant individual Character Area Assessments.

### **3.6 Boundary Changes**

As part of the appraisal process consideration was given to the appropriateness of the existing conservation area boundary identifying and assessing areas for both inclusion and exclusion based upon their contribution and significance. This assessment included both the built form and landscape features, and is part of the proactive management of the historic environment. The assessment of the conservation area identified a potential extension to the designated boundary to further strengthen the special interest of the area, which was formally approved on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016 along with minor changes to reflect current property boundaries. No deletions are proposed at this time.

#### **St Aidan's College**

This is a southern extension within the Elvet Character Area. This area has historic interest, originally forming part of the Elvet Hall Estate in the Victorian era. The built form includes a former hall, and a mixture of characterful cottages, cemetery buildings and farm buildings etc. of historic, architectural and aesthetic value, which are in good physical condition with surviving historic features.





*Image 37 Examples of street trees and greenery, a characterful historic building and important surviving stone walls within the St Aiden's area*

The landscape is of particularly high scenic value comprising of the former estate grounds, open and steep sloping grazing lands, tree belts, groups of trees and including important stone walls and hedgerows forming historic boundaries. This area has particular significance in forming part of the setting and backdrop to the Durham World Heritage Site, from which there are a number of outstanding public views towards Durham Cathedral.

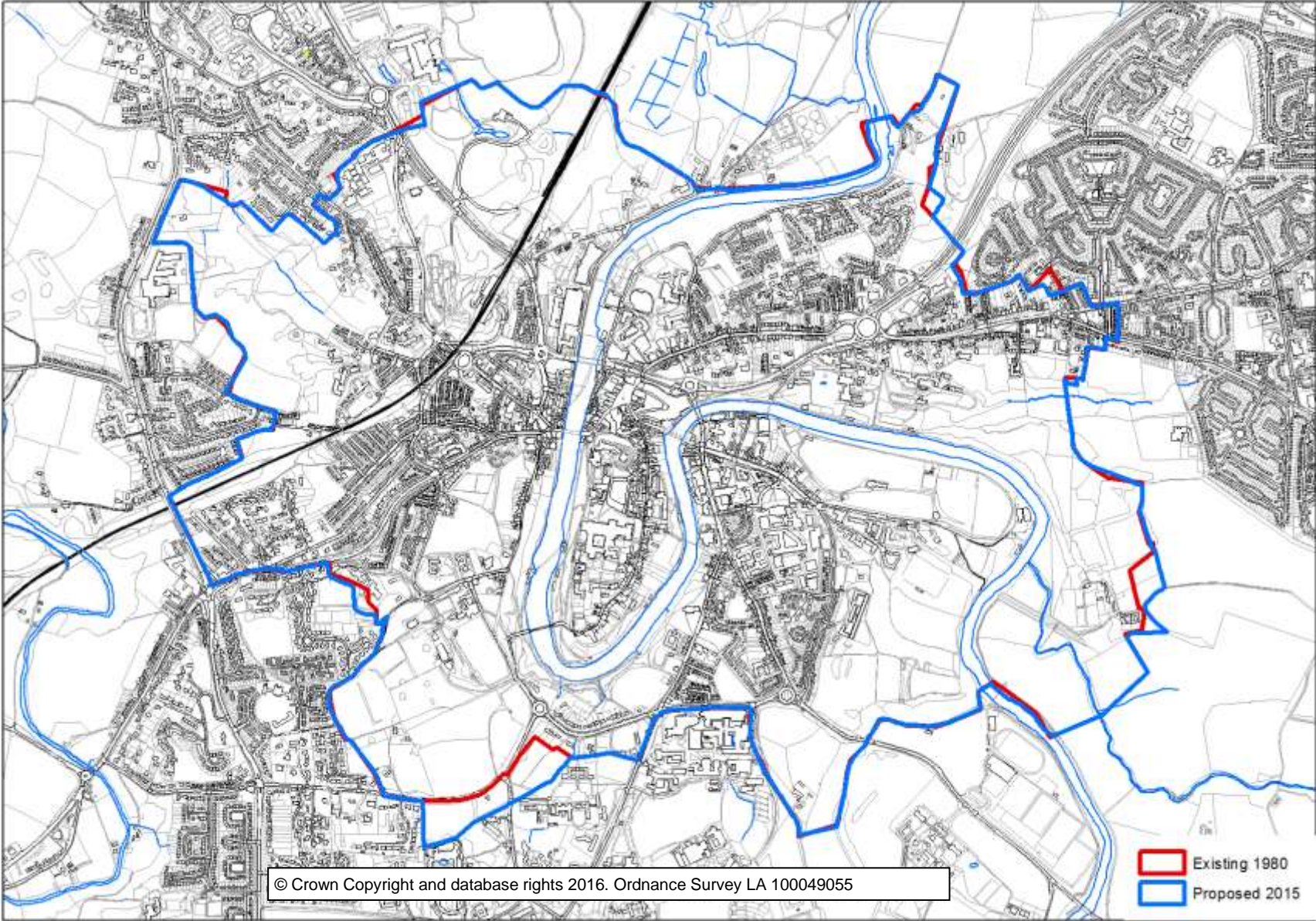
This area was considered to meet the statutory test for the designation of a Conservation Area in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

Other approved changes were of a minor nature to accurately follow more natural boundary lines; these are shown on the map below.



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Map 11 Conservation Area Boundary Extension - Potters Bank/St Aidan's College



Map 12 Boundary amendments

### 3.7 Article 4 Directions

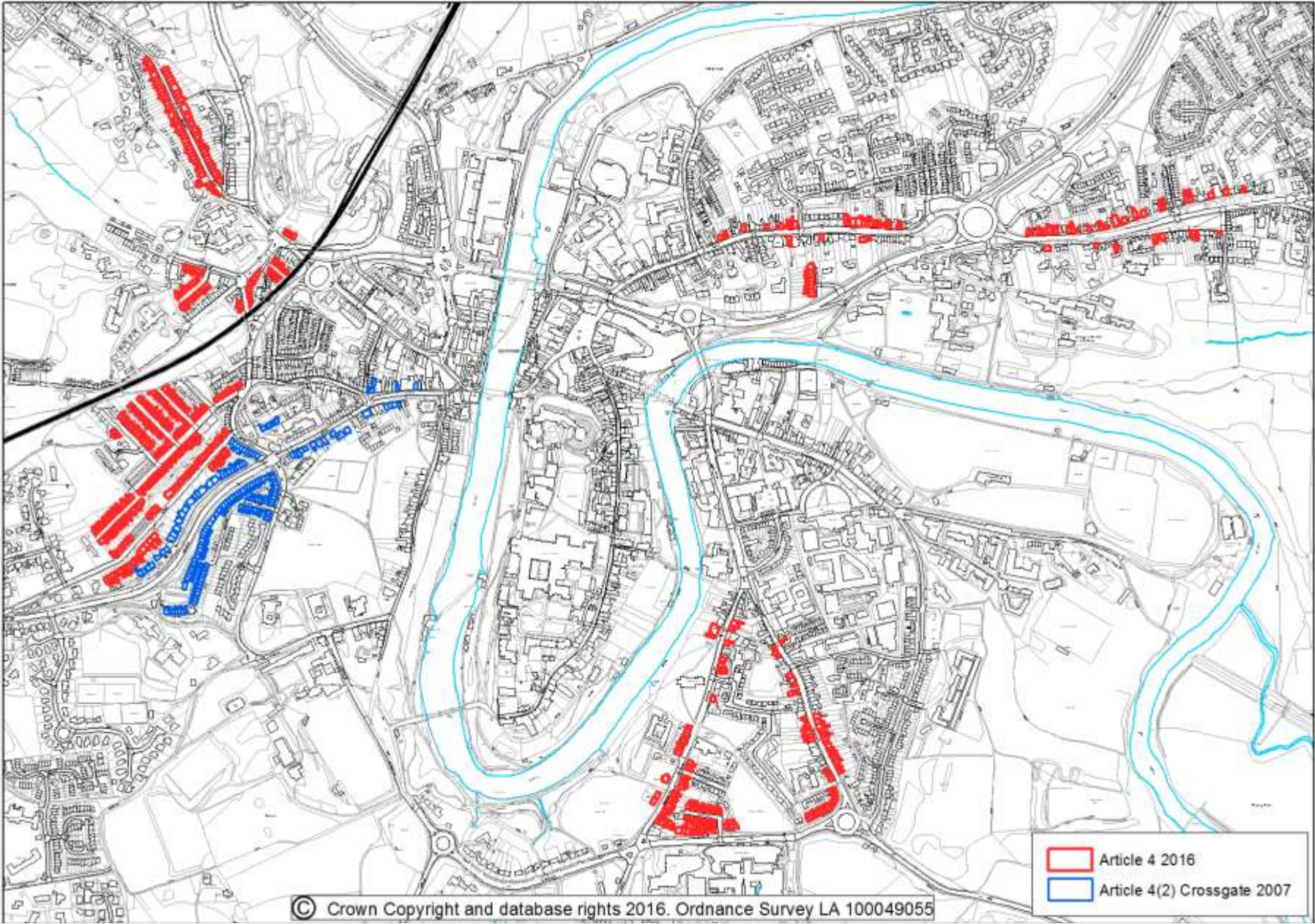
Minor development such as domestic alterations and extensions can normally be carried out without planning permission under the provisions of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO). Article 4 of the GPDO gives local planning authorities the power to restrict these 'permitted development rights' where they have the potential to undermine the historic environment. Using the provisions of Article 4 of the GPDO brings certain types of development back under the control of a local planning authority so that potentially harmful proposals can be considered on a case by case basis through planning applications. This can help prevent the erosion of the architectural details and character of the older traditional and historic buildings in the conservation area which undermine the general visual amenity of the area. This would mean that planning permission would be required to carry out works such as alterations to a roof slope, window replacement, construction of a porch, alterations to a means of enclosure, the installation of a satellite dish/antenna etc. Flats, shops, public houses and commercial premises are excluded as they do not benefit from the same permitted development rights as dwellings, so the Article 4 Direction would not apply. Listed buildings are also not included as Listed Building

Consent is required to carry out internal and external alterations.

The appraisal of the designated conservation area identified the need for Article 4 Directions in 4 areas as their character, appearance and special significance is under threat from works carried out under Permitted Development Rights, development pressures and proliferation of private rented accommodation etc.

The new Article 4 direction for Durham City covers alterations such as material alterations to elevations fronting an adopted highway including porches and removal of existing architectural features, painting facades and rendering; the changing of roof materials, removing chimneys, adding dormer windows and roof lights; replacing windows and doors; creation of hard standing areas; removal of boundary features such as walls.

The new Article 4 areas are shown on the map on the following page, followed by a brief justification statement for each area; full details can be found in the Management Proposal Section of the relevant individual Character Area Assessments.



map 13 Article 4 Directions

### 1 Hawthorn Terrace

This Article 4 Area includes Hawthorn Terrace, Holly Street, Mistletoe Street, Lawson Terrace, Laburnum Avenue, May Street and The Avenue. This area essentially comprises of Victorian terraces below the Viaduct and adjacent to the railway line along with the Victorian, Edwardian and Arts and Crafts villas and townhouses which climb up the steep hill towards Neville's Cross. These Victorian terraces have a distinctive character, small and compact, uniformed construction and street pattern with a distinctive roofscape and important back lane environment.

This is in contrast to the larger townhouses and villas of more individual quality enhanced by a richness of detailing and materials. The properties retain a strong degree of originality with many original features left intact.

The character of the area is enhanced further by boundary structures and divisions such as brick walls and hedges. These along with trees, shrubs and gardens visible in the public realm create a distinctive suburban ambience. This area is also of historic and social significance linked to the mining and railway history and associated development within the city.



Image 38 Lawson Terrace

### 2 Hallgarth Street / Church Street

The Hallgarth Street and Church Street Article 4 area also includes Anchorage Terrace, Oswald Court, Church Street Villas, Mountjoy Crescent, Gladstone Terrace, High Wood View and Union Place. The character of this part of the conservation area is formed by an impressive variety of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian properties within a uniformed street pattern along two major routes into the city centre.

The built form includes grand townhouses, smaller cottages and uniformed terraces of historic interest, architectural merit and aesthetic value. Many of the properties on Hallgarth Street

and Church Street retain their original linear Medieval burgage plot form which is an important characteristic of the area.



*Image 39 Mount Joy Crescent*

Within the area there is a large variety and richness in detailing and materials and the properties are in a good physical condition. This area has particular significance in the historical development of the city dating from Medieval times and there are a number of listed buildings contained within it, including St Oswald's Church and the Tithe Barns.

### 3 Claypath / Gilesgate

The Claypath and Gilesgate (upper and lower) Article 4 Area occupies the western sector of the conservation area and includes the associated street of Ravensworth Terrace.

This area is a major historic route into the city which is highly visible and an important gateway entrance.

The area has a wide mixture of historic properties including Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian terraced townhouses which combine to create interesting and changing historic streetscenes and roofscapes. The properties range from modest terraced dwellings to grander townhouses and larger villas with a high percentage of original features still intact and the physical condition of the buildings can be described as generally good. This area has historical significance in being one of the key Medieval routes into/out of the city and includes many important listed buildings including St Giles Church.



*Image 40 Upper Gilesgate*

### 4 Western Hill

The Western Hill Area includes a number of historic streets such as Albert Street, Lambton Street, Mowbray Street, Sutton Street etc. This area has been considered for an Article 4 Direction in the past which went out to public consultation and was generally supported with little negative feedback; however it was never formally ratified by the former City of Durham Council.

The area has a distinctive character of predominantly Victorian terraced properties; those within the southern part are modest simple dwellings whereas those along Albert Street are larger and much grander. The properties stepping down the hill have appealing public frontages and a distinctive historic stepped roofscape.

Generally the properties retain many original features and the buildings are in a good condition, the terraces around the Viaduct area can be described as good to fair with examples of original details left intact but regrettably some features have been lost. The area's importance is also derived from it forming a major traffic route and gateway into the city centre and its historic and social interest linked to the mining and railway development in the city.



*Image 41 Lambton Street*





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