

An aerial photograph of Durham City, showing the River Wear winding through a dense green forest. In the background, the city's historic stone buildings and the prominent spire of Durham Cathedral are visible under a blue sky with scattered clouds. A stone bridge with multiple arches spans the river in the foreground.

# Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan

## Part 3: Management Strategy





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# I. Introduction





## 1.1 What is the purpose of this management strategy?

Durham City is a unique and special place that has been shaped by the people who have lived and worked here over the centuries. Its special interest and distinctiveness derive from its complex history and evolution, the unique topography with hills and ridges encircling the historic urban core, the landscape character and setting, the vast array of historic buildings, narrow medieval streets and vennels, alongside a strong sense of local pride. The heritage significance of the city is recognised by the castle and cathedrals world heritage site status of international importance, the proposed designation of the seven new conservation areas, and the high number of listed buildings, and non-designated heritage assets.

Durham County Council (DCC) has a framework of local planning policies in place to ensure that new development and change in the historic environment preserves and where possible enhances its special architectural and historic interest, character, and visual appearance.

The adopted County Durham Plan and City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan contain specific heritage policies to achieve the above. These policies underpin the principles and requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework Section 16, Conservation and Enhancement of the Historic Environment.

The Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) supports the national and local planning policy framework and will be used by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) when assessing plans for change in the city centre, when considering future improvement works, and also in supporting funding applications for specific projects. It provides specific guidance to deliver positive management of the historic environment.

The CAMP is designed to ensure that proposals for new development and change follow an “*informed conservation*” approach. This is based on an understanding of the special interest of the place and its wider context, to help inform appropriate design decisions. The CAMP for Durham City is divided into the following three parts.

**Part 1** is the strategic context document. This sets the scene to the city as a whole explaining its special interest, the scope of the CAMP, the process and methodologies undertaken, and introduces the seven new Durham City Conservation Areas.

**Part 2** are the seven individual conservation area character appraisals that identifies the areas special architectural and historic interest that warrants their designated status, and the issues, problems, and threats they face.

**Part 3** is the management strategy that presents a series of management recommendations, aims and actions focused upon the overarching themes identified in the strategic context document.

The strategy has been drawn-up in response to the issues, problems, threats, and potential opportunities identified during the review of the existing Durham City Conservation Area. To address the key challenges identified, and through review of cross-corporate and wider stakeholder strategies and plans, both in place and emerging.

The intention of the management recommendations is to set out a realistic and deliverable overriding framework for the positive and proactive management of change in the proposed Durham City Conservation Areas, aligned with the national and local planning policy framework and other relevant documents.

Within the seven individual appraisals there are a series of recurring themes that can be drawn out to provide the foundation of the recommended management actions and aims made within this document to guide the conservation and enhancement of the conservation areas, and city centre as a whole.

On the following page is a brief S.W.O.T (strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats) evaluation, drawn from the strategic context document, the individual conservation area character appraisals, earlier condition survey work, and local knowledge.



## Durham City Strengths

- Excellent regional links and public transport accessibility.
- Large catchment area.
- Significant employment/administrative centre.
- Prestigious higher education destination (Durham University).
- Established heritage tourism destination, with WHS at its heart that is internationally recognised.
- Wide range of retail, bars, restaurants, leisure, and recreation offer.
- High historic, evidential architectural, aesthetic, and archaeological value.
- Strong heritage identity and image.
- High quality visual experiences with historic landmarks.
- Unique topography, geography, and landscape of high aesthetic value and locally cherished.
- “New quarter” of mixed-use contemporary development.

## Durham City Weaknesses

- Limitations and challenges of new development.
- Dominance of highways, parking issues, congestion, and conflicts with pedestrians.
- Hilly topography, presenting accessibility issues.
- Changing trend from traditional retail to leisure.
- Student dominance of housing.
- Conflicting agendas of major institutions and major landowners.
- Tourism offer not sufficiently broad with strong competition, short stay rates.
- Low quality developments.
- Condition of some buildings
- General unkempt appearance.
- Vacancy, disused buildings, and gap sites.
- Low quality shop fronts and advertisements.
- Areas of poor quality public realm.
- Unmanaged tree cover reducing important views.

## Durham City Opportunities

- Establish a clear identity and vision for the city.
- Improve overall city offer.
- Scope for some new development.
- Repurposing, reuse and restoration of buildings.
- Growth as a tourism destination.
- Growth and promotion of cultural heritage.
- Fabric and aesthetic improvements to buildings.
- Removal buildings from at risk category.
- Reversal of previous insensitive alterations to historic buildings.
- Cycle of active tree management in specific places.
- Public realm improvement works such as street surfacing and street furniture providing a co-ordinated approach.
- Expand the existing Article 4 to protect the unlisted heritage assets from harmful change.

## Durham City Threats

- National and local funding constraints, and wider economic weaknesses.
- Economic pressures, competition across region and wider afield, and lack of investment.
- Development pressure to specific sites.
- New development that detracts from significance and setting.
- Cumulative effects of new development.
- Continued and increased levels of vacancy.
- Continued long term status of vacant and gap sites.
- Continuation of anti-social behaviour.
- Continued harmful incremental changes to buildings.
- Continuation of deterioration and insensitive repairs of street surfacing.
- Loss of surviving traditional floorscape, and features, that will dilute historic character.



## What are the overarching conservation principles for Durham City?

Based upon the SWOT analysis, the analysis and findings within the individual conservation area appraisals the following key principles and objectives emerge to form the foundation of the management strategy for the city.

1. To preserve, and where possible, enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the Durham City Conservation Areas, the heritage assets within them, and the contribution made by setting.
2. To ensure that development within Durham WHS and its setting, preserves, and where possible, enhances its significance, experience, and outstanding universal value.
3. To ensure that future change and new development within the conservation areas is undertaken in a sympathetic and positive manner based on an understanding of the site's significance, character, and context.
4. To ensure positive contributors to the areas special interest, character and appearance are conserved.
5. To address elements that detract from the areas special interest, character and appearance including specific buildings, gap sites, vacant and derelict heritage assets, impact of traffic etc.

6. To help ensure the good maintenance and upkeep of the historic environment, including seeking to prevent traditional fabric loss, reinstatement of lost materials and features, and reversal of previous unsympathetic alterations.

7. To protect areas of public realm that contribute positively to the conservation areas and secure improvements where detracting from the areas special interest, character, and appearance, seeking the best quality possible and maximising opportunities for enhancement.

8. To ensure that the green infrastructure assets that contribute positively to the areas special interest and character are retained, well-cared for, and enhanced.

9. To maximise opportunities to better reveal the significance, experience, understanding and appreciation of the city's heritage assets.

10. To use the city's cultural heritage as the catalyst for the city to thrive as a town centre with a clear identity, and diverse range of uses, improving its economic vitality, viability, and attraction for all.





## 1.2 Managing change, planning legislation and guidance

Planning legislation, policy, and guidance, at the national and local levels, enables the effective management of change within conservation areas and secures the preservation and enhancement of the character, appearance and significance of the place.

The national legislative framework for the conservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings is set out in the **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** (HMSO 1990). The Act defines what a conservation area is and is the primary legal mechanism for ensuring its preservation and enhancement.

The primary legislation is supported by the National planning policy framework (NPPF) **Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework** (December 2023). This sets out the overarching requirement of the local planning authority to identify and protect designated and non-designated heritage assets, and their settings.

At a local level, planning policy is set out in the **County Durham Plan** (October 2020), this provides the local authority with its own policies and guidance on the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

Specifically, Policy 44, Historic Environment, and 45 Durham WHS, with policy 29 relating to sustainable design also relevant.

The plan also has several other policies relevant to the conservation areas, Policy 33 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy, Policies 35 and 36, Water Management and Water Infrastructure, Policy 39 Landscape, Policy 40 Trees, woodlands and hedges, and Policy 41 Biodiversity.

The above is underpinned by the **Durham City Neighbourhood Plan** adopted in June 2021 and the specific policies H2 the conservation areas, H1, Durham WHS, and S1 sustainable development.

The Neighbourhood Plan also identifies a number of Local Green Spaces under Policy G2, creation of the 'Emerald Network' under G3 and a general requirement to protect and enhance green and blue infrastructure in accordance with Policy G1.

Links to all the relevant planning policies and guidance can be found in the **CAMP Part 1 Strategic Overview document**.

Generally, living in, owning or managing a building within a conservation area can bring about additional controls to proposed works and what may, or may not, require planning permission. These can include demolition of buildings (including in-part) and boundary treatments, works to the front elevation, trees works, and others that may impact upon the special character and visual appearance of the place.

Permitted Development Rights are works that can be undertaken without planning permission to householder properties only. But sometimes they can be removed either as part of a planning condition of an approved development or by the serving of an Article 4 Direction.

### How can I find out if permission is required for the works I am proposing?

It is always advised to check with the local planning authority before carrying out works to a listed building or building within a conservation area, and there is a formal pre-application / enquiry advice service to check if permission for works is required or not, and if so the likelihood of an application submission being supported.

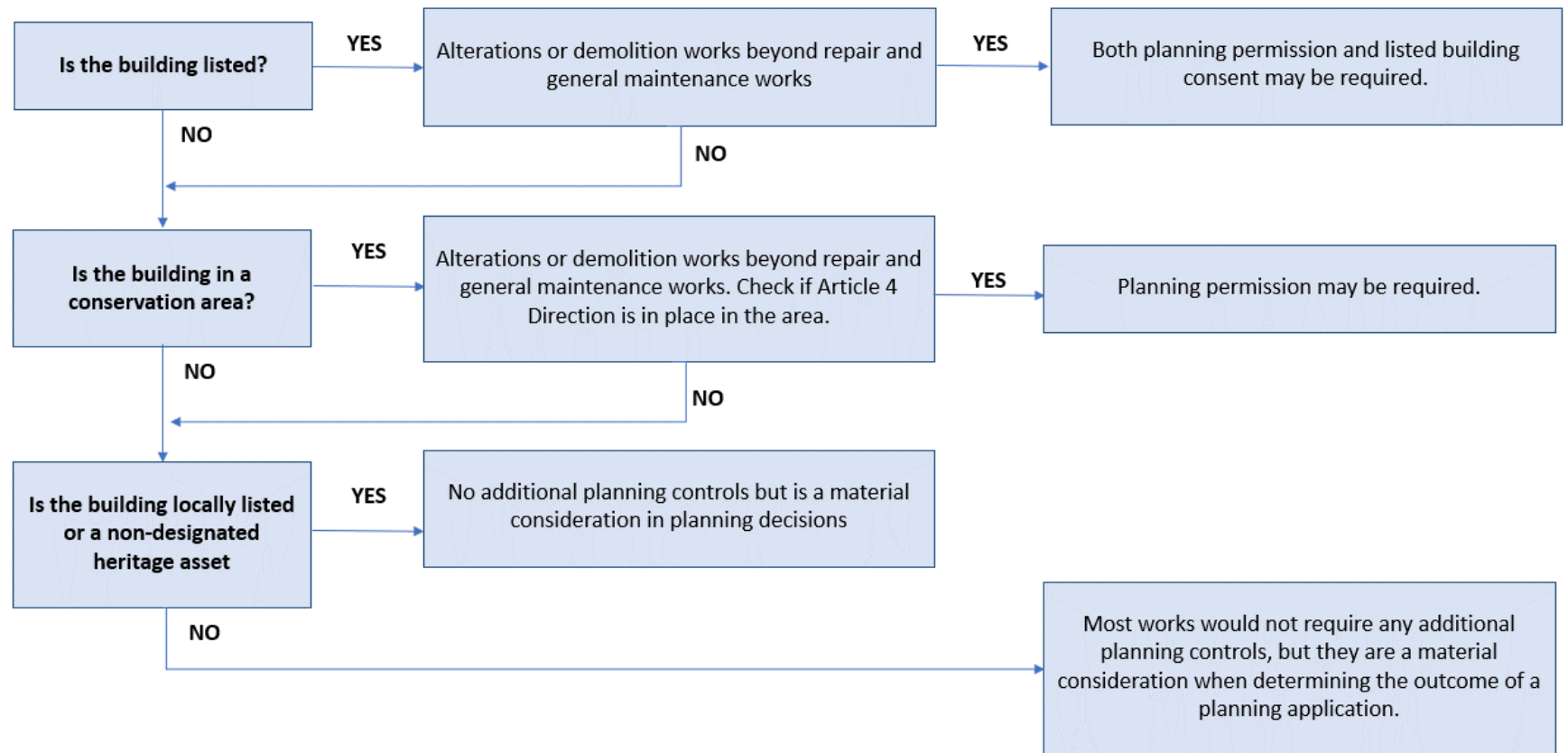
The pre-application process also helps to identify and potentially resolve any issues at an early stage to ensure a smoother application process once the application has been submitted. Details about the pre application service and how to apply can be found [Planning advice and enquiries - Durham County Council](#)

Additional information can be found at the Planning Portal Website [Conservation Areas - Other permissions you may require - Planning Portal](#)



## What is the process to determine if permission is required or not?

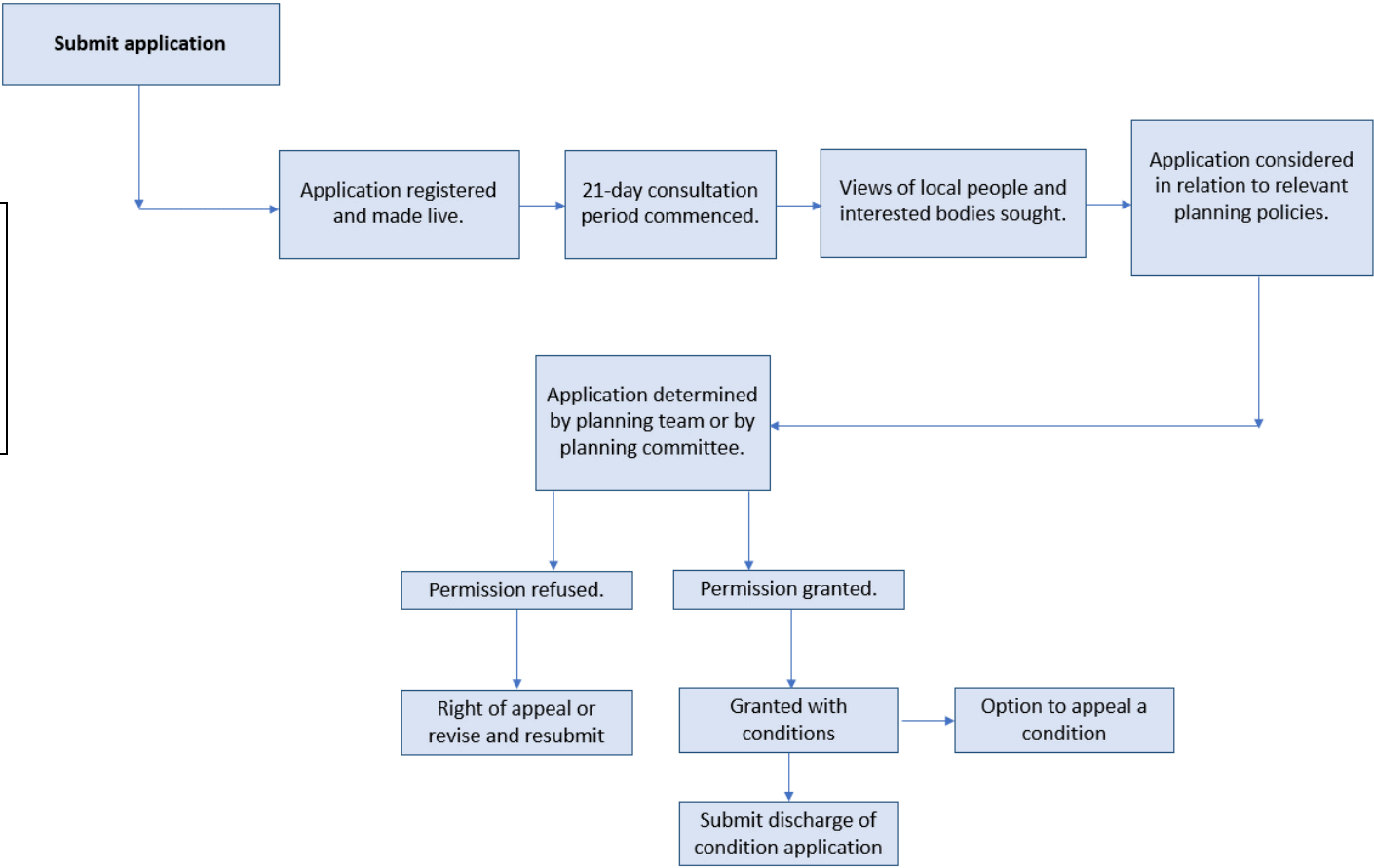
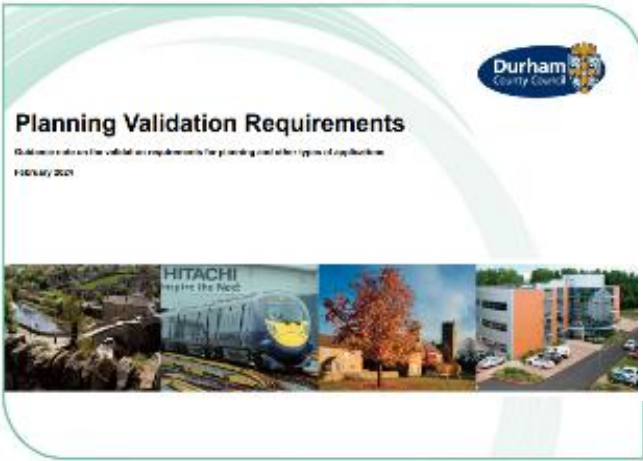
The infographic below shows the basic process in determining if permission is required or not, this is followed by a second infographic that sets out how the planning process works, and its timescales, in principle.



# If permission is required what is the general planning process?

The infographic below shows the general planning process from initial submission of the application to its determination.

To assess a listed building consent or planning application an appropriate level of supporting information is required, some of which are national requirements and mandatory. This information is required for an application to be made valid. Details of the validation requirements can be found [Planning Validation Requirements \(durham.gov.uk\)](http://Planning Validation Requirements (durham.gov.uk))





### 1.3 Major Development

Major development is often far more complex than other forms of planning applications and requires more extensive levels of information, consultation, and consideration.

Within Durham City it is essential that such proposals have a thorough understanding and due regard of heritage matters, both direct and indirect, at the start of the process. This is in order to identify constraints and opportunities, to influence positive design decisions, and to conclude and mitigate impacts.

Such impacts can relate to the significance of the site itself, the setting of surrounding listed buildings and conservation areas in both the immediate and wider context, and most importantly, the significance and setting of Durham WHS. As such, a robust understanding of the WHS values and attributes set out in the "Statement of Outstanding Universal Value" is required.

The role of the site in the setting of the WHS, its location, the form, scale, massing, design, and materiality, of the development proposal and visual connections are important to evaluate from the outset with the impact on OUV assessed to a standard recognised by UNESCO.

### What is a major development?

Major development is defined by the [Town and County Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) as;

- a) the winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits.
- b) waste development.
- c) the provision of dwellinghouses where—(i) the number of dwellinghouses to be provided is 10 or more; or (ii) the development is to be carried out on a site having an area of 0.5 hectares or more and it is not known whether the development falls within sub-paragraph.
- d) the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more: or
- e) development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare.

### What are the key principles?

- a) Informed by a clear understanding of the site, its immediate surroundings and wider townscape, landscape and riverscape context as relevant.
- b) Identification of key constraints that can include flood zones, green belt, area of high landscape value, trees, topography, and specific design parameters such as scale and massing etc.
- c) Based on a full understanding of heritage significance and setting contribution to ensure preservation.
- d) Understanding the site's contribution to views at near, middle and long distance.
- e) Identification of key opportunities including creating new views to better reveal significance, removal of negative elements, or providing a higher quality design response than what exists.

## What is the general process?

The starting point should be an extensive pre application submission with DCC providing a bespoke service for major and strategic development proposals. This will help to

- Determine details of any legal designations and limitations that affect the site, this can be heritage, landscape, archaeological etc.
- Set out the key national and local planning policy context and any relevant supplementary guidance.
- Bring in key internal consultees and external parties at the early stage.
- Identify if the proposal will have a significant impact on the environment by virtue of its nature, size or location, that an environmental impact assessment (EIA) will be required.
- Identify any other material considerations.
- Identify any elements of the proposed development that may be deemed harmful and need addressing or amending to rectify issues.
- Set out the information requirements for full application stage.
- Conclude as to the likelihood of the scheme being accepted.

If the proposals are EIA development is should include the necessary information to meet the criteria outlined in [Schedule 4 of the Town and Country Planning \(Environmental Impact Assessment\) Regulations 1999](#). This includes (but is not limited to):

- a description of the proposed development, its characteristics, land-use, emissions, etc.
- an outline of the main alternatives studied – including the main reasons for the choice, taking into account the environmental effects.
- a statement identifying the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.
- for example, the population, fauna, flora, soil, water, air and climatic factors, as well as the architectural and archaeological heritage.
- a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment – including the direct effects and any indirect effects.
- a statement outlining the measures that will be taken to prevent, reduce and (where possible) offset any significant adverse effects on the environment.
- an indication of any difficulties (technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.

The Environment Statement (ES) would need to include a cultural heritage chapter that identifies the heritage assets potentially affected by the development proposals and provides a comprehensive assessment of the potential effects on their significance and setting. WHS are classed as “sensitive areas” for the purposes of EIA assessment regulations.

## What are the requirements on assessing the impact on Durham WHS?

Any major development proposal that impacts within or within the setting of the WHS must be assessed based on the UNESCO Guidance Toolkit 2022 [World Heritage Centre - Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context \(unesco.org\)](#) . The toolkit provides an overview of impact assessment and how it can be used for the WHS, with Section 5 detailing how it can be carried out as part of a wider EIA process, and Section 6 how to carry out a standalone HIA. The guidance is clear that the assessment should be drawn up in consultation with local communities and key stakeholders.



DCC’s planning validation requirements sets out that all applications whose scale or nature could impact on heritage assets should be accompanied by a heritage statement and with specific reference to Durham WHS, sets out that a Design and Access Statement and Townscape or Landscape Visual Assessment will be required.

As previously when considering the potential impacts of major development within the setting of the WHS this must be assessed in terms of the relevant attributes of significance contributing to its OUV generally relating to;

**Significance 2** The visual drama of the Cathedral and Castle on the peninsula and the associations of the site with notions of romantic beauty.

**Significance 3:** the physical expression of the spiritual and secular powers of the medieval Bishops Palatine and the defended complex.

**Significance 6:** the sites role as a political statement of Norman power imposed on a subjugate nation, as one of the country’s most powerful symbols of the Norman conquest of Britain.

The Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site Management Plan <https://www.durhamworldheritagesite.com/files/Durham%20WHS%20Management%20Plan%202017.pdf> Sets out the significance of the site and its OUV, the range of challenges and opportunities, and provides a robust management system vital for its protection and development.

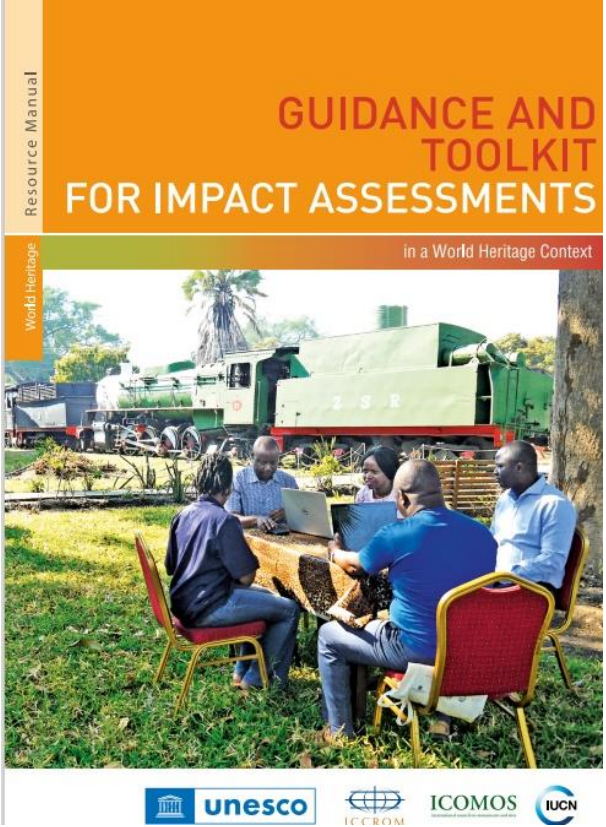
The management plan is currently being refreshed, with the prospectus for 2023-35 headlining the themes and projects of the next period [2024-2035MgtPlanprospectusfinal-compressed.pdf](https://www.durhamworldheritagesite.com/2024-2035MgtPlanprospectusfinal-compressed.pdf) ([durhamworldheritagesite.com](https://www.durhamworldheritagesite.com))

The emerging WHS Setting Study once adopted will provide part of the public evidence base for the WHS, and an important toolkit to inform an understanding of its setting that include experiential visual and intangible values.

Historic England provides expert advice and [Guidance for World Heritage Management | Historic England](#) on management and changes that relate to world heritage that should be utilised at early stage.



In combination the above should be used inform major new development proposals within the city to ensure its OUV is protected. In direct association, as the proposed Durham City Conservation Areas provide a significant part of the setting to the WHS, this process will ensure that change is effectively managed to preserve and where possible enhanced the conservation areas special interest, character, and visual appearance.



## What additional controls are in place to protect historic buildings?

Keeping historic buildings in active use, and in good repair is key to their preservation, while untidy sites can significantly detract from the character and visual appearance of the area. Owners are under no statutory obligation to maintain their building, however when one has been neglected, is standing vacant, and in a state of disrepair with loss of historic fabric or even a potential threat to its special interest, the local planning authority has powers to rectify such issues in some cases.

**Section 215** of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 gives the local authority powers to require land to be cleaned up when its condition is such that it adversely affects the amenity of the area such as vacant sites or derelict buildings. A section 215 notice requires such steps to be taken to remedy the condition of the land or building as specified in the notice and to be carried out within a specific time period.

**Urgent works notice** gives the local planning authority powers to directly carry out works required to urgently make an unoccupied building weather tight to prevent further fabric decay, making the building safe from structural collapse or prevent unauthorised entry, vandalism or theft.

**Repairs notice** allows the local planning authority to specify the works the owner should carry out to secure the condition of a building.

**Compulsory purchase order** as a last resort the local planning authority can compulsorily purchase a listed building to undertake repairs or sell it to an organisation or charity, such as a building preservation trust, to be restored.

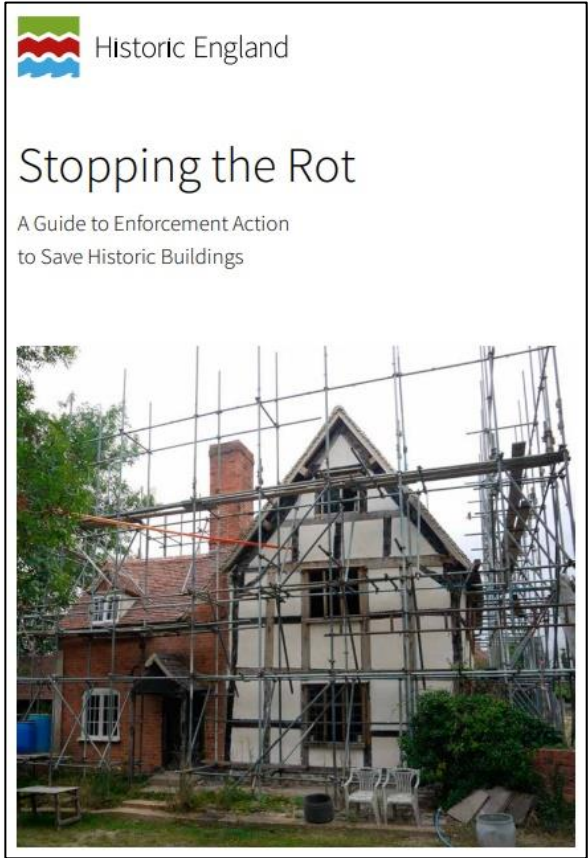
There are many buildings within the city that are statutorily protected being "listed". A listed building is a building of special architectural or historic interest, as specified by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Listing is made at three levels of importance. Grade I, Grade II\* and Grade II. Listed building consent is required before any alterations, extensions or demolitions can be made to a listed building which might affect its fabric, or special architectural or historic interest, Listed buildings can be searched for online at

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

It should be noted that buildings, structure, and features within the curtilage of listed buildings may also be regarded as being listed subject to meeting a specific set of criteria. Further information can be found <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/listed-buildings-and-curtilage-advice-note-10/heag125-listed-buildings-and-curtilage/>

Historic England document "*Stopping the Rot: A guide to enforcement action to save historic buildings*" Published 13 January 2013, provides detailed guidance.

[Stopping the Rot | Historic England](#)





## 2. Management Recommendations



The management strategy is focused on ten key overarching themes that can be applied across all seven of the proposed individual conservation areas, hence applied to Durham City as a whole. Under these themes there are sub-categories some of which overlap.

The recommendations made under these themes have three parts, first is a brief introductory section, second is the overall key management principle followed by individual actions that can help to achieve the aim, thirdly is a brief summing-up of the justification for the recommendation.

In addition, the review process has identified a series of buildings, spaces, and places where there are potential opportunities for regeneration, improvement, and enhancement. Some of these are already earmarked for potential redevelopment and/or have extant planning permissions and are considered in more detail to help bring about a proactive conservation-led approach to change management to these specific sites.

This management plan has been developed with current, emerging, and plans, strategies, and initiatives in mind. It intends to provide a positive tool for unlocking heritage-led regeneration in the city, supporting the care and improvement of the historic environment, while guiding sensitive change and proportionate new development to help create a better place for those who live, work, study and visit the city.





Consultation is an integral part of the appraisal process and proposals for conserving and enhancing the historic environment will be most effective when all interest parties work together. Following phase 1 consultation all the feedback will be reviewed and the management strategy revised accordingly. Final development will be informed by a series of workshops key partners and stakeholders before presenting the updated document for phase 2 public consultation next year.





## 2.1 Theme I

### Built Development

Durham City is a complex, diverse living river city of international cultural importance. It has a strong, highly varied, urban form, constantly changing from place to place. It significantly evolved during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, through the middle half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and continuing up to the present day.

The city’s architectural character reflects its origins, history, development, and status, with civic, educational, ecclesiastical, residential, commercial and leisure uses defining the built form, and building ages ranging from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These are dispersed along a unique street plan responding to the topography that combines intimate narrow medieval streets, Victorian streets in grid patterns, and open riverside frontages. It has a clearly definable 21<sup>st</sup> century riverside quarter of large scale contemporary mixed-use development.

The built form is rich, architecturally diverse, and high quality, and the overall townscape is a critical factor in the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas.

The built environment of the city will inevitably continue to grow, and it is of the upmost importance that change is managed carefully to protect the special interest and character of the city.



The conclusion of the conservation area review survey work is that the condition of the existing built form within the city is fair to good. Some notable exceptions were found in the form of historic buildings that are vacant and deteriorated, others identified as being at risk, and some suffering from fabric deterioration issues.

The special architectural and historic interest and level of intactness of the townscape overall is very high. There are some good examples of contemporary infill, repurposing of buildings, and replacement development that make a positive impact. But there are a number of existing modern buildings identified as detracting from the streetscene or are neutral offering nothing positive.

**Fig 1**, images showing examples of the variation in built form, the Market Place, the historic commercial and civic heart of the city, the historic domestic properties along Hallgarth Street, the contemporary redevelopment on the Milburngate House site redevelopment and mixed-use historic streetscene at Old Elvet



### Management Aim 1

Protect existing buildings that contribute positively to the townscape ensuring they are retained, conserved and enhanced where possible, and address those buildings that detract from the character and visual appearance of the place.

#### Action 1.1

Where the opportunity arises, the removal and replacement of existing buildings and features identified as negative or detracting from the streetscene will be encouraged, to be replaced with appropriate and sympathetic redevelopment. Alternatively, opportunities will be sought to improve their visual appearance in the short to medium term.

Durham lives with a legacy of 20<sup>th</sup> century road infrastructure; associated clearance works and development. This opened the door for the construction of several buildings identified as detracting from the streetscene within the proposed individual conservation areas. While the reasons for this contribution and level of effect, differs from building to building, they are generally of low architectural and urban design quality, inappropriate in terms of style, scale, massing, and materials and devoid of detailing, or a combination of such factors.

This distinguishes them within their respective historic surroundings as being out of character and lacking local distinctiveness, but they offer great potential for an instantly noticeable enhancement achieved through refurbishment, upgrading, repurposing, or demolition and replacement as part of a carefully designed, sympathetic redevelopment.

Appropriate redevelopment, or improvement, achieved by complying with Management Aim 2, could result in positive transformation of the site, enhancing the wider townscape and strengthening the area's identity.

**Fig 2**, images showing examples of buildings in key streetscene that are identified as detracting from the historic character and distinctiveness of the place.





**Action 1.2**

Retention and appropriate re use of vacant and deteriorated buildings that contribute positively to the townscape and local character will be strongly encouraged.

Historic buildings should be retained as important relics of a bygone age, they add character to the area, and can have deep associations for local people. Where such buildings are vacant and deteriorated, they significantly detract from the character of the place and can attract vandalism. Repurposing such buildings can reinforce the sense of community, and not only enhance the character and visual appearance of the place but can contribute to the local economy and act as a catalyst for improvements in the wider area. New uses should therefore be encouraged, and sensitive adaptations facilitated, based on an understanding of significance and a minimal intervention approach, when the historic use is no longer relevant or viable.

Complete demolition of historic buildings equates to total loss of heritage significance of what is an irreplaceable resource handed down from the past. Partial demolition and insensitive alterations can also be harmful, to both the building and the conservation area. Loss and harm must be resisted and only considered as a last resort, where there is no viable alternative, and where it has the opportunity to deliver wider public benefits. Replacement development must then be of equal or higher quality consistent with the principles of Management Aim 2.



*Fig 3, above, example of a two long term disused and deteriorated historic building, the former public swimming baths a historic landmark building on the riverside.*

**What is meant by public benefits?**

The National Planning Policy Framework requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, that could be anything that delivers economic, social, or environmental objectives. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.

Examples of heritage benefits may include reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset or securing its optimum viable use in support of its long-term conservation. The balancing exercise is a matter of planning judgement. For more information [Historic environment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-environment)

**Action 1.3**

There are a number of sites within the city that offer the opportunity for new built development that could have a major impact upon the character of the city, the conservation area, the setting of others as well as that of Durham WHS. Such proposals should be nurtured through early engagement with development management and Historic England.

There are a number of potential development sites and future redevelopment opportunities in the city that could be hugely influential, not only on the physical character of the conservation area, but visually on the wider city. Early engagement in the planning process will help to ensure that high quality development, appropriate to the site's context, is delivered. This can be an invaluable process by identifying potential problems and issues at the early design stage, and a mechanism for resolving them, involving cross-council specialists.



The process will help formulate a full understanding of the site's constraints and opportunities and an appreciation of the physical, social, and historical context that goes beyond the site boundaries to ensure the delivery of good design, and high architectural quality of new built development that must also conform to the principles set out in management aim 2.

**Action 1.4**

Seek to raise awareness amongst owners and landlords of best conservation practices, duty of care, and the importance of timely and regular maintenance of historic buildings and features. Continue to monitor the situation of known issues and condition of vacant buildings.

There are a number of buildings that are visibly suffering from fabric deterioration and condition issues, some seemingly due to a lack of regular maintenance. Regular maintenance will avoid such situations from worsening and will avoid future more extensive and costly repairs that may be required to rescue the building from significant deterioration, and in extreme cases possible dereliction. If such works can be secured, then this will ensue the buildings protection and will have a positive aesthetic benefit in the context of the streetscene. This is expanded further under **Theme 3, Action 6.2.**

**Fig 4, image of general fabric issues collapsed historic wall, render issues, and joinery decay.**



## 2.2 Theme 2

### Design

Durham City is a distinctive place with a rich variety and interplay of built, historic and natural environments. Different character is experienced moving between the proposed individual conservation areas and change within them will continue. Buildings, streetscapes, and urban areas are dynamic places that are constantly adapting to the needs of their inhabitants, with each generation contributing uniquely to this evolution.

New developments shape the place, its aesthetic, and people's perceptions and experiences of the area. It is therefore of the utmost importance to put into place overarching design aims and actions to support the planning policy framework, and to ensure that the special architectural and natural interest, character, and visual appearance of the city is conserved and where possible enhanced going forward. This relates to all types of new development from small scale householder and commercial works such as house extensions and new shop fronts, to larger scale new residential, commercial and leisure development proposals

with the potential to impact greatly in the wider townscape context.

New development in the city can be challenging, with different sites and places having different constraints and opportunities. But the approach must be to inspire high design quality through the creation of buildings and spaces that celebrate and reinforce the special interest and character of the city and responds positively to the individual sites local and wider contexts. Historic England's [Good Practice for Design in the Historic Environment: Principles and Case Studies | Historic England](#) provides 8 basic principles:

1. **Baseline Understanding** – starting with an assessment of the value of retaining what is there.
2. **Context** – relate to the geography and history of the place and lie of the land.
3. **Character**- Be informed by its own significance so that its character and identity will be appropriate to its use and context.
4. **Streets and Spaces**- sits happily in the pattern of existing development and the routes through and around it.
5. **Views**- Respect important view.
6. **Scale**- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings.

7. **Materials**- Use materials and building methods which are as high quality as those used in existing building.
8. **Visual Composition**- Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of the setting.

#### Further reading

[PROMOTING A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH TO NEW HOUSING IN HISTORIC PLACES](#)  
([historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk))





**Fig 5**, below example of positive regeneration in Claypath based on an understanding of the historical context and character, despite the demolition of the historic the new development responds positively to the building line, scale, stepped roofscape, and verticality to the elevation treatment with a contemporary aesthetic.

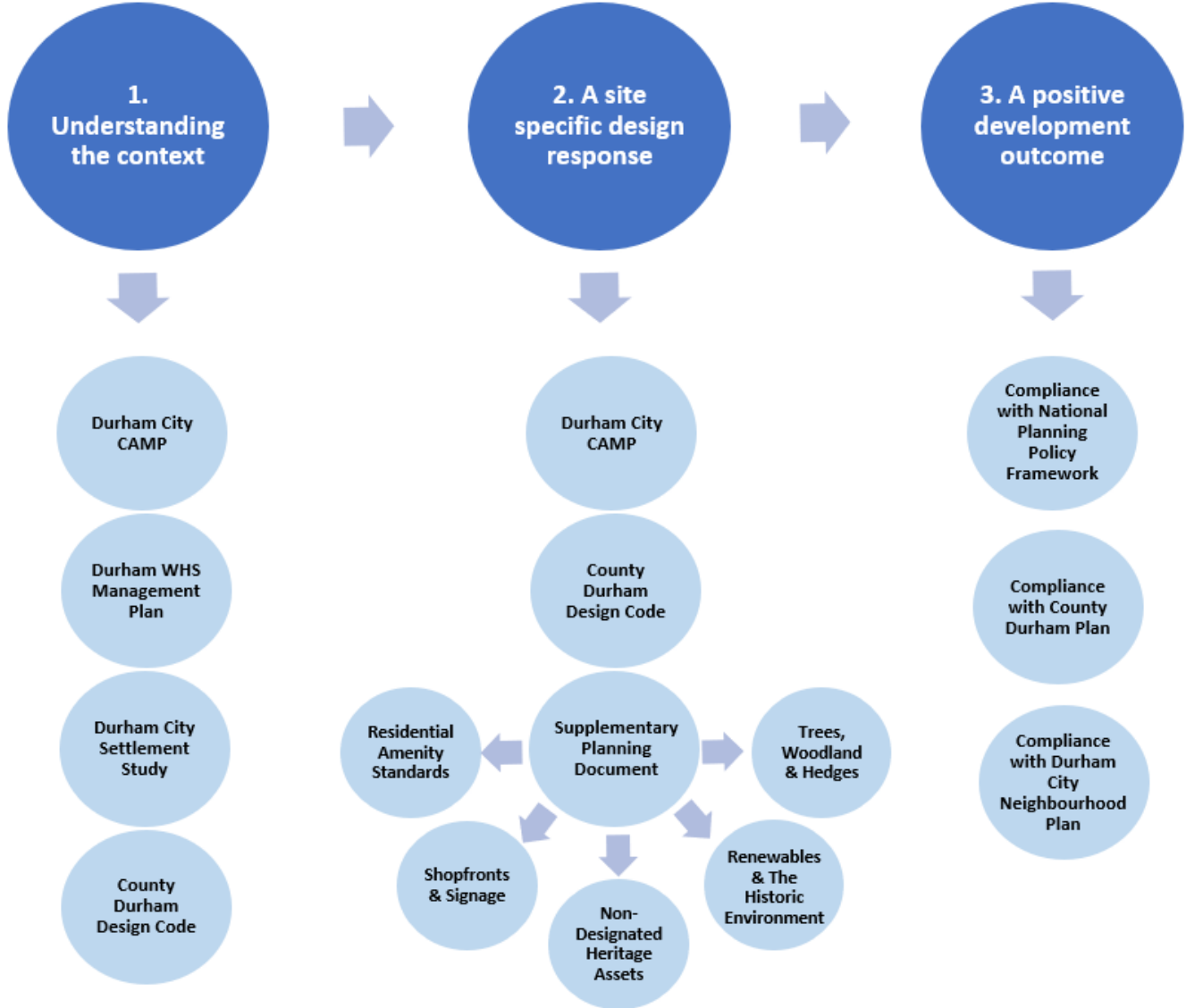
[The bottom of Claypath © Roger Smith cc-by-sa/2.0 :: Geograph Britain and Ireland](#)





# How can positive design be delivered?

A suite of documents should be used to form a detailed understanding of the site's significance, surroundings, and context, that is then used to formulate the detailed design process for new development proposals and alterations within the city.



## What are the design aspirations and objectives?

- To encourage and promote a higher standard of design within the city centre, that can deliver positive place based outcomes.
- Any form of new development to have a positive impact in the city, the area in which the site is located, and the significance and setting of heritage assets (where relevant).
- To ensure that new development proposals respect the areas' historic identity, architectural character, local distinctiveness, and sense of place.
- To maximise enhancement opportunities where possible, to improve the built form, green infrastructure assets, the public realm, connectivity, and views and to better reveal heritage significance.
- To ensure sympathetic assimilation into the street scene, immediate surroundings and the wider townscape and landscape context of the city.
- To encourage high quality contemporary development, subject to location, that draws inspiration from the local vernacular.

### Management Aim 2

To ensure that any new development has a positive impact within the townscape, by being of a high standard of design and sensitive to the special interest, character and appearance of the place and its context, while adhering to relevant local and national design guidelines.

### Action 2.1

The planning process and relevant design guidance will ensure that the desired design quality of new development proposals will be achieved, with a traditional/local vernacular response or sensitive high-quality, or innovative, contemporary approach.

New development can have a very positive impact on a place, so long as the design response is appropriate. It should be informed by positive existing development, harmonising in terms of placement, layout, orientation, scale/size, massing, architectural style, materials, and detailing drawn from existing built environment. New development must also consider, and be sensitive to, the sites setting. This includes the local streetscene, and important public townscape, landscape, and river corridor views, at close, middle, and long distance.

Contemporary design with its own language is to be encouraged when high-quality and appropriate to the use, site, its surroundings, and wider context.

Contemporary buildings appear radically different from their historic counterparts. But contemporary architecture can enrich the townscape, it is an ever evolving style reflecting current trends and technologies. But there are some consistent principles such as form follows function, simplicity with clean lines and unnecessary decoration, restrained material palette, and drawing inspiration from existing buildings but with a different expression.



**Fig 6**, St Johns College Learning Resource Centre that replaced a former two storey house but reflects the rising topography and stepped line of the street generally, emulating the terraced form on each side, and being unashamedly contemporary, simple and indicative of its function.

**Action 2.2**

When the opportunity arises, high quality appropriately designed redevelopment of notable gap sites that offer an opportunity for a positive townscape outcome will be encouraged.

There are a number of gap sites identified within the conservation areas that generally detract from the character and visual appearance of the place. Some offer excellent potential for new built development, with historic planning consents that did not materialise. Some of these sites were formerly occupied by buildings and structures demolished at some point in the past, others form notable gaps at the end of, or between the terraced blocks that developed around them. Infill development of such gap sites, in an appropriate use and manner that is sensitive to its immediate surroundings and wider built context, would have the potential to enhance the existing built up street frontage and have a positive effect on the city townscape.



**Fig 7**, the gap site at the west end of John Street, that impacts adversely on the visual amenity of the area.

**Action 2.3**

Alterations and new extensions must be sympathetic in design to the building and its surroundings. Opportunities should be taken to replace existing low quality extensions with ones of a higher design and aesthetic quality.

Extensions to residential properties are the most common form of new development that will inevitably continue. Many existing extensions are sympathetic, with both traditional and contemporary design approaches. Many others however detract from the character of the original building and when seen in the public domain have a negative effect on the visual appearance of the area. They can create a harmful terracing effect within street scenes, have poor wrap-around forms, be too dominant and overpowering, be of insensitive materials, and have fenestration that is not reflective of the existing, that must be avoided.



**Fig 8**, Observatory House, Potters Bank, given a successful contemporary make-over with a lightweight glazed extension, the scheme retaining the character of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century building.

**Action 2.4**

The introduction of new roofs through new development and alterations to existing roofs (including adding dormers and rooflights) must be sympathetic to preserve the roofscape of the city. Opportunities should be maximised to reverse existing harmful impacts.

The roofscape of the city is an important characteristic of its special interest and is widely visible. The overall impression is of a universal use of natural slate, traditional roof forms, more often stepped with the gradient, and punctured by chimneys. This creates a high quality traditional roofscape with a distinctive rhythm. New development proposals must preserve this roofscape in both the local and wider context. Flat roofs may be appropriate and sympathetic in certain locations for example many of the large modern buildings along the riverside incorporate flat roofs, mostly successfully. The use of flat roofs in contemporary extension designs can also be complementary to traditional roofs setting an honest dialogue and contrast between old and new.



**Fig 9**, an example of a typical historic terraced roofscape a familiar scene within Durham City.



### *Dormer Windows*

Across the conservation areas there are many examples of traditionally styled dormer windows that assimilate successfully into the historic character of the roofscape and streetscene. There are instances where they are integral components of the buildings original architectural design, that are important features contributing very positively. Historic dormers should be retained and repaired whenever possible, changes to bring them up to modern standards may be possible provided they do not compromise their character. If, however full replacement is needed owing to poor condition then this should be on a true like for like basis.

The introduction new dormers to buildings that were not originally designed with such features can be harmful, particularly to one that is part of a uniform historic terrace. In such cases dormers should be avoided or potentially located to the rear if there is already a precedent for such interventions into the roofscape. Unlisted buildings detached or of an individual architectural style are generally more compatible with new dormers provided they are well-designed and not out of character.

Major harm can result from inappropriately designed modern dormers in prominent locations. There are examples of large box style dormers in the city that are markedly out of place because they are excessive in size, horizontal in form, and devoid of design cohesiveness with the elevation below.

Such dormers not only harm the character and special qualities of the individual building, but also to the surrounding and wider townscape context.

### **What are the general design principles for dormers?**

- The principle of adding dormers must be based upon initial compatibility with the period and character of the host building and its context.
- The size and scale must be proportionate and subordinate, it must not dominate the roofscape, and reflect the positive dormers in the locale if any exist.
- It should be set below the ridge, back from and above the eaves level and centrally aligned with the window openings to provide vertical balance and symmetry to the elevation.
- If more than one is proposed, they should be regularly spaced.
- It should normally adopt a traditional form and style, with windows and materials reflecting the existing.
- It must not conflict with the original roof form or detract from the character and visual appearance of the elevation.



**Fig 10**, an example of well-designed traditional dormer (top) and poor quality dormer in the same historic terrace.

### Rooflights

Rooflights are a common sight within certain parts of the conservation areas. They are generally neutral in impact when appropriately designed, but they can result in adverse clutter in the roofscape when for example where a high number is installed haphazardly, when they are oversized and project up from the roof plane. New rooflights should also be avoided in roofs where none pre-exist or limited to the rear of the roof if generally unseen in the public domain. This is to ensure the traditional roofscape is conserved with visual impacts minimised.

### What are the general design principles for roof-lights?

- They should be limited in number and small in size and scale.
- They should be of a conservation style, metal material, and flush fitted.
- They should be vertically proportioned.
- They should be set in the middle third of the roof and centrally aligned with the window openings.
- If more than one, they should be horizontally aligned.
- They should be completely hidden from view if possible.

**Fig 11**, example of conservation style roof lights that appear sympathetic (top), below standard roof-lights haphazardly arranged.





**Action 2.5**

The introduction of new lighting in new development proposals or changes to existing buildings, streets, and spaces, must give due consideration to conserving the distinctive nighttime character and appearance of the city, where relevant to the site specific location and its context.

With Durham Castle and Cathedral WHS at its centre and the historic urban core contained by hills and ridges, the city is a unique environment both with respect to its topography, architecture, landscape and riverscape setting. By day it provides a spectacular picture whether arriving at the railway station or walking by the river. By night it has not been dramatically over-lit and is effectively a twenty-four hour city with its mixed population of students, tourists, shoppers, workers, and residents providing an ever changing pattern of activity at all times.

As a result, a large number of people spend as much time experiencing Durham’s built environment during the hours of darkness as they do by day. Lighting therefore plays an important role not only in providing the basic means by which to see but also in creating an appropriate atmosphere, and experience of the historic environment, that is both positive and enjoyable.

The visual presence of the cathedral and castle by night contrasts with the darkness of the woodland cloak, river, riverbanks, and sky. This combined

with the low levels of illumination in the townscape below, in the loop of river around the peninsula, and at the base of the WHS, provides a dark cloak that emphasises the cathedral and castle at night while giving a different visual experience.

Such nighttime views, and many others, can be appreciated from many different vantage points throughout the city and include intimate views at close quarters, channelled views along narrow streets, open views from the bridges, glimpses between buildings and over rooftops, and at long distance from elevated vantage points.

Nighttime views contribute significantly to the character, visual amenity and distinctiveness of the city that must be protected. The night-time presence of the WHS and other historic landmarks could be harmed and even significantly threatened by the introduction of high levels of new illumination into this sensitive context, likewise excessive light spillage could harm the nighttime character of the city’s historic streets and spaces.

As a result, very careful and detailed consideration must be given to the nighttime visual impact of lighting. Either when informing the detailed design of new development proposals of sufficient size/scale and massing, relevant to the site specific location, or when considering changes within streets and spaces, to ensure the nighttime character of the city and the setting of the WHS is protected. Critical will be the positioning, form, type, and level of illumination.



**Fig 12**, nighttime views of Old Elvet (top) with striking silhouettes of the chimneys, church spire and dome of Old Shire Hall. The well-known view of the WHS from Leazes Road Bridge, and the Market Place.

**Fig 13**, a series of nighttime views from different locations around the city demonstrating the different visual experiences of Durham Castle and Cathedral and the darkness context, it is of the utmost importance, that these view, and others, are protected.





### Action 2.6

Opportunities should be maximised through the planning process to repurpose and redevelop existing modern buildings and sites with higher quality designs where this will deliver positive regeneration and townscape enhancement.

Fundamental to the design process is making places better for people, this includes the way they work, and how they look, while providing and improving connections between places and people's movement, the urban form, nature and built fabric.

Good design can help create lively places with their own distinctive character and such important benefits can be gained by repurposing and redeveloping existing buildings and sites that do not contribute positively. This can include contemporary design solutions that respond positively to the site specific location and context, local building forms and patterns, detailing and materials. If carefully considered such scenarios can play a major role in enhancing the character and visual appearance of the place, how it is used and the experiences of the general public. This in turn can encourage more footfall and add positively to the vibrancy, vitality and economic viability of the city centre. Such opportunities within the city should therefore be maximised.



### Example of part repurposing/part redevelopment of an existing site

**Top**, a substantial late 20<sup>th</sup> century shopping centre in a very sensitive riverside location. "The Gates" developed over two phases above a podium of car parking, it had an insensitive inwards "cul-de-sac" type layout, a horizontal emphasis, built from mundane brown brick, and turned its back to the historic streets and river where there was very limited activity.

Elevation comparison image from Design and Access Statement, planning application reference [DM/15/01626/FPA, DM\\_15\\_01626\\_FPA-DESIGN AND STATEMENT PART 1-1602566.pdf](#) ([durham.gov.uk](#))

**Bottom**, Riverwalk created streets and spaces open to the sky, opened up views of the river corridor and Durham WHS. It responds positively to the local vernacular in terms of scale, vertically proportioned forms, varied roofscape, improved block legibility, and a livelier palette of materials and embraces the riverside with active frontages, and new promenade.

*Opportunities (gap sites)*

**Site 1 Back Silver Street**

The site is located on the west side of the Market Place at lower river level on Back Silver Street. It previously hosted a series of buildings, of residential and small commercial uses, that were cleared in the 1970s/80s. It is a split level site that retains extensive buttressed retaining walls and comprises of numerous small parcels of land overgrown with scrub and self seeded trees, a disused garage block, and dilapidated refuse store. The derelict site detracts from the local historic industrial character and areas visual appearance.

**Key design paramaters**

- Up to 5 storyes in height.
- Layout and arrangement to respond positively to the historic urban grain.
- Provide a strong active frontage.
- Composition influenced by simple traditional shapes and forms.
- Should present a positive response to the local vernacular that could be a high quality contemporary interpretation.
- Options to merge traditional and contemporary elements, detailing and materials.
- Roofscape a significant aspect in surrounding views that must respect the “tumbling” roofsape from the back of the Market Place down to the riverside.
- Limited high quality palette of materials.



*Site location plan*



*Site highlighted in local context*



*Site image*



Site 2 John Street

The site is located at the west head of the terraced street of John Street within a dense residential area characterised by Victorian terracing. Historically it hosted two dwellings which were demolished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with two garages remaining on the site until c.2000. It was later cleared and used as a yard, and has been vacant and disused for many years. It comprises of over grown hardstanding, scrub with a larger overgrown retaining wall enclosed by security fencing, that detracts from the character and visual appearance of the area.

Key design paramaters

- Orientated to face Holly Street with a two storey domestic frontage.
- Linear terraced form to respect surrounding grid pattern of streets.
- Stepped blocks to break down scale and massing.
- Traditional pitched roof form including stepped eaves and ridge lines.
- Simple elevations with rhythm, vertical balance and symetrical fenestration to reflect surrounding treatments.
- Rear elevation to follow themes of verticality and uniformity.
- Good quality red brick fascade with natural slate roof coverings.
- Should present a positive response to the local vernacular that could be a high quality contemporary interpretation.



Site location plan



Site highlighted in local context



Site images





**Site 3 The Avenue**

The site is located on the north side of The Avenue between Nos 24 and 25. It has historically been continuously undeveloped ever since the construction of the surrounding housing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite this it stands out in the terraced streetscene as being at odds with the prevailing character. It is disused and overgrown with harsh close boarded fencing that contributes nothing positive to the character and visual appearance of The Avenue. Sensitively designed infill development would enhance the streetscene.

**Key design paramaters**

- Terraced infill development responding to the terraces flanking either side.
- 2 storey street frontage with attic accomodation with 3 storeys to the rear,
- Linear form with front and rear alignments responding to existing building lines.
- Limiting depth to provide occupier amenity space, utilising the difference in levels.
- Traditional form and proportions.
- Simple elevations with rhythm, and vertical balance.
- Simple traditional form to the rear.
- Reflect dominance of solid masonry to windows, as seen in surroundings
- Detailing drawn from historic precedent.
- Good quality red brick fascade with natural slate roof coverings, traditional timber windows and doors.



*Site location plan*



*Site highlighted in local context*



*Site images*





Site 4 Claypath

The site is located on the south side of Claypath and is a notable gap in the continuous historic streetscene between Nos 79 and 80. The site was previously occupied by built development from the 19<sup>th</sup> century up until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It comprises of a refuse store enclosed by timber fencing with scrub land behind. The site detracts from the character and visual amenity of Claypath, a key historic street, and an important route into/out of the city centre. Sympathetic infill would positively regenerate the site and improve the historic streetscene.

Key design paramaters

- Different use options residential, commerical or leisure.
- Infill development responding to the stepped nature of the building and roof lines that characterise the street.
- Maximum of 3 storeys.
- Scale, height and massing to respect surroundings.
- Vertical expression and balance to the front elevation onto the street.
- Design and detailing drawn from the positive characteristics of the historic buildings in the vicinity, but could be a contemporary interpretation.
- Detailing must not be overly fussy.
- Materials to be traditional, high quality, and drawn from existing material palette.



Site location plan



Site highlighted in local context



Site images

**Site 5 St Johns Road**

The site is located at the north end of St John’s Road. It was previously occupied by a filling station fronting the A167 Newcastle Road, that existed up until 2006. The site was cleared and remains a vacant prominent site in the street frontage at the end of the residential terrace where it is enclosed by close-boarded timber fencing with its poor hard surfaces visible. In its current form it detracts from the local character and visual amenity, and sensitive redevelopment has the potential to improve matters.

**Key design paramaters**

- Suitable for residential development given predominance of residential uses in the surrounding area.
- Must respond positively to local plan form, predominant modest terraced form and domesitic scale that characterises the sites surroundings.
- Should of be a locally inspired character with desing inspiration taken from positive historic buildings within the area.
- Vertical expression, ordered and well balanced elevation treatment.
- Simple detailing drawn from the locality.
- Materials to be traditional, high quality, and drawn from existing material palette.
- Should present a positive response to the local vernacular that could be a high quality contemporary interpretation.



*Site location plan*



*Site highlighted in local context*



*Site images*



**Action 2.7**

New development proposals must ensure that they respect the sites positive green character, and the local and wider landscape context of the city, where relevant. Preserving and maximising opportunities to enhance the city’s green infrastructure where possible.

The city is very distinctive owing to its unique topography and interplay of townscape and landscape. It has a rich intimate and broad landscape setting with a range of green infrastructure assets, and varied biodiversity. The complex of ridge lines that encircle and divide the city also figure strongly in the backdrop of many views across the conservation areas and provide a leafy and often dramatic setting to its notable buildings. Such elements are fundamental to the city’s special character. The value of the natural environment is recognised and embedded within the planning policy framework.

Any future development proposals must carefully consider the positive natural characteristics and qualities of the site and its local and wider value and context. This will ensure development will protect the existing landscape and local green infrastructure assets. It should seek to optimise benefits and contribute positively to the natural environment while conforming to the management aims and actions as set out in **section 7**.



**Fig 14**, the College of St Hild & St Bede has an enclosed collegiate air where the formality of the buildings is softened by the mature landscaping. The site has a parkland character within and provides a significant part of the green backdrop to the Elvet Area. This results in a place of high aesthetic quality that contributes to the overall visual quality and character of this part of the city centre



*Good design principles*

The design of new development should adopt these general design principles:

- Relate well to the geography, topography, landscape and history of the place.
- Respect the positive characteristics that define the city’s urban form relevant to the site specific location, for example plan form, building lines, historic street pattern and layout, building scale, massing and proportions, plot and block shapes and dimensions.
- It should follow historic plot widths and avoid merging or sub-division of historic plots, avoiding harm to burgage plots.
- Provide strong active frontages.
- Respect the surrounding built form with regards to height, scale, massing, form, material, styles and detailing.
- Respond positively to the local vernacular paying due regard to street frontages in terms of symmetry/ordering, verticality, repetition, fenestration, and detailing as relevant to the location.
- Respect important views.

- Use high quality materials that reflect or respond to the dominant material palette of the street.
- Create new views and juxtapositions that add variety and interest to the area.
- Provide positive connections and pedestrian permeability, embracing existing routes, and good quality public realm where relevant.

**Fig 15**, good examples of modern residential development successfully assimilated into its historic context.





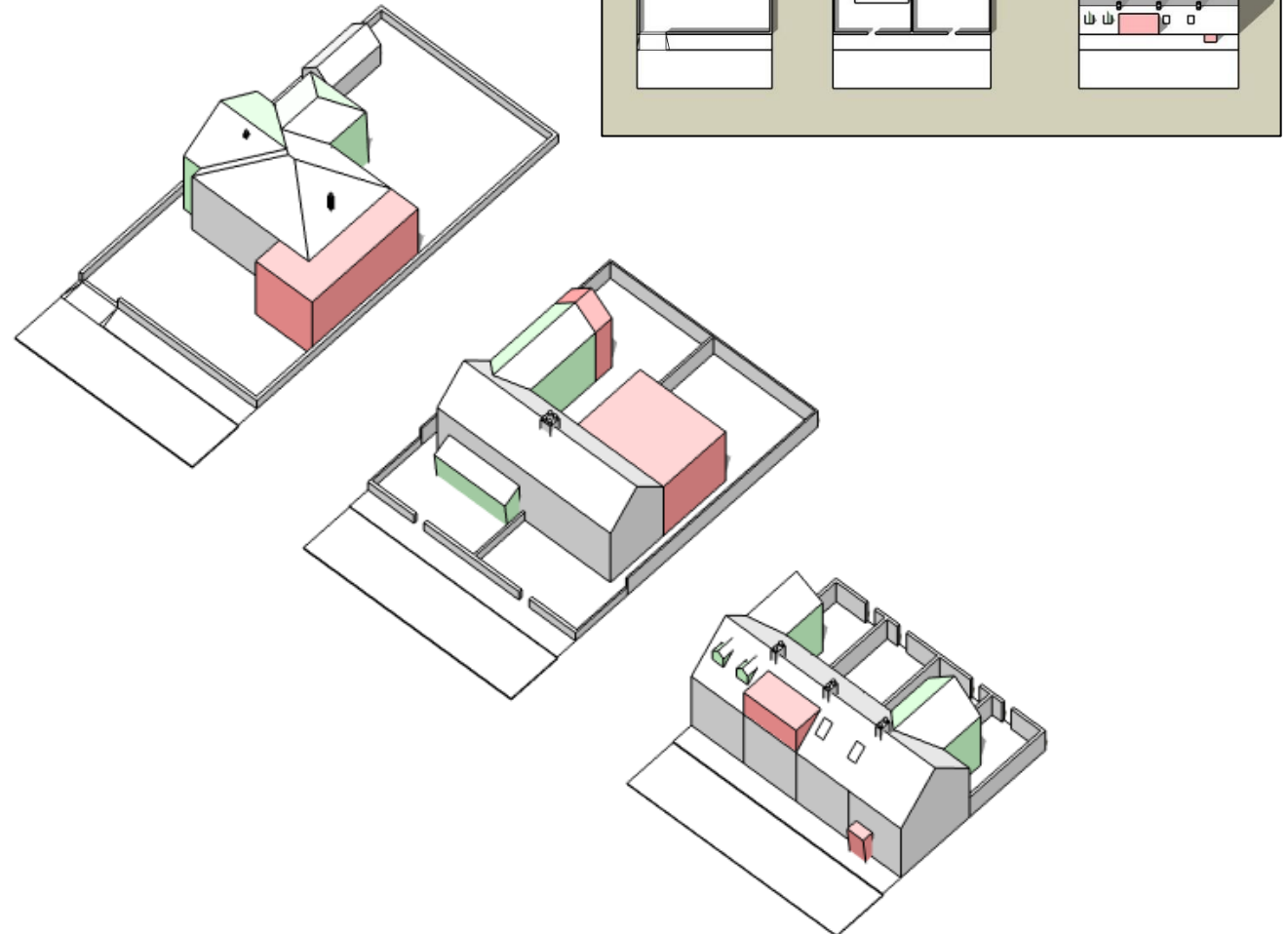
## How should extensions be designed?

Each individual building can play a role in defining the character of the street and place, and therefore extensions, that provide the most common form of new development in city, should be sympathetic to preserve or enhance that character rather than appearing at odds. Generally, extensions should:

- Adopt a form that is in keeping with the host building.
- Be of an appropriate size, scale, and massing so it does not appear inappropriately dominant or overpowering.
- Use matching materials and emulate detailing of the host building.
- Respect the pattern, size, shape, and style of the existing openings.
- Have a roof shape, pitch, and form that complements the existing roof.
- Appear subordinate usually achieved by lower ridge and eaves levels and stepped-in building lines.
- Not imbalance the streetscene or create a terracing effect.

In some cases, exceptional and good quality, interesting contemporary designs may be achievable, and it is important not to stifle creativity or imaginative contemporary design approaches.

**Fig 16,** examples of good (green) and bad (red) typical extension designs with top view right.



**Action 2.8**

New development proposals within the conservation areas should conform to the principles set out in the County Durham Design Code SPD, where relevant, and supporting settlement study for Durham City.

The County Durham Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets down an approach for ensuring well designed buildings and places that are suited to County Durham, with a specific section in the code relating to historic cities, such as Durham City.

The document is broken up into sections covering context, significance and setting to provide an understanding to help formulate the design process, then a model design code and checklist providing design guidance in different locations and contexts.

The code supports the planning framework for ensuring high quality design and is intended to support all types of development although the document is housing focused. The document can be used by applicants and their design teams, local communities and their representatives, Councillors who make planning decisions and local authority planning officers in assessing the quality and appropriateness of planning applications.

It is a key and important tool to ensure that new development is well designed and high quality that responds positively to the site and its local and wider context.

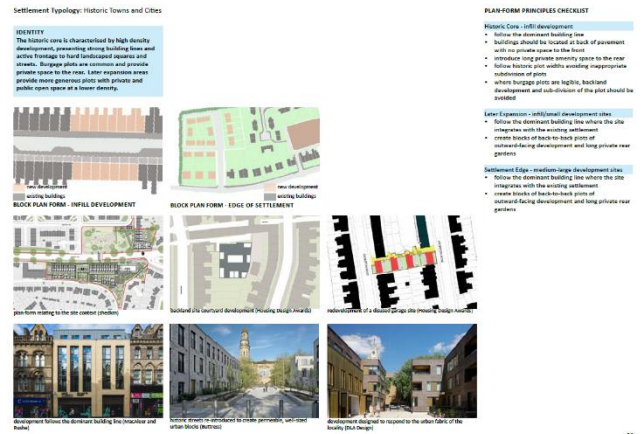
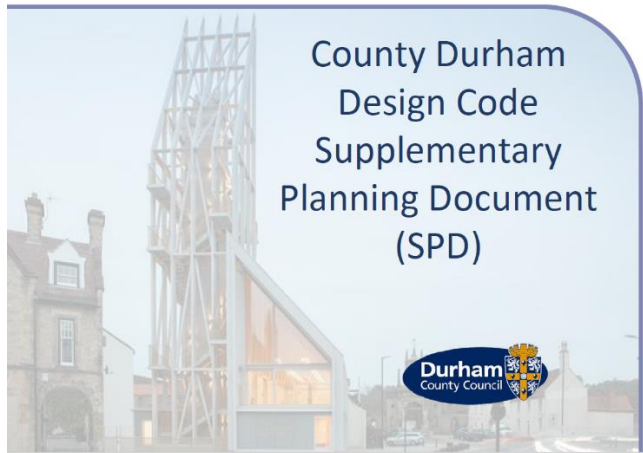


Fig 17 example of contemporary residential development that is not very successful, the aspiration was to introduce a high quality newer character, but it is out of scale and includes design features that do not respond positively to its historic domestic surroundings.

The Design Code aims to inspire design excellence through the creation of locally inspired buildings and places which celebrate and reinforce the unique character, identity, heritage and culture of County Durham.

By providing clarity about what is meant by high quality locally distinctive design - in the context of County Durham Plan Policy 29 (Sustainable Design) and requirements set down in other policy guidance - it can aid the planning and implementation of all types and scale of new development"

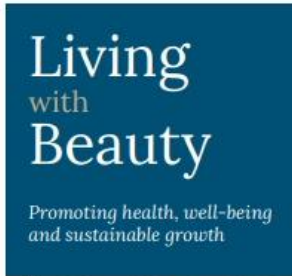


The settlement study sits alongside the design code, and other supplementary planning documents, and sets down the different settlement typologies found across County Durham. Each study provides a landscape overview, a set of sub areas, explains the origins and historic development, and an analysis of the area’s layout, built form, architecture, materials, and general condition of place. These documents combined with the CAMP will provide an invaluable toolkit for developers to help them create better quality development and uplift design standards in the city.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the importance of good design. Following the government’s Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission in 2021 and the resulting report ‘Living with beauty’, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated to provide a stronger focus on beauty and design quality in planning policy to ensure the planning system can both encourage beauty and prevent ugliness.

Section 12 of the NPPF sets out the importance of creating high-quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. It promotes the role of good design in achieving sustainable development, which creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

[Living with beauty: report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100222/bb-bbc-report-2020.pdf)



The report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission

JANUARY 2020



**Shopfronts and signage**

Durham is a vibrant mixed use city with a number of commercial streets. Within these there is a multitude of shop fronts and their associated advertisements to attract custom, some are historic, others modern, in both traditional and contemporary forms and styles.

Well-designed shopfronts and signs help create a sense of place and contribute very positively to the character and visual appearance of the area, that alongside outdoor seating and eating areas, add to the vitality and vibrancy of the place. In the city there are many positive examples of surviving historic and traditional timber shop fronts and it is of the upmost importance that these are retained and any alterations to them carried out sympathetically. There is a risk when a new owner takes possession, in terms of re-branding and the potential to undertake insensitive alterations that can be damaging, this can include corporate colour schemes.

There are a number of modern shopfronts and signs of lesser quality design that detract from the character and visual appearance of the host building and in succession the visual amenity of the streetscene. It is important that these are not repeated in the future and that opportunities to reverse insensitive shopfront and signs are taken whenever possible.

**Management Aim 3**  
To ensure existing historic and traditionally designed shopfronts are retained, with works to them undertaken in a sympathetic manner, proposals for new and replacement shopfronts are of a high standard of design appropriate to the character of the host building and its context.

**Action 3.1**  
Surviving historic and good quality traditional shopfronts and architectural features are to be retained and preserved. Where in a poor condition repair is to be encouraged, loss must be justified, and replacement carried out sympathetically.

**Action 3.2**  
Any proposed new shopfronts must be sympathetically designed and of good quality, and where relevant with the new design based on visual documentary evidence of the original, or alternatively from positive shop frontages in the site’s context.

**Action 3.3**  
All shop front alterations and replacement works are to be in accordance with the Shopfront Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

There are many examples within the city where modern replacement shopfronts have been introduced, that stand out due to being aesthetically inferior to their historic and traditional counterparts. These changes have often been at the expense of the original shopfronts basic rules with traditional materials, scale, proportion, and detailing ignored, for cheaper alternatives that have an adverse visual effect and dilute the historic character of the place.

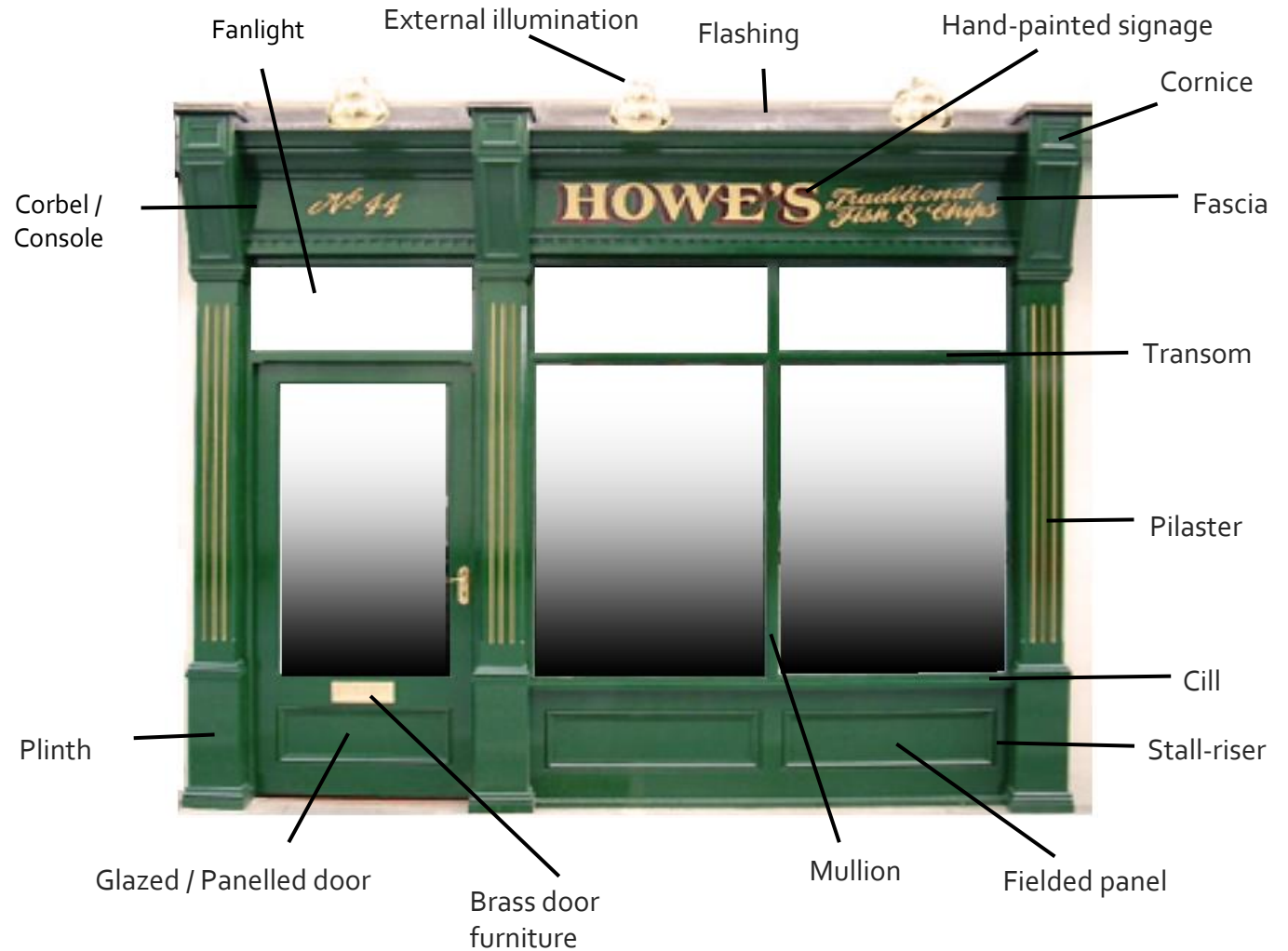
Where documentary and/or physical evidence is lacking, new shopfront designs should be based upon positive examples within the street or surrounding area, that are appropriate to the period of the building. This is of particular importance where there is uniformity of design. New designs should take the aesthetic of the whole building into consideration, and the proposal should harmonise with the shopfronts and buildings in the surrounding area.

The promotion and delivery of good shopfront design is essential to the preservation and enhancement of the character of the city, in succession enhancing the retail and leisure experience for customers and visual amenity for the general public. This not only relates to shopfronts within historic buildings, but good design is also important to new leisure and commercial frontages to modern development, here there can be more freedom to provide visually interesting designs appropriate to the buildings architectural style, context and setting.



## What is good shopfront design?

- Good proportions and balance that unify with the rest of the host building.
- Designed to “frame” the view and opening into the shop itself.
- Designed to complement and take cues from neighbouring shop fronts that are of good quality.
- Include features such as pilasters to frame the entrance and windows, stall riser to provide grounding and protection. Corbels or capitals to finish off the top of the pilaster, cornice and fascia to frame the upper part and provide a signage zone, appropriate window layout, and recessed entrance doors.
- Colour finishes to be considered in the context of the street and overall character of the area, avoid being excessively bold and garish, and consider the use of heritage paints.
- Contemporary shopfronts should follow the same basic principle in terms of balanced composition, vertical glazing, lateral framing elements, and simple configurations with a “clean” aesthetic.



**Fig 18**, an example of good traditional shopfront design, extract from the shop front SPD.

## What are the benefits of good shopfront design?

- Creating a positive shopping experience.
- Increasing property value.
- Conserving and enhancing the character and visual appearance of the conservation area.
- Higher pedestrian footfall and increased sales turnover.
- Help with the creation of a shopping community that includes those that wish to buy and sell locally.
- Encourage new investment and long-term sustainability.

**Action 3.4**

Where the opportunity arises existing unsympathetic additions, clutter, and fixtures to existing shop frontages will be reversed, and where in a deteriorated condition repair and restoration encouraged.

The visual appearance of shopfronts can be harmed by elements such as security shutters, window clutter and too much signage, over boarding when vacant, modern fixings, condition issues and a lack of regular general maintenance. The overall adverse visual impact is often elevated when such issues affect heritage assets. They are generally easy to resolve and should be encouraged as this would greatly benefit the visual amenity of the streetscene and conservation area.

**Fig 19,** below examples of good and bad shopfronts and cluttered shop windows.





**Management Aim 4**

To ensure existing historic, traditional, and good quality modern signage is preserved and that existing insensitive modern forms of signage are replaced to a higher standard of design where the opportunity arises.

**Action 4.1**

Future signage proposals to be of a sympathetic design and of appropriate quality relevant to the host building, location and context, in terms of size, style, design, materials, colouring and content.

**Action 4.2**

Utilise available planning enforcement powers where expedient to preserve or enhance visual amenity resulting from those existing shop fronts and signs that are unauthorised.

Signs and advertisements can have a significant impact on the streetscene, both positively and negatively. Their purpose is to attract attention and they are important for commercial activity. Signs come in many different forms including fascia signs, hanging and projecting signs, wall mounted signs, menu boards, pavement signs, and window graphics.

It is of the utmost importance that the design of such items is well considered and appropriate to the host buildings, and the wider streetscene, so that they positively impact upon the surrounding environment while at the same time delivering the desired effect in terms of attracting customers. They should not be oversized, but rather proportionate with the shop front as a whole, the type and size of the lettering must be suitable so that it is clear, legible, and visually appealing, and colour palettes overall but subtle and not too garish. Painted timber is a traditional material and is encouraged, but depending on the host building and its context other options could be considered, but uPVC, acrylic and metal boxes would generally not be appropriate as this gives a poor quality appearance and does not weather well.

The visual quality of signs can often be dictated by corporate branding and there can be pressure to deliver such house style signage. However, house styles can be inappropriate, depending on the site specific context, but they may need to be adapted to respect the age, style and character of the host building and its conservation area surroundings.

**Action 4.3**

Future proposals for illuminated signage are to be considered on an individual basis, illumination should relate to an established night-time use and where illumination will not adversely affect visual amenity, the level, form and type of illumination to be appropriate to the site’s context.

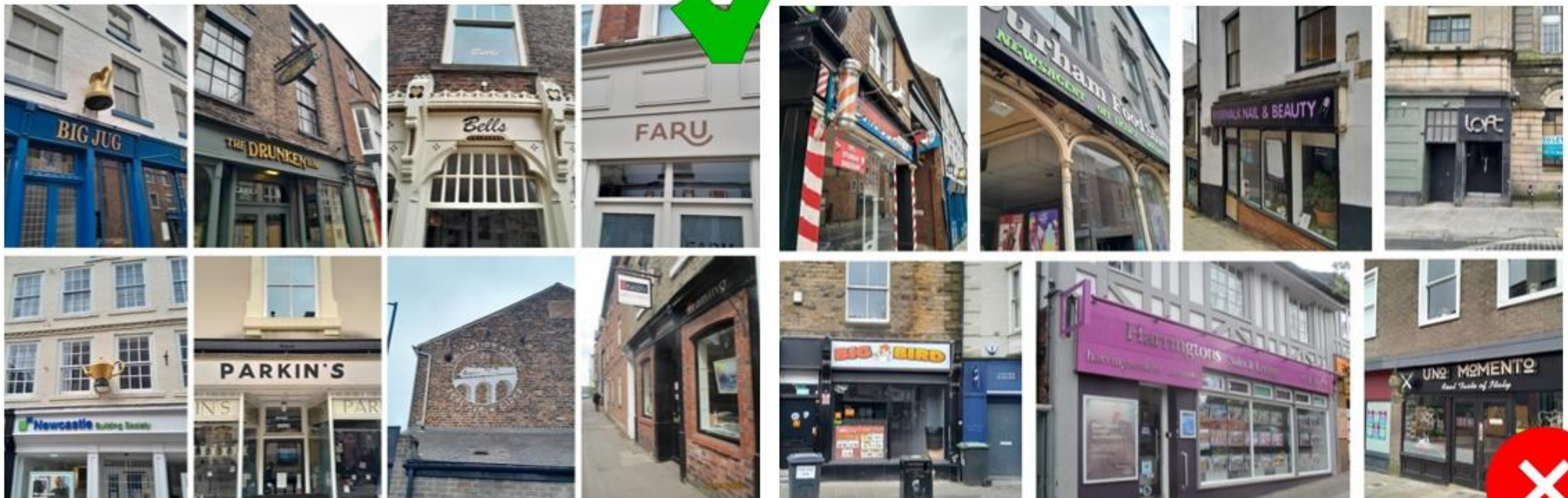
The lighting of commercial units, streets and spaces must be carefully considered, an over illumination could potentially be visually harmful not only to the building and street but the setting of other heritage assets. In some cases, sufficient illumination can be provided by ambient street lighting and interior lighting, and illumination should only be permitted to night-time business uses, and where appropriate to the context.

If illumination is justified then the form, style, level and colour should be sympathetic and subtle to prevent adverse nighttime visual impacts. The intrusion of artificial light extensively illuminating areas that are not supposed to be lit or intruding visually in wider townscape and river corridor views must be resisted. The dark woodland and river cloak forming the setting to the WHS is of particular sensitivity in this regard.

Boxy, bright, internally illuminated forms of signage can often be very detrimental, with external forms, or individual letters back/halo lit, subtler and more sympathetic. External illumination sources must be concealed as much as possible and should be carefully directed at the signs to avoid excessive light spillage and glare.

**Fig 20**, different examples of good quality signage found within the city centre, in the form of individually applied lettering, restrained external illumination, hand paints signs, hanging signs, and unique pieces such as the teapot and jug.

**Fig 21**, different examples of low quality signage found within the city centre, garish colours, modern internally illuminated box signs, oversized signs, and fascia's out of keeping with traditional timber shop fronts.





**Action 4.4**

In collaboration with Highways explore ways of reducing and controlling the number, type, and positions of freestanding pavement signs within the city's primary commercial streets.

All advertisements affect the visual appearance of the place in which they are displayed both positively and negatively, and there is a need to balance requirements of attracting the attention of potential customers to the business, with conserving the character and visual amenity of the city.

During normal business hours there is a general proliferation of free standing signs within the city, some businesses having more than one. In places there is a cumulative effect where they add clutter and are both disruptive to visual amenity and cause obstructions in the footway especially when far forward from the premises that they relate too. The impact is elevated when they are viewed against many other advertisements on the building.

The opportunity should be taken to rationalise the number of these types of signs and remove those that are excessive, this will improve visual amenity and remove causes of obstruction for pedestrians.

This can be achieved by putting a strategy in place of effective and proper enforcement of laws relating to highways where appropriate and when A-boards and other free standing signs are placed upon the highway that includes footways, footpaths, paved area and pavements.

It is recognised that businesses need to attract customers and freestanding pavements signs would not be so harmful if numbers are restricted, they are placed in a suitable visible location of public highway, they are of a good quality and consistent in size to secure some uniformity, and the design consistent with the main frontage.



**Fig 22**, some of the city streets and spaces are adversely affected by a high number of pavement signs that add clutter, hinder pedestrian movement, and some are positioned so they are unrelated to the business premises they advertise.



### Management Aim 5

Any proposals for new and/or replacement security measures to the retail, business and leisure uses within the city must be carefully considered and justified by the use.

#### Action 5.1

All new security measures must be justified and designed on a site specific basis, with the visual impacts mitigated as far as practically possible and should only be considered when relevant to the specific business use with justification.

There is a recognised need for security and that criminal activity and anti-social behaviour is a concern for business operators and owners, more so for certain uses. However, the introduction of security measures, especially external security shutters, can often result in a poor “deadened” frontage preventing window shopping and contributing to a sense of hostility because of their appearance that negatively affects the building and streetscene. The more this is repeated on one particular place the worse the effect. Added to the above, they can have visually poor bulky external housing units, and can harm architectural features of the shopfront.

Therefore, justification must be provided, different options explored, and the aim should be to strike an appropriate balance between improving security and preserving the character and appearance of the building and the surrounding area.



**Fig 23**, above, examples of the different types of security shutters found within the city. Completely solid roller shutters should be avoided as they have the appearance of garage doors that are very out of keeping and visually incongruous giving a “deadening” visual affect. Grill and perforated types allow views through and those set well back from the shop window can be visually less impactful. The design should take into consideration the significance of the building and its role in the streetscene.



### 2.3 Theme 3

#### Heritage

The historic environment is central to the county’s cultural heritage and sense of identity, and is an invaluable resource handed down from the past that must be conserved for the benefit of this and future generations. Durham City boasts a multi-layered historic environment spanning from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries comprising of a significant number of heritage assets with a wide range of ages, uses, and architectural styles.

These buildings define what is special about the place, and it is important that they are protected. There is the recognition for potential beneficial changes to historic buildings, spaces, and places to enhance, better reveal and reinforce their significance that can overall enrich the historic environment and how it is experienced.

**Management Aim 6**  
Ensure that the city’s historic buildings and sites are retained, conserved, and where possible enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance.

**Action 6.1**  
The Design & Conservation Team will continue to provide specialist advice and comment on pre application enquiries, listed building consent and planning applications ensuring that the significance, character, appearance and setting of the city’s heritage assets is preserved.

**Action 6.2**  
To ensure that any alterations to the physical fabric of heritage assets within the city are appropriate and sympathetic while taking opportunities to enhance including reversing any previous harmful alterations. This can be via proactive engagement with owners and/or through the formal planning process.

Many historic buildings within the city have been subject to inappropriate alterations such as loss of traditional windows and doors, replaced by uPVC in varying styles and quality, the rendering or painting of original brickwork, enlarging original openings, a cumulation of modern fixtures and fittings, and from works such as lowering or complete removal of chimney stacks. All of these types of changes harm the character and appearance of the building, the uniformity of the street, and the conservation area.

Fig 24, image of different types of heritage assets within the city.



Retention of historic and traditional materials, period architectural features and elements of detailing, is critical to avoid incremental diminishment of historic character, while maximising opportunities to reverse previous harmful changes would be very positive.

The most visibly obvious issue with the city's historic buildings results from use of uPVC for windows and doors that is most often harmful. This is owing to the inappropriate style and design, operation, heaviness, detailing and finish, making them appear markedly different to the more refined and aesthetically superior traditional timber counterparts.

It is however important to recognise that technology has advanced in recent years with a number of high end uPVC heritage vertical sliding sash window units available. These can still result in a positive visual change for example when they are proposed to replace a modern top opening timber casement that is already out of keeping with the period character and visual appearance of the property, or when replacing an existing uPVC casement window unit of lesser quality. This is due to providing a traditional vertical sliding opening mechanism, a window of a style, appearance and glazing configuration more commensurate with the period of the building in comparison to the existing situation.

Other common modern introductions into the historic environment include roof-lights or dormers when undertaking attic conversions. Such items should be within rear elevations where possible unless there is a historic precedent for them within the front elevation. If for example the subject property is part of a historic terrace where the roofscape is intact, then interventions must be discouraged so that it is conserved.



**Fig 25.** above an example of a uPVC heritage sash window (left) showing the different in aesthetic quality compared to standard bottom different styles of standard uPVC casement windows that fail to imitate a traditional sash appearance.



**Fig 26**, streetscene views highlighting unsympathetic alterations to historic terraced properties that are commonly seen across the city.



**Action 6.3**

Seek to work with the owners of historic buildings where possible to address disrepair or condition issues sympathetically, and where dialogue fails, and/or where the extent of deterioration or dereliction is sufficient, take appropriate enforcement action to rectify the issues.

There are some historic buildings within the city that are vacant and deteriorating, others that are in-use but still visibly suffering from condition related issues due to a lack of a regular maintenance regime, and general fabric decay because of age and natural weathering.

There are also instances where historic buildings have been inappropriately altered for example through replacement of traditional fabric and features with inferior harmful modern alternatives, and where front elevations are marred by modern fixtures and fittings. It is of the utmost importance that buildings affected by such issues are addressed whenever possible, harmful alterations are reversed, and future ones avoided.

Sound regular maintenance and appropriate repair not only safeguards the historic physical fabric but also contributes towards the aesthetic qualities of a place and can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of a conservation area. Maintenance is defined by Historic England as “routine work necessary to keep the fabric of a place in good order”, it differs from repair in that it is pre-planned, regular activity intended to reduce instances where more extensive remedial or unforeseen work is needed. Regular maintenance ensures that small problems do not escalate into larger, more costly and impactful issues.

Regular inspection of building fabric and services is the starting point to identify any issues and specific maintenance tasks. This can include cleaning of gutters, drain grills or debris, cleaning blocked downpipes, removing vegetation growth, re-pointing, and cleaning and/or re-painting render, painting joinery. **A number of organisations have useful guidance:**

[Maintenance and Repair of Older Buildings | Historic England](#)

[Top Tips for Maintaining Your Listed Building – The Historic England Blog \(heritagecalling.com\)](#)

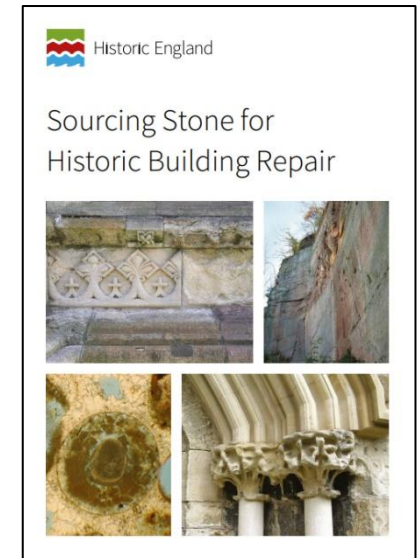
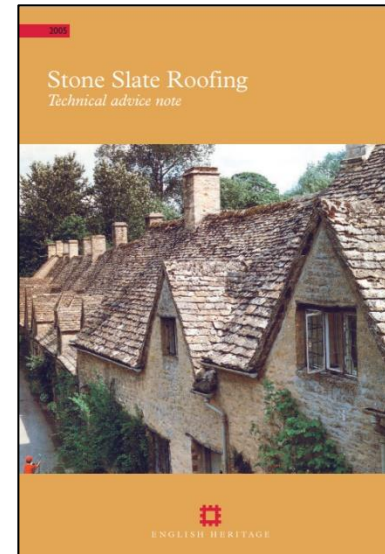
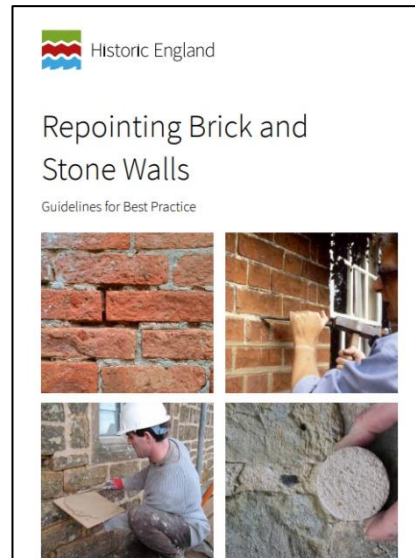
[Maintenance Calendar\\_4.pdf \(spab.org.uk\)](#)

The majority of the buildings within the conservation areas have no obvious condition issues and appear to be sound. But there are some examples that would benefit from repair works, and fabric continues to decay as time progresses so those that do not require repair works now may do so in the near future. The approach to repair should generally be to uphold the use of traditional materials and techniques, so that the physical characteristics and visual appearance of the historic building is conserved. But there may be instances where inappropriate modern fabric has decayed and requires replacement, providing a positive opportunity for better replacement in different materials traditional to the building.



There can be major benefits by improving the breathability of historic fabric as originally constructed when this is impeded by the use of modern materials, for example replacing hard cement pointing with softer lime mortar or replacing non-porous cement render with lime render.

The above types of modern material can cause moisture build up, condensation, damp and mould growth. It is of the utmost importance that when considering repair, the type of materials and techniques used are sympathetic to the period, construction and character of the individual building. When considering renewal of fabric, a conservation-led philosophy should be adopted, that is one of minimal loss and intervention for maximum long terms benefit.



**Further reading**

[Repointing Brick and Stone Walls | Historic England](#)

[Repairing Walls of an Older Home | Historic England](#)

[Repair or Renew the Roof in an Older Home | Historic England](#)

[Stone Slate Roofing | Historic England](#)

[Identifying and Sourcing Stone for Repair | Historic England](#)

**Action 6.4**

Continue to monitor the properties included within the Article 4 (2) Directions and utilise available planning enforcement powers where expedient to reverse the effects of harmful unauthorised alterations to unlisted historic buildings.

Some of the issues identified on the previous pages can often result from new owners taking control of an unlisted historic property or because of absent landlords. This can lead to unauthorised works being carried out in streets where an Article 4 Direction has been served and remains in operation.

There have been cases where enforcement powers have been used effectively to secure reversal of such works and reinstate sympathetic traditional materials and period architectural features. For example, securing replacement of unauthorised manmade fibre cement slate back to traditional Welsh slate, and uPVC casement windows changed back to traditional sliding sash windows.

The Article 4 Direction has also successfully resulted in enhancement works, for example where existing windows are insensitive modern uPVC or timber casements replaced with better quality period style heritage uPVC vertical sliding sashes secured through the formal planning application process. Following review of the conservation area a number of historic buildings are proposed to be included within the Article 4 to ensure they are preserved.

**Action 6.5**

To consider buildings and structures identified within the appraisals as NDHAs for potential inclusion on the local list for Durham City or for potential national designation. All these heritage assets to be added to the Historic Environment Record.

The individual conservation area appraisals in combination identify over three hundred NDHAs, these vary considerably in interest, age, architectural style, character and potentially in value. The local list for Durham City has the ability for ongoing nominations to be considered for inclusion, that would recognise higher-end NDHAs giving them a greater degree of protection. It would therefore be very proactive to undertake further detailed criteria assessment of the NDHAs for consideration in the local list going forward. Based upon the individual assessment final scoring (10+) will identify those that could potentially be put forward for inclusion on the national list.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) is a fundamental part of the evidence base of the management of the historic environment both above and below ground. The HER is often the first port of call for people wanting to find out more about the historic environment for the city and it should therefore be as comprehensive as possible, and enhanced when the opportunity arises.

**Fig 27**, photos of non-designated heritage assets top, St Oswald's Church Vicarage Church Street, Mountjoy Crescent and St Marys College.





**Action 6.6**

To continue the Regulation 7 to ensure that for sale and to let advertising boards are omitted from the conservation areas in the places most adversely affected by their visual presence and continue to monitor the situation.

Following a public consultation and application to the Secretary of State a Regulation 7 Direction was served in parts of the city to give control of the number of to let boards on display. These were increasing significantly in number in specific streets within the conservation area, mainly in association with an increase in the delivery of student accommodation. To let boards serving to be detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area, with significant representation made to the LPA over a period of time concerning such impacts. The Regulation 7 is a key tool for such works otherwise difficult to control, due to letting boards being a class of advertisement that benefit from "deemed consent".

**Further guidance**

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/18910/To-Let-boards-control>

**Action 6.7**

To ensure that the setting of designated and NDHA's is sustained, conserved and where possible enhanced through the formal planning process.

Within such a densely developed urban city that grew up on the peninsula expanding outwards, contained by the surrounding hilly landscape, and given the high number of heritage assets, settings in Durham City are intrinsically connected by geographical circumstances. They often overlap and can have intentional design and group value adding significance. Therefore, the historic environment is sensitive to change, and new development must consider the sites immediate context and its wider townscape, river corridor and landscape setting, and the interrelationships (physical and visual) between buildings and spaces that can contribute significantly to the character and appearance and distinctiveness of the place.

Cumulative change is also a major factor. Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development affecting its setting, consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset.

Negative change could include severing the last link between an asset and its original setting; positive change could include the restoration of a building's original designed landscape or the removal of structures impairing key views.



**Fig 28**, the view of the cathedral from the roundabout at the bottom of Gilesgate Bank, the extent and quality of the view reduced by the modern development blocks and street clutter in the foreground.

# What is setting?

Setting refers to;

*”the surroundings in which the heritage assets is understood, experienced and appreciated, including past and present relationships to urban townscape and landscape”.*

The importance of setting lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. Setting is primarily visual but can include other elements such as tranquillity or remoteness, historic connections and intrinsic relationships between buildings, places and spaces. It is important to understand the setting of a heritage asset, and what elements contribute either positively, negatively, or are neutral, when considering proposed development so that the detailed design can be informed on a sound evidence base to ensure that the setting of the heritage asset(s) is preserved or enhanced.

### Further guidance

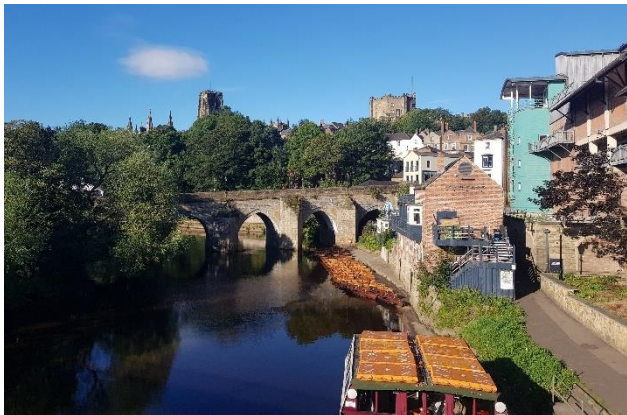
<https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/setting-assets/setting-assets.html>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/>

**Fig 28**, the enclosed dense urban and civic space of the Market Place dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, informing the setting to the many historic buildings surrounding and within it, their settings inseparable and experienced intimately from views within the space.



**Fig 29**, the river corridor is intrinsic to the inner setting of Durham Castle and Cathedral WHS and many other buildings within the city, the riverbanks forming the “romantic” landscape around the monuments, shaped by the Prince Bishops following the decline in its military role, this is experienced from many vantage points around the city that provide different experiences.



**Fig 30**, the view from the ridge line within Pelaw Woods, showing the relationship between the built form of Elvet, the flat open floodplain land, Durham WHS, and the woodland that encapsulates the historic core of the city.



Historic England

## The Setting of Heritage Assets

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)



**Action 6.8**

To ensure that proposals for change within the historic environment take into consideration any intangible cultural heritage of the site or its setting and to ensure that such values are sustained and protected.

The significance of the place lies not only in the built form but in the activities that took place within and around them, and the lives of the people who dwelt and worked in them. The value of and special interest of buildings and sites can be elevated by their use, and the histories and different perspectives of the people who used them both historically and today. The names can also be an important part of their interest.

Other intangible heritage can include traditional skills and trades, routes and the experiences they provide, and the range of events and festivals that took and continue to take place. For example, such values include the medieval role of the Cathedral as a Chartered Sanctuary; and the medieval practice of pilgrimage through the City, the practice of traditional skills such as masonry and joinery in the conservation of buildings, and places that are important social centres, providing a gathering space such as the Market Place and The Racecourse. The city's intangible heritage is to continue to be valued and protected for this and the future generations.

**Action 6.9**

To seek, through collaborative working, and exploring available resources, opportunities to secure sustainable re use and sympathetic restoration of historic buildings identified as being at risk.

Vacancy is a real threat to the physical fabric and significance of historic buildings, as maintenance issues go unaddressed, they can become structurally unsound, important historic fabric can be lost that is irreversible and they can be susceptible to damage from vandalism, or worse, arson.

The identification of vacant and derelict historic buildings at risk is important in focusing attention on the issue. This then acts as a monitoring mechanism and helps to inform proactive conservation strategies with the ultimate aim to see them removed from the "at risk" category.

This requires close collaboration with building owners and detailed consideration as to how resources can be used to target where they are most needed. Continued surveys should be carried out to assess the status and condition of identified buildings at risk, and potentially others that have fallen into disuse, dereliction or disrepair.

This will provide a useful means of monitoring significant issues and change within the conservation areas and to indicate where actions may be required to halt or reverse deterioration. Such a process is important to safeguard the special interest and character of the city's historic environment for this and future generations. In worst case scenarios dereliction can threaten a heritage assets significance.

**Further guidance**

[Buildings at Risk | SAVE Britain's Heritage \(savebritainsheritage.org\)](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/)

[Search the Heritage at Risk Register | Historic England](https://www.heritageatriskregister.org/)

### *Vacant/Disused historic buildings*

#### **Miners Hall, 15-17 North Road (grade II listed)**

The building is located on the south side of North Road near to its junction with Nevilledale Terrace. It is the former Miners Hall, listed at grade II, dating from 1875, a very distinctive building of a high status in its surroundings and it is a historic landmark in the townscape. The building has been vacant for a long period of time and visually is suffering from deterioration, its full condition would need to be understood to inform development options.

#### **Options appraisal**

- Commercial / Leisure use potential.
- Large floorplates may be offputting.
- Full surveys required to establish true structural and fabric condition.
- Surveys to inform full scope of remedial works to rectify the issues.
- Limited historic fabric and features internally therefore greater scope for changes to secure re-use.
- External alteration opportunities limited given restrictions imposed by architectural style and facade quality expressing original use.
- Any new signage would need to be carefully considered.



*Site location plan*



*Site highlighted in local context*



*Site image*



### Riverbanks, South Street Mill (grade II listed)

The building is located on the outer west bank of the River Wear and at the head of the weir. It was built in the medieval period as a fulling mill converted to a corn mill in 1462, believed to be one of six mills in the city during the 13<sup>th</sup> century owned by the priory. It was previously in commercial use for various purposes including a boat building workshop until 1945, operating as an informal club house and boat store since the 1950s. The Mill House was previously in residential use but has been vacant for a long period of time. The building fabric has continued to deteriorate over a prolonged period and it is prone to vandalism.



Site location plan



Site highlighted in local context

### Options appraisal

- Commercial / Leisure use potential, Mill House residential/office/tourist accommodation potential.
- Isolated location outside the main commercial streets of the city may be offputting.
- Accessibility and flooding issues given riverside location.
- Full surveys required to establish true condition and to inform appropriate repair/restoration scheme.
- Very limited opportunities for external changes given historic use and conserved character.
- Feasibility study beneficial to explore options.
- Ecologically sensitive area.

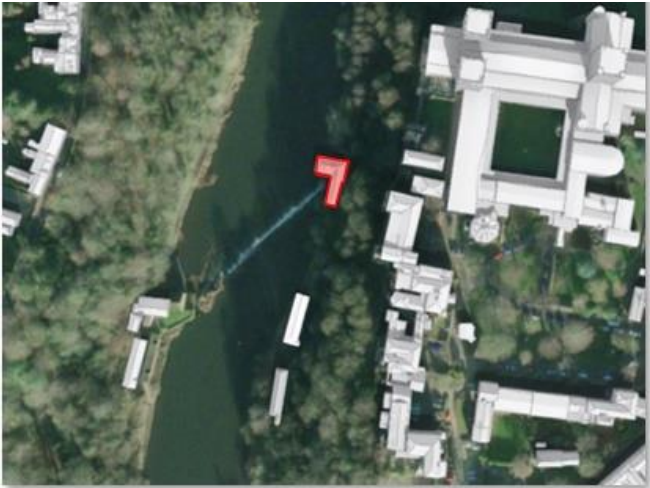


Site images



**Riverbanks, Fulling Mill (grade II listed)**

The building is located on the inner east bank of the River Wear at the north head of the weir opposite South Street Mill. Again it dates from the medieval period and is the other surviving priory mill. However the building that stands today is mostly 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century incorporating early fragments. The building became the first Durham University museum of archaeology opening in 1833. From 1956 it housed the university's archaeology department becoming a museum again in the 1970s up until 2014 when it became vacant and it remains disused. The building fabric has continued to deteriorate over a prolonged period and it is prone to vandalism.



Site location plan



Site highlighted in local context

**Options appraisal**

- Different use options and potential.
- Isolated location may be problematic
- Accessibility and flooding issues given riverside location.
- Full surveys required to establish true condition and to inform appropriate repair/restoration scheme.
- Very limited opportunities for external changes given historic use and conserved character.
- Feasibility study beneficial to explore options.
- Ecological sensitive area.



Site image





### Riverbanks, Counts House (grade II listed)

The building is located on the riverbanks at the south end of the peninsula. It was built c.1810 as a summer house for No.12 South Bailey, when the Bailey gardens stretched down to the riverside. The building has been considered “at risk” for a long period of time due to being disused, its deteriorated condition, and has suffered from vandalism. Various options for its re-use have been appraised in the past but none have materialised these include a café, visitor centre, catering and education centre.

#### Options appraisal

- Mixed use potential possible visitor or interpretation centre, café etc.
- Isolated location may be offputting.
- Difficult accessibility due to location.
- Works to make usable such as providing new heating ventilation, power supply and distribution would need to be carefully considered.
- Full survey required to establish true condition and to inform appropriate repair/restoration scheme.
- Building is within the floodplain.
- Ecological sensitive area.



Site location plan



Site images





**Former City of Durham Swimming Baths, Elvet Waterside (NDHA)**

The building is located at the east end of Elvet Waterside, facing the River Wear, and near to The Racecourse with Old Elvet behind in the south. It was built in the 1920s on the site of the original baths and wash house c.1856, and is in an inter-war style with a strong presence on the riverside. The swimming baths stayed open until 2008 and has been disused since this time. It is in a derelict and severely deteriorated physical condition, worsened as it is prone to vandalism.

**Options appraisal**

- Mixed use potential.
- Within floodplain placing significant restrictions.Requires awareness of flood prevention as an essential measure in any new building design.
- Retention and reuse of existing building to be explored.
- The physical and technical constraints of the building implies that its adaptation to an alternative use may be improbable.
- Retention of historic boundary walls.
- Particular emphasis would need to be given to the direct inter-visibility between the site and Durham WHS.
- Would need to respond positively to historic urban, riverscape, and landscape contexts.
- Consider contemporary design of exceptional quality.



Site location plan



Site highlighted in local context



Site images





**Former industrial buildings, Back Western Hill (NDHA)**

The site comprises of five linked former Victorian industrial buildings located on the west side of Back Western Hill. They are of different phases of construction, originally dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, fully established by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They have been substantially altered and re-built and are of a general functional design. The buildings were formally in use as a garage but have been disused for many years and are in a deteriorated physical condition.

**Options appraisal**

- Residential use potential.
- Retain and convert principle historic blocks, but full condition survey would be required to determine feasibility.
- Redevelopment between 1 and 3 storeys.
- Must respond to the topography, existing built form and back street character.
- Any increase in density must be broken down by inclusion of building line and height variants.
- Elevation treatments to be simple that could draw from historic industrial character, including contemporary approach.
- Materials to be high quality reflecting the traditional material palette of the area.
- Very limited scope for private amenity space and parking provision given physical constraints.



Site location



Site images



**Mount Joy, Farm Buildings (NDHA)**

The site comprises of a group of Victorian farm buildings located in the south west corner on the top of the hill at Mount Joy. They comprise of a farm house and a collection of outbuildings adjacent in the north. The buildings have been disused for a prolonged period of time. The farmhouse is in a reasonable condition but the outbuildings are very dillapidated, have missing roofs, sections have collapsed with others unstable.

**Options appraisal**

- Farm house previously in use as office accommodation.
- Farm house in sound condition and easily adaptable to appropriate new use with minimal intervention conserving historic character.
- Farm house requires some fabric restoration work.
- Outbuildings require feasiability study and condition survey.
- Desirability to retain, restore and re use but the physical fabric is very dilapited and repurposing may be unviable.
- Outbuildings have limited new use potential.
- Constrained site on edge of Science Park with limited private access.



Site location plan



Site images





*Archaeology*

Although not an obvious component of the conservation area, archaeological remains contribute to understanding how the city and its environs have developed resulting in their current appearance. Upstanding remains are more obvious, but the character of the modern city has been heavily influenced by buried archaeology through the persistence down the centuries of street patterns, land divisions and property plots.

Development related archaeological excavations in the city have added to the understanding of its past and it is a city of high archaeological importance, potential and interest. Final analysis of 2017-18 archaeological investigation to the rear of No 17 South Bailey produced evidence of occupation in the Bronze Age (2,000BC to 700BC) with remains of timber buildings dating to the Iron Age (1200BC-550BC) which continued in use into the early Roman period.

The city’s archaeological importance is recognised internationally as it forms a key attribute of Durham WHS Outstanding Universal Value relating to the wealth of archaeological remains, documents, collections and building archaeology that the site offers, drawn from its historic continuity of use over the past 1000 years.

**Management Aim 7**  
Seek to ensure that the archaeological importance, interest and potential of the city is preserved, while increasing the knowledge and understanding of the past, for this and future generations.

**Action 7.1**  
Through the formal planning process ensure that the archaeological interest and potential of the site, and impact of the development proposal, is understood, through appropriate assessment the level being relevant to the significance of the site.

**Action 7.2**  
Seek to ensure through the formal planning process that in cases where development may adversely affect archaeological remains, loss must be minimised or mitigated as far as practically possible.

**Action 7.3**  
Work in collaboration with relevant officers to ensure that DCC’s Historic Environment Record (H.E.R) is responsive, proactive and kept up to date as an essential public information resource.



**Fig 31**, photos of archaeological excavations at Nos 5 to 8 South Bailey.

The remains of the past represent a valuable and finite physical resource that contributes significantly to the historic interest of the city, that must be given appropriate consideration for example when new development is proposed, as relevant to the specific site and the nature of the proposal. It is of the upmost importance that archaeological assets are protected and not inadvertently damaged or destroyed. In the planning process early engagement with the LPA including review of relevant local planning policies and consulting the HER is critical to the progression of a development proposal.

Where a site has the potential to have archaeological interest developers should undertake desk based assessments that provide a mechanism for assessing the sites archaeological potential as well as the impacts of the proposal given that archaeological assets can be highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Added to the above, in some cases it may be necessary to carry out further archaeological work such as, field evaluation, watching brief or building recording.

The HER provides detailed public information about the known historic environment, that includes archaeological remains, and is a valuable tool of the planning system, this is a dynamic and constantly evolving resource. The knowledge gained from archaeology is generally not available through any other resources and development-led archaeology is fundamental to understanding and

expanding the knowledge of the past. The HER also brings information together about archaeology, historic buildings, historic structures, finds, and historic landscapes of the wider County it is therefore important that it is kept up to date with new information to help public understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment. Below is an example of a HER record for No 22 Allergate, Durham City.



The HER records are accessible to the public via “Keys to the Past” website that is a database containing information about every known archaeological site in the Durham and Northumberland area from the smallest Roman coin to the largest medieval castle. This is however a abridged version and should not be used solely to inform heritage statements in support of listed building consent or planning applications.

To search Keys to The Past, click <https://keystothepast.info/>

**H7894 : 22, Allergate, Durham City**

**SMR:** 7894  
**Listed Building:** R12485

**General Information**

**Exclude from OPAC** No

**Broad Term** Historic Building

**Summary** HOUSE, TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE

**Technical Description**  
Description of Principal deposits: Not recorded (1)(2).

Street, General comments: Most medieval deeds relate to north side of Allergate which was apparently occupied throughout the medieval period. Most freeholds in private hands, so only documentation is rentals. Most tenements can be traced back to 1329; most detailed rental 1500 (8).

No. 22: A complex and interesting house. Double storey with 2 wide bays; rear section with earlier wing and outshut. The front block appears to be 16th century, with rear wing and perhaps outshut earlier 17th; the rear part was heightened and the present roof constructed in second half of the 18th century.

Property: Features of note, internal: timber framing in front block etc, fireplaces. No Cellar. Timber-framed building as noted in a general review by Emery (1994).

Tie-beam strutted purlin roof construction (6).

**Public Description**  
Kensington House was built in the 16th century. It is a Grade II Listed Building protected by law.

**Changes to Form and Function**

Type	Evidence	Period	Min	Max	Display Date	Interpretation Status
HOUSE	EXTANT BUILDING	Tudor (1485 to 1603) to Elizabethan (1558 to 1603)	1501	1600		
TIMBER FRAMED	EXTANT	Tudor (1485 to 1603)	1485	1603		

**Pictures**

22 Allergate, Durham



*Views & Vistas*

Durham is a city of views created by its distinctive topography and the way in which the urban environment has developed. Views range from incidental glimpses between buildings, into and out of vennels, intimate channelled historic streetscape views, wide open panoramas from hills and ridges, and some views that are world renowned inspiring artists and poets over the centuries and the present day.

The city has a very dramatic skyline of a tumbling of domestic roofs, with the dramatic introduction of historic landmarks such as the Viaduct, the many church towers and spires, and the copper dome of Old Shire Hall, all subordinate to the dominance of Durham Castle and Cathedral, majestically crowning the peninsula. The height of the cathedral tower designed as an eye catcher in the landscape so that pilgrims can find their way.

Views, into, out from, across and through the city, are all fundamental to its special character, with views of the WHS defining its image that is internationally recognised. General views of the townscape, landscape, and river corridor that overlap are also of great importance in conveying the city’s special interest and evolution. There are many sequential views of the cathedral and castle as the move in and out of view with sudden and dramatic reveals. These make an exceptional contribution to the special character of the place and how it is experienced.

The urban form combines with the river, intimate and wider landscape to generate many views of high aesthetic quality that contribute very positively to the conservation areas.

**Management Aim 8**  
To ensure that key and important views across the city are sustained, conserved and enhanced where possible when opportunities arise, this includes day and nighttime views.

**Action 8.1**  
Key and other important views will be protected by impacts being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, where relevant.

**Action 8.2**  
Opportunities will be sought to recover lost views, better reveal or improve views that are reduced and adversely affected by elements such as, intrusive modern developments and unmanaged tree cover, consistent with other relevant management recommendations.

**Action 8.3**  
When arising, and appropriate, seek opportunities for new development to create new views to better reveal the significance of the city and the WHS.

The key views identified in the CAMP have been selected because they define the image and sense of place of the area, and/or are focused on heritage assets of higher significance, or a combination of the above. Obviously, many of the views are focused on Durham Castle and Cathedral but careful consideration was given to including the most significant and well-known public views, while at the same time identifying any detrimental elements within the views where there is an opportunity for enhancement.

The key views identified must not be considered a definitive list as the city’s townscape is far too rich and important to discount other views when considering development proposals such as the general streetscene in the local context of the site.

**Fig 32** the “classic” renowned view of Durham Cathedral from Prebends Bridge.



**“The famous view of Durham Cathedral from Prebends' Bridge over the River Wear. This was a view which inspired the English Romantic artist J M W Turner (d. 1851) and the author Sir Walter Scott (d. 1832)”.**

When considering changes in views they must be carefully considered, including where for example tree management in one location to improve a reduced view of the WHS, does not open up visually harmful elements and features in the foreground or background.

A major consideration of new development in the context of townscape views, is building height, form and materials, and skyline impacts. Given the high value of the city’s roofscape, and the fact that in some places the topography is such that it blends roofscape and elevations, poorly considered development proposal has the capacity to be very detrimental to the special character of the city in this regard. Views are also seasonal, that must be considered, with the value of views and extent of visual appreciation of the heritage assets forming the focal point potentially elevating during the Winter months.

Detailed consideration must be given to new illumination within the city given the high significance of nighttime views, with a specific desirability to safeguard the dark river cloak around the peninsula so that the nighttime experience of the WHS is protected. The architectural lighting scheme to the cathedral gives a different visual dimension that is enhanced by the darkness below and above in the sky. Major lighting interventions within this context can be very detrimental to its setting and visual experience.

To protect such views, this may require the applicant to produce visualisations or modelling, to accurately demonstrate the potential impacts of the development proposal. This process should not be seen as a negative as it is recognised that development can also have a positive impact within key views, enhancing them for example by providing built development of a higher architectural quality or by removing visually detrimental elements.

The consideration of views in new development is critical to conserve the special interest, character, appearance and experiences of the Durham City Conservation Area’s and the setting of Durham WHS that they inform. Development both within and outside the boundaries has the potential to affect views that can be positive and negative and in respect of the WHS has the capacity to impact upon its outstanding universal values. Development also has the potential to affect the setting of other designated heritage assets within the immediate and wider townscape context of the site.



**Fig 33** the environment around the city provides many splendid views of the cathedral and castle that demonstrate its visual drama, dominance, and its exceptional architecture. They offer unique and different viewing angles, and contexts that enhance the viewers appreciation and experience of the monuments in the urban townscape and surrounding landscape.



**Fig 34** examples of cathedral views from key vantage points that are reduced and heavily filtered by unmanaged tree cover, taken from the Railway Station, Potters Bank, Wharton Park, South Street and Leazes Road.



## 2.4 Theme 4

### Landscape, Green & Blue Infrastructure Assets

Durham City boasts a city-wide network of green infrastructure assets. These vary in terms of type, use, spatial scales, visual amenity attributes and character. They contribute significantly to the character, and visual appearance of the conservation areas in which they fall, they enhance the setting of historic buildings, and elements are integral to the setting of Durham WHS.

The green infrastructure (GI) network goes hand in hand with blue infrastructure in Durham City relating to the River Wear with its streams and smaller water courses. It acts as an important corridor through the heart of city, between spaces, buildings and sites, where urban greenery transitions into the surrounding open countryside. The River Wear and its corridor meandering through the city is the most significant landscape feature, and its value to the significance of the conservation areas and WHS cannot be overstated.

**Management Aim 9**  
To ensure that the city’s existing GI assets are protected, managed and enhanced where possible in a manner appropriate to their contribution and significance, character, functionality and context. Including seeking to ensure that development proposals maximise GI net gain within the city where relevant.

**Action 9.1**  
Work in collaboration with other DCC departments to set out a holistic, strategic direction, to positively manage and optimise the city’s GI.

**Action 9.2**  
Seek to ensure that works within the conservation areas are in accordance with the principles set out in the Tree, Woodland and Hedges SPD.

**Action 9.3**  
Seek to ensure through the planning process that the value of the framework of GI is understood so that it can be protected and enhanced through the formal planning process.

The network of GI found throughout the city, not only has high visual amenity value, but also provides leisure, health and environmental benefits, opportunities for outdoor recreation and exercise, and can add to the inwards investment and tourism offer.

As part of the CAMP, GI has been classified into 2 hierarchy types. First, are the broad level GI assets that include green features found consistently across the city such as roadside and footway verges, embankments, landscaped roundabouts, street trees, general woodland areas, sports pitches, and playgrounds.

The second category are those GI assets of higher significance owing to their added historic interest, design value, community and social value, higher visual amenity value, and those which are designated. These include Wharton Park, Crook Hall Gardens, The Racecourse, The Sands, Gilesgate Village Green, St Margarets Allotment Gardens, and the riverbanks.

Given the numerous and wide reaching benefits the protection, conservation, enhancement and appropriate management of the city’s GI network must be a high priority, and that when considering new development proposals that such assets are not lost or harmed unless the wider benefits to the city clearly outweigh that harm.



**Action 9.4**

Seek to maintain a litter free environment by exploring different options in collaboration with DCC and relevant external bodies to reduce the effects of litter/plastic pollution within and around the River Wear and its environs.

The presence of unsightly accumulated litter within the river, on the weirs and around the riverbanks degrades public amenity and perceptions of the city. Dealing with these issues is important so that the riverbanks and river can be enjoyed by visitors, students, people working in the city, and users of the river. This can include raising awareness of the impact of litter, undertaking an audit of litter bin units and considering additional units at known "hot spots".

There may be the potential of installing modern technology solutions to mitigate the issue (along with measures to interrupt litter supply at source) demonstrating positive action to address the problem, and in so doing presents education opportunities to raise the profile of litter pollution and to influence behaviour. But the river environment is very challenging particularly in the context of Durham WHS, with the visual impact of any proposed intervention requiring very carefully considered.

**Fig 35** river views from Lambton Walk, Framwellgate Bridge, Baths Bridge and Prebends Bridge.



**Fig 36** images of different green infrastructure assets, the medieval village green at Gilesgate, Wharton Park, and St Margarets Community Allotments.





*Trees and hedgerows*

Next to buildings, trees are generally the most significant and prominent features within the city that contribute significantly to its character, visual appearance and sense of place. Added to this they provide other benefits, being the cornerstone of biodiversity, helping with climate change mitigation, they can contribute to flood management and reducing and are integral to people’s health, sense of wellbeing, and quality of life.

Tress and hedgerows bring colour and character into the urban area, soften hard building lines and spaces, and enhance the aesthetic qualities of streetscapes. The reasons for the occurrence of trees, location, distribution, and density can be as a result of intentional design giving added importance. Trees are a vital resource within the city and people have long valued trees for the vital role they play as part of its natural infrastructure. Likewise, hedgerows are of high aesthetic and environmental value, and in the city are a defining characteristic of both suburban street scenes and the rural environment.

Despite the density of urban form, in places the combination of woodlands on the steep river valley slopes, Flass Vale, Pelaw Woods, Great and Little High Woods, trees in farmland, and the college campuses etc gives the historic core of the city a very high urban tree canopy cover – in excess of 30% - which contributes significantly to the

character and quality of views providing a green backdrop of high scenic quality to many places.

**Action 9.5**  
Work in collaboration with relevant DCC departments and external bodies to seek to protect and maintain the city’s existing tree stock and hedgerows where they contribute positively.

**Action 9.6**  
Seek to maximise opportunities to enhance the city’s trees and hedges where possible and relevant to the specific site and its context, supporting replacement where loss is unavoidable.

**Action 9.7**  
Work in collaboration with relevant DCC departments and relevant external bodies to improve the tree management regime within the city.

**Action 9.8**  
Seek to ensure that trees and hedgerows are managed in line with DCC tree management policy and the Trees, Woodlands and Hedges SPD.

**Fig 37** images of the trees along Gilesgate Bank and the rich wooded ridgeline the background, the dense mature woodland on the edge of the grounds of St Hild and Bede College merging into Pelaw woods, and street trees along Sutton Street.





The care, conservation and effective management of trees is vital to conserving the benefits they provide. But it is also important to identify and action ways to enhance the city tree stock where relevant, this can be part of future development proposals and wider strategies. It is recognised that tree management within the city can be difficult given available resources and land ownership, but it is still important to have a methodology in place to provide a positive mechanism ensuring that decisions undertaken in relation to trees are made in an appropriately considered way.

Trees are often at risk from development pressure, and it is vital that their importance to the site and its wider surroundings is understood, and that their value is a key consideration from the very early stages of the design process.

Despite the many benefits, trees can cause damage to historic structures most commonly to boundary walls, and it is important to balance problems against benefits based on an understanding of significance.



**Fig 38** Van Mildert College, the 20<sup>th</sup> century purpose built college designed to embrace the landscape that has created a leafy park land setting, with the lake as its natural focal point.



*Ecology & Biodiversity*

Biodiversity refers to the variety and abundance of life, wildlife is often closer than you think in our towns and cities. Otters move through the city along the River Wear and badgers and peregrine falcons can also be seen in the city. Expansive green and blue spaces as well as gardens, street trees, and walls all support wildlife in and around Durham.

Nature in the city provides several benefits, urban wildlife provides a connection to the natural world which can have health and well-being benefits to residents and visitors; spending time in green spaces with wildlife can reduce stress and improve mental well-being.

Trees and other vegetation can help cool the urban environment and remove pollutants from the atmosphere as well as reduce noise pollution. Green spaces also contribute to stormwater management by reducing run-off and the risk of flooding.

As identified in the previous section the city has significant green and blue spaces. The River Wear and riparian woodland run through the centre of the city providing habitats for a range of wildlife as well as opportunities for people to engage with nature and enter a quiet green space at the centre of the city. Ancient woodland, one of the most important and diverse habitats, can be accessed within the conservation areas.



**Fig 39** Pelaw Woods and Flass Vale provide a haven for different types of wildlife and of high ecological and biodiversity value.

These expansive green and blue spaces are supported by a network of street trees, cemeteries, allotments, parks and gardens all providing opportunities for nature.

**Action 9.9**  
Seek to promote nature friendly practices in open green spaces, such as one-cut per year grass management, using plants that attract pollinators in planting schemes, create log piles, and hibernacula and install bat and bird boxes and bee hotels when opportunities arise.

**Action 9.10**  
Seek to promote the installation of swift boxes on buildings over 5m in height when opportunities arise.

**Action 9.11**  
Seek to ensure the River Wear remains a “dark corridor” through the city, providing suitable conditions for bats.

**Action 9.12**  
Seek to ensure the control of non-native species within the city where relevant, particularly in areas where it may cause the public to be at risk.



While urbanisation and our towns and cities pose a challenge to wildlife, they can also provide important habitats and resources for biodiversity and an opportunity for people to have a relationship with the natural world. Supporting wildlife in the city not only has benefits for nature by creating stepping-stones for wildlife navigating through the urban environment but also is essential for engaging people with nature.

Much of the population lives in towns and cities and it can be difficult for people to experience nature. Wildlife friendly spaces in built up areas such as Durham City not only increase habitat and connectivity for urban wildlife, but also expose people to nature in their own backyard providing health benefits and a sense of well-being. Conserving and enhancing the city's ecological and biodiversity value is therefore of the utmost importance.

There are areas within the city where invasive non-native plants occur that out competes native species and reduces diversity. With giant hogweed for example also posing a health risk to the public making walking in areas with giant hogweed hazardous and infestations can block paths and prevent recreational accesses. Such risks must therefore be reduced.



**Fig 40** the river provides ideal conditions for various species of wildlife to thrive and supports an abundance of diverse plant communities that provide shelter and food for animals.

## 2.5 Theme 5

### Regeneration & Inward Investment

Durham City lies at the heart of the County and is a bustling city centre with a university that is internationally renowned. It is a significant administrative and cultural centre and a public transport hub reflecting its role as the focus for the locality and wider area. It continues to attract major events, with Durham Cathedral as its major cultural attraction. All the above bring huge benefits for the local economy, and for residents, business, and visitors.

It is important that the city continues to move forward but enhancing its vitality is challenging. This is given that town centres are generally facing the challenges of changing and evolving retail patterns, there is the future size and shape of the University to support their vision of world leading research, education, and a wider student experience, alongside growth in student numbers, improving public transport, cycling and walking routes, achieving balanced communities, developing the leisure and tourism offer and addressing environmental impacts.

The priority must be to ensure that as the city meets those challenges and evolves, it does so in a manner that safeguards its special character, appearance, distinctiveness and setting.

**Management Aim 10**  
To support developing Durham City as a key visitor and tourist destination, educational, commercial and leisure destination, vital to its future economic success, through preservation, enhancement and promotion of its cultural heritage, unique built environment, and natural assets.

**Action 10.1**  
DCC will continue to explore opportunities for regeneration and inward investment within the city centre with its funding partners, stakeholders, and developers. This will consider the historic and natural environments, leisure, cultural and retail offer, seeking to deliver positive enhancement.

**Action 10.2**  
The CAMP will be used as a key tool to drive heritage-led regeneration and inward investment in the city centre and to monitor progress while providing a platform that ensures all parties with an invested interest are informed.

## What are the key aspirations and objectives?

- Promote sustainable regeneration through collaboration and investment when opportunities arise.
- Exploit the city’s potential as a commercial, leisure, business and residential centre, academic hub, local and international visitor, and tourist destination.
- Deliver the cultural and tourism ambitions for the city that will benefit the wider county.
- Embed a “whole town” approach through coordinated investment and improvements in infrastructure, employment, retail, leisure, education, and health.
- Encourage private sector investment.
- Seek to regenerate and improve those buildings, spaces and sites that are disused, vacant, deteriorating and detract from the streetscene.
- Improving the vitality, vibrancy, and attractiveness of the city centre.
- Create better places to live, learn, work, and enjoy.



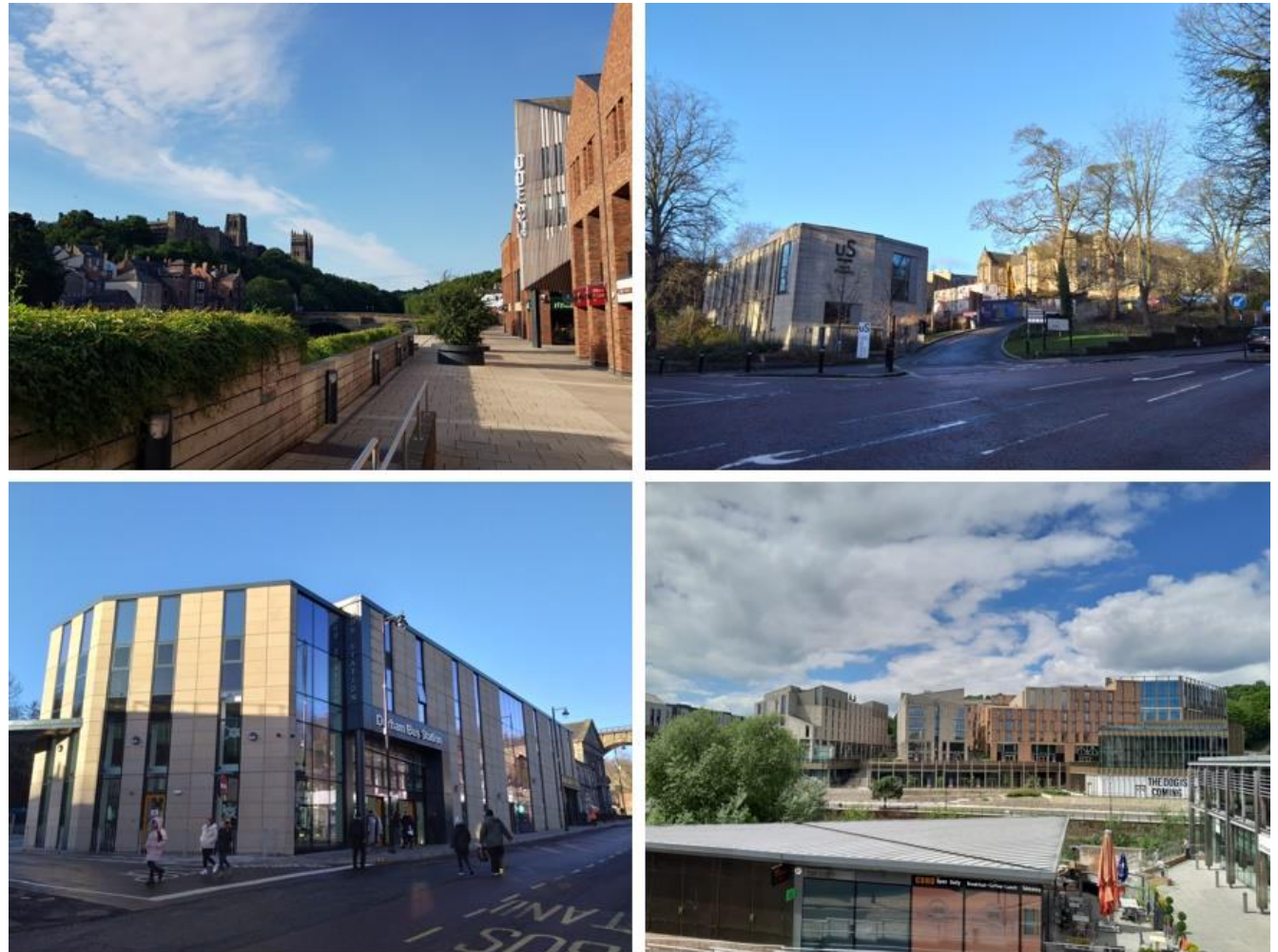
**Action 10.3**

Seek to identify potential delivery partners and ways of addressing the improvement and opportunity sites identified as part of the CAMP process.

The CAMP should be used as part of the primary regeneration framework for the city. This is due to identifying numerous buildings, sites, spaces, and places where there are opportunities for improvement and enhancement as part of a proactive approach to change management within the conservation areas.

A mapping exercise has been undertaken of the potential opportunities and different types of improvements (set out in the Strategic Context document) that could also help identify delivery partners. They must be guided by the other management aims and actions set out in this document to ensure there is great emphasis placed on the preservation and enhancement of the special interest, character and appearance of the city conservation areas and their setting.

**Fig 41** examples of positive regeneration in the city at Riverwalk, North Road Bus Station, the former County Hospital site, Freemans Reach and the Milburngate House site.



**Action 10.4**

Proactively engage with owners and encourage new occupants to improve vacancy rates within the conservation areas and seek funding streams to aid take-up.

**Action 10.5**

Continue to encourage take up of the councils Targeted Business Improvement Grants (or future scheme) and seek funding streams to aid reuse of vacant retail units and upper floors.

While there has been a positive uplift in the city's commercial streets in terms of a reducing vacancy rate since 2020 there are still a number of vacant ground floor retail units and upper floors. Vacancy is generally detrimental to the visual appearance of the individual building and gives rise to a neglected atmosphere and poor visual impact within the streetscene detracting from people's impression of the place.

Empty buildings can cause a negative feedback loop which means they discourage investment, decrease the offer of the high street, dissuade customers from visiting and contribute to a general sense of decline and neglect; this obviously increases where there are more empty buildings in a single street.

It is of the utmost importance to maximise opportunities and encourage appropriate reuse of empty retail units and upper floors, to enliven and diversify the retail, or hospitality, and leisure mix within the city centre, to encourage more footfall and ultimately improve the city's economic health.

There are different options available that can have a very positive instantly noticeable impact. Soft touch interventions that don't require regular use or access to the property such as window painted, displays and installations, or changing exhibitions, that can create visual interest, but such options require careful design consideration. Temporary uses such as pop-up spaces can include both retail and community workshops or leisure spaces, that can inject life, creativity and economic activity.



**Fig 42** examples of empty retail units and busy historic streets.





There are many vacant upper floors within the city centre even when the ground floor shop unit is occupied, they are sometimes used for storage that gives a bleak visual appearance. Upper floor use is to be encouraged to revitalise the high street, that in theory ensures appropriate maintenance, and can add increased footfall into the area. Reuse can be very constrained and challenging as floorspace can be inadequate, the plan form of historic buildings can prove difficult and may not be possible to modify, there is a lack of outdoor space for amenity purposes, and bin storage, and physical access can be problematic.

There can then be the barriers of planning permission and listed building consent, but there have been examples of vacant upper floors being successfully repurposed.

Policy 9 (retail hierarchy and town centre development) of the CDP aims to protect and enhance the retail areas of the county, with Durham City categorised as a “sub regional centre”. The city is noted as having seen significant recent and continued investment including the redevelopment of The Gates into Riverwalk, with new multiplex cinema, associated leisure uses and the opening up of the riverside walkways, alongside the ongoing redevelopment of the former Milburngate House site.

**Fig 43** examples of new business within Silver Street, that was the worst affected street in the city following the pandemic and has seen a positive turnaround.



The County Durham Town Centre Surveys that are conducted annually, covering 3000 units of different retail uses (shops, financial and professional services, restaurants & cafes, drinking establishments and hot food takeaways) across the 13 largest town centres, 2 district centres and 3 retail parks in the County. The most recent survey was undertaken between June and August 2023.

Durham City is recognised as continuing to evolve as a popular destination and while the number of retail units has fallen in recent years, the number of vacant units has decreased significantly. Durham City has the highest percentage of restaurants and cafes, with the second highest percentage of drinking establishments.

The level of vacancy rates in the city has improved during the ongoing post-COVID-19 recovery, but within certain commercial streets empty ground floor retail units and vacant upper floors are still a noticeable problem. The city's economy is also significantly influenced by the large student population and its part-time presence.

The figures demonstrate a shift in the city from the historically recognised retail use to one of more leisure with a strong "café-culture". Moving forwards there needs to be a clear direction in terms of embracing this change to meet the demand, and allowing more varied uses, or a refocus on the retail offer, with the ultimate outcome to reduce vacancy rates, create a place that attracts visitors and encourages them to spend more time in the city, that will improve the vitality

and vibrancy of the conservation area and benefit the wider city.

**Town Centre Summary Durham City (data is correct as of June/July 2023)**

- There has been no change in the number of financial and professional service units, it still remains the highest in the county at 11.8% or 49 units.
- The number of retail units has fallen by 2 to 140 that account for 33.6% of all the units in the city, the lowest proportion of retail units in the county.
- Restaurants and cafes have increased by 4 units to 71 that is 17% of all units, the highest in the county.
- The number of drinking establishments has remained the same with 29 units equating to 7%, the second highest in the county.
- Durham City has seen the highest reduction in the number of vacant units since 2022, the vacancy rate is 12.9% (54 units) a decrease of 6 units that is lower than the national average for high streets of 13.9%
- The number of hot food take-away units has remained the same since 2012 at 2.9% or 12 units.

DCC is operating a retail start up grant scheme, targeted business improvement grant scheme, and property reuse and conservation local scheme, that seek to encourage new business across the county and for external improvements to existing business premises. **Further information can be found [Business grants and loans - Durham County Council](#)**

**Durham County Council supporting Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Businesses**

**If you are considering setting up a new retail, leisure or hospitality business or are an existing business that wants to grow, come and talk to us about our range of financial and support packages available.**

**Retail Start Up Grant**  
Open to new retail, hospitality and leisure businesses across the County, subject to eligibility.  
The Start Up Support Programme is available to new retail, hospitality & leisure businesses for the first 6 months of trading.  
Eligible costs are defined as:  
• Rent • Rates • Service Charges • Utilities • Insurance  
This complements our current County Durham retail, leisure and hospitality support offer.

**Targeted Business Improvement Scheme**  
The Targeted Business Improvement scheme is a grant available for external works to a business premises and internal works in some target areas.

Logos: LEVELLING UP, Funded by UK Government, towns & villages, Durham County Council



## 2.6 Theme 6

### Public Realm

The public realm of the city is fundamental to its plan form and character, and it is how most people experience it. It is created by the way the streets and spaces interweave throughout the different areas, how they are accessed and the connections between places of different use and character, the buildings, and the historic and modern routes that dictate movement.

The public realm binds areas together and reinforces the sense of place and there are many significant historic and contemporary spaces of different uses and extents. These range from cobbled streets, paved squares and formalised footways, historic vennels and rural "green" lanes, that have their own distinctive qualities and contribute to the historic fabric and layout of the city.

The public realm consists not just of the carriageway and footway surface treatments but also items such as boundary treatments, street furniture, street signs, lighting columns, guardrails, and public art pieces.

In the historic environment the public realm should be accessible and inclusive, high quality, cohesive, materially appropriate, visually appealing, functional, and safe, for residents, workers, students, and visitors alike.

**Fig 44** the medieval civic space of the Market Place and the newly created public realm at Freemans Place.



#### Management Aim 11

To protect, and enhance, where opportunities arise, the quality and distinctiveness of the public realm of the city creating more enjoyable, safe, and accessible places for all.

##### Action 11.1

To engage with other DCC departments and external bodies as necessary to ensure a collaborative sympathetic approach to public realm works within the city.

##### Action 11.2

Explore opportunities of improving the public realm of the city based on an understanding of the significance and character of the space and to ensure change is consistent with other relevant management aims and actions.

If the public realm is poorly considered, inappropriately altered and uncared for, it can fragment and diminish the overall quality of the historic environment undermining its character, and appearance, as well as detracting from its usability as a social space. It is of the upmost importance that future changes to the public realm are well considered relevant to significance and character that differs from place to place.



Future works should seek to maximise opportunities for enhancement for example removing outdated and mismatched items of street furniture, de-cluttering spaces, material improvements, and better co-ordination where relevant.

**Fig 45** Back Silver Street is of strong historic industrial character with a series of craft workshops and a café, but the quality of the public realm is significantly harmed by a variety of issues.



**Action 11.3**

New development proposals within the city should maximise opportunities for the creation of new public realm, and linkages to existing, that must be high quality and designed relevant to context, secured through the formal planning process.

Where opportunities arise, new development proposals should provide spaces of distinctive quality and should not feel disconnected from the existing public realm. Spaces should feel welcoming and be accessible, with physical barriers avoided, routes carefully considered, entrances clearly visible and sightlines maintained. The amount, extent and style of street furniture should be carefully planned so as not to cause obstruction and to be aesthetically pleasing, and a continuity of high-quality materials should be used drawing from the local context. Trees and planting can play a positive role in enhancing visual amenity and softening urban hardscape and buildings. In the city designs could maximise river outlook and heritage views enhancing the overall experience of the place.

The above, and other good practice design principles would help to ensure that the creation of new public realm is given real value as part of the collective public realm resource that enhances the aesthetic, and people’s perception and experience of the city.

**Fig 46** below the new public spaces adjacent to Freemans Reach that connects to a new riverside walk above.





**Action 11.4**

Existing historic boundary treatments must be retained, with opportunities sought to reinstate lost boundaries where possible, and prevent harmful alterations to boundaries that contribute positively, to ensure they are conserved appropriate to their significance and setting.

Within the conservation areas there are many important surviving historic boundary features that vary from sandstone walls to decorative wrought iron railings, and red brick walls enclosing back yards and gardens. These are part of the historic physical fabric of the city, have aesthetic value and reinforce the sense of enclosure to many streets and spaces. Some are designated heritage assets of high significance with historic, associative and evidential value for example as part of the castle defensive complex on the peninsula. Others are important by delineating historic burgage plots, being components of the grid pattern of Victorian terraced street, enclosing historic lanes and vennels creating an intimate character, and add character to front gardens in the streetscene.

However, there are many examples where they have been lost or unsympathetically altered and re-built for example using modern engineering bricks with no detailing, and where timber fencing has replaced traditional railings that appear too stark and harsh in the streetscene.

It is of the utmost importance that such historic features are retained and conserved, or where replacement is justified based on condition, they should be re-built based on the original details and materials. Existing harmful changes should be reversed, and where historic boundaries have been lost, they should be reinstated based on historic evidence or where none exist, taking design cues from the period of the building or from positive examples in the streetscene. They should also be kept in a good state of repair. This will ensure that they continue to make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation areas.

**Fig 47** examples of positive historic boundary treatments that contribute to the distinctiveness of the place that must be preserved and protected. Ranging from historic stone and brick walls, decorative metal railings and gates.



**Action 11.5**

Seek to improve areas adversely affected by street clutter or outdated items of street furniture, secure the installation of higher quality co-ordinated items designed to respect the sites character and context and that future works make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the city.

There is a wide mixture of items of street furniture throughout the city, in some places where more abundant this results in excessive visual clutter. There are items that are in a deteriorated condition and others that are out of date. For example, cast "Durham" bollards, concrete bollards and steel tube type bollards can be found in the same place, there is a mixture of different litter bin styles, in places a proliferation of traffic signs, and different styles of seating. The combination of such factors and creation of excessive, unnecessary clutter, can be detrimental to the visual appearance of the place, with some notable "hot spots".

Such items should be rationalised, with redundant items removed, and a minimalistic co-ordinated approach required to achieve a positive enhancement. The positioning and style of new items should be flexible and should respond to a balance between the user requirements, the character of the historic space and setting of historic buildings.

**What are the opportunities?**

- Street furniture must be provided but should be audited on a regular basis.
- Street furniture to be rationalised and reduced where possible and beneficial.
- There should be a co-ordinated approach to street furniture.
- Street furniture to be kept in good condition.
- Street furniture to be high quality of design and materials with appropriate colour finishes relevant to location.
- Consideration should be given to providing a heritage range when replacement is proposed, and appropriate to location.
- Any future installations for e-charging points, that are likely to become more common place in street scenes in the coming years, must be carefully considered so as not to add to existing visual clutter.
- Street furniture to be sited and laid out appropriately to context, avoiding causing obstruction, with seats for example located in places of interest and activity creating a "seat with a view" where possible.

**Action 11.6**

Seek opportunities to improve the general environment within the historic vennals and lanes within the city.

There are a series of vennels (or alleyways), and lanes within the city that are significant physical components of its historic layout some dating back to the medieval period. They also provide pedestrian links between neighbouring areas forming part of the movement framework within the city.

Historic routes such as Moatside Lane, Drury Lane and Back Silver Street have their own intimate character that contributes positively to the conservation area and should be preserved and enhanced.

These spaces, and other historic lanes and routes, are however generally forgotten about when considering improvement works and as such, they can be in a poor physical condition suffering from deterioration of fabric, and often from the effects of anti-social behaviour. They are not inviting to the public meaning they miss out on the different historic experiences they provide compared to the main streets and spaces.

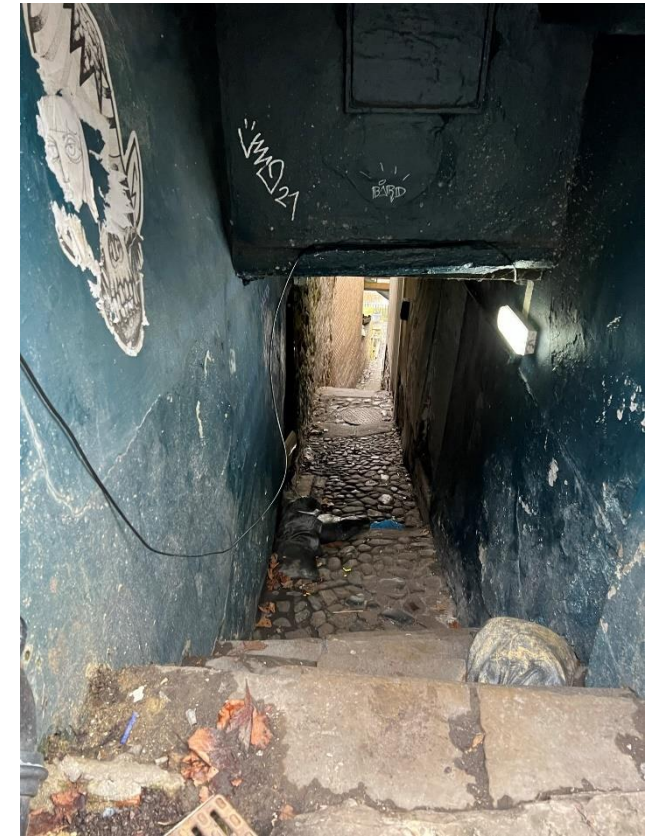




**Fig 48** example of a well preserved historic vennal on the west side of Sadler Street, an inviting space of strong historic character.



**Fig 49** in contrast the historic vennal of Drury Lane on the east side of Sadler Street a very poor environment leading down to the riverside with deteriorated fabric, litter and graffiti.



**Fig 49. I.** Above, the opposite view in Drury Lane.



**Action 11.7**

Seek to improve cross service and partner working to maximise opportunities to improve wayfinding signage throughout the city with a clear strategy and brand focused upon key routes and destinations, and access for all.

Wayfinding information is critical, primarily aimed at people who are unfamiliar with the city centre and need to find specific locations for business, recreation, shopping or leisure purposes. The objective is to provide inter-movement from key arrival points to and between destinations rather than intra-movement within sites, with a clear brand identity and kept up to date as the city evolves.

At present there are different layers of signage that can be confusing, with a proliferation and mixture of monoliths, welcome boards, wall mounted and finger post signs, that provide no cohesive branding, with some signs old and out of date.

Added to the above, some signs are poorly located, obstructed from view and vandalised meaning they are ineffective at communicating directions to users. Overall, such issues give a poor impression of the place.

To address such issues and make the city easier to navigate a clear strategy is required that provides a consistent approach, information that is clear, accessible, integrated and co-ordinated. It must remove clutter, damaged, and redundant existing signs, and be mindful of the needs of all users. It would also be important to maintain a good visual appearance of any new signage, and that it is kept relevant, that will require continued monitoring.

**Fig 50** below examples of the different wayfinding signs found within the city, mismatched in style, some outdated, difficult to see, and of a poor visual appearance.





**Action 11.8**

Work in partnership to explore ways to introduce new and update existing interpretation where relevant, that must be sympathetically designed, to better reveal the significance of the site and area, with the information based upon site specific research.

Heritage interpretation is a key part of the historic environment, providing information to the public explaining the nature, origins, history, and purpose, of the resource. The goal being to improve and enrich the visitor experience by helping them understand the significance of the place they are visiting and connecting people and places.

There is some limited interpretation provision within the city, but there is a missed opportunity to greatly improve the visitor experience given the high significance of the historic environment. There would need to be a delicate balance between over-intensive interpretation and the need to avoid excessive clutter to conserve the special character and appearance of the area.

The design of new interpretation would need to be carefully considered; it could exploit the use of modern technologies. It must be relevant to the place, understanding why it is important, what is the meaning that wishes to be communicated and the key message and story, and what is the best way to present it.

**Action 11.9**

Seek cross service collaboration to ensure that proposals for replacement and new lighting units within the city are appropriate to the site and its historic context, exploiting opportunities to improve existing lighting units where possible.

Existing street lighting is very mixed in terms of the type and style of units, size, and appearance, ranging from traditional Victorian lanterns style columns and wall mounted units painted black, to different types of standard modern columns. Such tall modern columns can appear out of place and be visually detrimental in the higher quality historic streets. Lighting can be affective without being obtrusive, the temptation must be avoided to over-provide that can lead to clutter and unnecessary light pollution.

Consideration should be given to extending the use of the existing heritage style street lighting where appropriate based upon the streets character. This can include the provision of new and when considering replacement, but adding new lighting into historic streets must be carefully considered. In other areas care should be taken to select lighting units of a style that is in keeping with the prevailing character, providing mismatched units must be avoided, and positions carefully considered.

Early engagement with the Design & Conservation Team should be undertaken to ensure delivery of an appropriate scheme.



**Fig 51** top, heritage interpretation at Prebends Bridge that better reveals the significance of the place enhancing the visitor experience. Below, the Market Place at night, not overly lit with an emphasis placed on the lighting of the statue of Neptune that acts as a visual focal point.

### What are the opportunities?

- Street lighting should be designed to achieve sufficient illumination to enable safe movement by pedestrians and cycling and reducing opportunities for crime.
- Select new lighting unit types which are in keeping with the character and appearance of the place.
- Take opportunities to replace lighting units that are outdated and appear out of keeping within the historic place.
- Heritage style lighting is recommended for streets and spaces of higher significance whereas high quality contemporary styles may be suitable elsewhere.
- Avoid an excessive number of lighting units to avoid light polluting, spillage and over-lighting buildings, streets and spaces.
- New installations must consider the value of the floorscape for example avoiding causing harm to traditional cobbled and stone surfaces.
- The number, height, and placement should be appropriate to the significance of the space, the surrounding buildings, and category of the highway.

**Fig 52** examples of the different styles of street lighting columns that can be found throughout the city.





**Action 11.10**

Seek to improve the nighttime environment of the city where opportunities arise working in collaboration with relevant DCC departments and external specialist bodies in line with the overarching principles of the lighting and darkness strategy.

Durham City possesses a unique nighttime environment with dark areas of natural landscape sitting close to the illuminated city core. This takes place amongst a rich and diverse collection of historic buildings, streets and spaces, crowned by the castle and cathedral with an architectural lighting scheme giving a different visual dimension after dark.

By day the city provides a spectacular picture whether arriving at the railway station or walking by the river. By night it remains one of the UK’s few cities that has not been dramatically over-lit. Like many urban environments Durham is effectively a twenty-four hour city and whilst the use of its streets, buildings and landscaped spaces may not be on the scale of its larger neighbours such as Newcastle and Gateshead its mixed population of residents, students, tourists, shoppers, and workers provides an ever changing pattern of activity at all times.

As a result, a large number of people spend as much time experiencing Durham’s built environment during the hours of darkness as they do by day, particularly in the winter months.

Lighting therefore plays an important role not only in providing the basic means by which to see but also in creating an appropriate atmosphere, making people feel safe and secure and helping them to find their way around such that their experience of the public realm is both positive and enjoyable.

Despite this the city does not fulfil its potential after dark. Its streets, and public spaces can sometimes feel slightly disorientating, particularly to the visitor. The quality of light could be better and fine buildings are often disfigured either by inappropriate lighting solutions or unnecessary spill from street lighting, advertising and security lighting. Lighting also provides a potential unwelcome environmental impact not only through the use of energy and the potential of light pollution but also through the effects of light on the local ecology. Improving the existing situation is to be encouraged and if such proposals come forwards in the future the following key guiding principles would generally apply.

- **Improve the quality of the experience** – make Durham enjoyable after dark, revealing the traditional landmarks seen by day as well as creating a new identity for the city by night.
- **Enhance safety and security** – use light to help protect people and property and improve the atmosphere of areas perceived to be uninviting or dangerous.

- **Support the local economy** – use lighting to help re-vitalise and enhance the character of areas of night-time economic activity.
- **Limit environmental impacts** – use a sustainable approach to protect the darkness of the natural landscape within and around the city and enable the people of Durham to enjoy a view of the stars once again.
- **Provide the opportunity for spectacle** – help facilitate festivals, events and art that may be organised as part of Durham’s endeavour to improve its reputation of being a modern-thinking and exciting cultural city.
- **Following up with new ideas** – regularly reappraise the strategy in the future to check that the approach is still in tune with the city’s thinking and technological advancements.

The above could help define the image of the city after dark, but any future proposals must be very carefully considered and must not harm how buildings, streets and spaces are perceived, and a clear hierarchy would need to be observed such that the lighting of the castle and cathedral remain dominant when viewed at night.

**Fig 53** examples of different streets, spaces and building at night, Crossgate, South Street, Framwellgate Waterside, Silver Street, Elvet, Broken Walls and Owengate where varying illumination levels create different atmospheres.





**Action 11.11**

Seek opportunities when they arise to add to the existing public art offer within the city centre and to ensure any pieces are appropriate in terms of location, position, and design.

Public art where imaginatively and sensitively used can help to enhance and celebrate the sense of place and its heritage, as well as adding distinctiveness and encourage civic pride. There are many public art pieces within the city for example at The Racecourse, Wharton Park, the Hill Colleges, the at Freemans Place, some of which are Lumiere event legacy pieces. These enliven the spaces and place, some encouraging interaction, that impacts very positively on the publics experience adding value to the area.

There should be continued support of the retention of existing and the development of new public art pieces, where relevant in the city. Any new public art piece should be commissioned for the specific site, drawing inspiration from its historic interest and/or natural qualities to tell its story. Common characteristics of public art are public accessibility, public realm placement, community involvement, public process (including public funding); these works can be permanent or temporary.



Public art can be aesthetically valuable but also encourages people to be attracted to and form an attachment with a location through historical and cultural understanding. It also highlights what is unique about the place where people live, work, and play and improves the local image and identity. Some pieces have added value by encouraging interactions.

**Fig 54** above, examples of public art from around the city, at Freemans Place, Millennium Square, The Racecourse and St Oswald’s playground.

*Community Safety: Anti-terror & crowded places*

**Action 11.12**

Seek to ensure that the implementation of any new anti-terror and crowded place measures strike an appropriate balance between safeguarding and minimising the visual and physical impacts within the historic environment

**Action 11.13**

Seek to ensure that new developments and alterations to buildings and within the public realm adhere to the basic principles of Secured by Design at the outset of the design process, where relevant.

Durham City attracts a high number of visitors each year as an international tourist destination, there are many businesses with a wide range of pubs, bars, restaurants and leisure uses on offer, it has a high residential and student population, key transport hubs, and different public spaces. As such certain buildings and the public realm can be very busy, congested, and crowded, with densities varying depending on location, the day of the week and time of the day. Added to the above are popular annual events such as Durham Miners Gala, with more than 200,000 people packing The Racecourse and city streets, and Lumiere with an estimated 160,000 visitors over the four days in 2023.

There is a continued threat from international terrorism within the UKs crowded places, and it must be a priority to ensure and maintain a safe and secure environment for the people visiting, studying, residing, and working in the city.

Achieving a safe and secure public environment can include the implementation of physical measures that impact upon the character, visual appearance and impression of the place, as well as active management, to provide the necessary protection for a particular building or public space. Each site is different and can present different challenges with a no one size fits all solution.

Measures can include street design improvements to create clearer lines of sight and reduced vehicle access and speed, improvements to buildings, CCTV, well-managed access points, and specifically designed items of street furniture. Such measure must consider the needs of people and the potential impacts on the historic environment.

There are generally two main affects from the introduction of permanent and temporary anti-terror and crowded places management measures, visual and physical. Given the sensitivity of the city’s historic environment, impacts should be minimised and mitigated as far as practically possible but without compromising the effectiveness of the measure. It is also important to consider design when incorporating security measures into new developments where relevant.



**Fig 55** above, sympathetically designed security measures as part of the new public realms at Durham University Business School.



**Fig 56** above, example of a counter terror planter product that are robust and do not compromise the visual amenity of the area with other specifically designed products on the market to protect public spaces and buildings.



Secured by Design (SBD) is the official police security initiative. This includes guidance on publicly accessible locations, counter terrorism measures, and working closely with architects, developers and local authority planners at the design stage to design out crime. This can be achieved improving the physical security of buildings and incorporating crime prevention techniques in the layout and landscaping of the immediate surroundings. It is important that proposals follow such specialist guidance and principles where relevant, **further information can be found** <https://www.securedbydesign.com/>

Early engagement with the Design & Conservation Team should also be encouraged to ensure an appropriate balance between the implementation of new measures and preserving the character and appearance of the historic environment.



## Secured by Design (SBD)

Secured by Design (SBD) is the official police security initiative that works to improve the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings to provide safe places to live, work, shop and visit.

### SBD Development Guides



*Community Safety: Anti-social behaviour*

**Action 11.14**

Seek to support wider corporate initiatives and explore ways, including expediting enforcement powers, if relevant and justified, to tackle ongoing anti-social behaviour issues within the city centre.

Anti-social behaviour covers a broad range of activities. In the wider public domain, it can include rowdiness and general nuisance behaviour, discarding litter or drugs paraphernalia, begging, graffiti, and vehicle nuisance. Such activities can significantly affect not only people’s enjoyment of a place, but the wider public’s impression, the sense of local community, as well as disrupting local businesses.

There can be harm caused to heritage assets by both crime and anti-social behaviour such as physical damage and loss of fabric through theft or vandalism, and there are buildings and structures within the city that attract vandalism.

Within the city there are some known “hot spots” where anti-social behaviour frequently occurs, with evidence that people are travelling from further afield to participate, as the city is seen as a lucrative area for begging given the high number of students and visitors to the city that are harassed in the street. Such incidents are likely to escalate on busier market days for example.

Anti-social behaviour can have both a direct and indirect impact through social or economic loss to the amenity of an area. Such effects detract from the experience of the historic environment, and it is vitally important they are resolved, and prevented from reoccurring as far as practically possible.

**Fig 57** different examples of graffiti that harm the fabric and visual appearance of the historic environment.





**Action 11.15**

Seek to work proactively with owners and occupiers of heritage assets to address issues of heritage crime when opportunities arise, or a threat is identified.

There is an identified threat of heritage crime defined by Historic England as *"any offence which harms the value of England's heritage assets and their settings for this and future generations"*. Harm caused by crime and anti-social behaviour can have harmful direct impacts for example loss of fabric through theft particularly metal and stone, criminal damage including graffiti and especially arson, and through unauthorised works by owners.

It is important that such impacts are avoided as far as practically possible and that tactics to prevent or deter crime threats are effective, informed by an understanding of significance and the identified threat or risk, proportionate to the risk, and suitable for the protection of the specific heritage asset. This is to ensure that the historic and cultural environment passed onto the next generation is in a good condition. A collaborative and coordinated approach is required taking into consideration the significance of the heritage asset(s) affected.

Further guidance can be found [HEAG319 Heritage Crime Prevention \(historicengland.org.uk\)](https://www.historicengland.org.uk)



Historic England

## Heritage Crime Prevention

Advice for those who care for heritage assets






Refuse

**Action 11.16**

Seek to work in collaboration with other DCC departments, partners and interested bodies to explore ways of improving domestic and commercial waste management in the city centre to improve the historic environment for all.

**Action 11.17**

Seek to ensure through the planning process and existing policy guidance that new development proposals within the city provide adequate waste management measures, where relevant, based on use, level of occupancy, and predicted volumes.

Issues with domestic and commercial refuse and litter, which can include fly tipping, trade waste problems with overflowing bins, accumulations of rubbish bags can be very detrimental from a general environmental and visual amenity perspective. Within the city centre there are places more affected by such issues than others with collections of a high number of refuse bins visible and rubbish bags in the main street scenes, some back lanes, and vennels, and areas impacted by several larger commercial refuse bins and overspill.

**Fig 58** right examples of refuse bins that are visually detriment to the historic streetscapes and obstructing pedestrian movement on the footway.



There are also many streets within the city where there are collections of refuse bins on the footway that impede pedestrian movement. Some places would perhaps benefit from shared bin storage facilities in appropriate locations to help mitigate the effects of such adverse features in the historic environment. However, the position and design of such introductions into the street scene must be carefully considered to avoid causing visual detriment.

Bin collection on primary streets is a challenge with waste often left on the street by business that is made more difficult when they have accommodation above. Ways to address such issues and impacts should be explored to enhance the character and visual appearance of the areas worst affected.

Properties changed in use, and new developments should seek to incorporate on-site storage that meets the future governments agenda around “circular economy” and “simpler recycling principle.”



Riverside Safety

Action 11.18

Seek to support the wider corporate agenda, the city safety group and landowners when considering works to improve safety around the riverside so that it can be enjoyed by all, and to ensure that the implementation of any new physical measures are sympathetic in design.

There have been a number of infrastructure works carried out along the river to improve safety over the past few years funded by DCC, Durham University and Durham Cathedral following a robust inspection and maintenance regime. Improvements were made to the riverside paths in locations prone to erosion and the installation of new sections of fencing carefully designed in the context of the location. Added to the above is the lighting along Windy Gap along with publicising the lit nighttime walking routes. Other opportunities to improve riverside safety including education and awareness campaigns are to be encouraged, but any future physical control measures following risk assessment must be carefully considered and designed to protect the unique historic landscape and high aesthetic value of the riverbanks.

Fig 60 examples of riverside safety railings and bollard lighting.



Accessibility, visitor welcome and connectivity

Action 11.19

Seek to work in collaboration with other DCC departments, partners, and relevant bodies when opportunities arise to explore and implement ways of improving accessibility and inclusivity within the city.

Action 11.20

Seek to ensure that the existing public rights of way, lanes, paths, and tracks within the historic environment are not lost because of new development, and that they are improved where possible.

Action 11.21

Explore opportunities to improve the visitor experience and dwell time including providing new services.

Visitors to the city generally arrive by car, bus or by train, and at present the experience from the railway station and bus station is less than satisfactory with the main route to the castle and cathedral for example via North Road, the redevelopment of the bus station has improved visitor welcome here but there are empty buildings, buildings in a poor condition, and low-quality

developments along North Road impacting on the visitor experience. This can be improved by responding to other recommendations presented in this document such as reducing vacancy, diversifying uses, improving the visual appearance of buildings and the public realm.

Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all alongside, efforts and promotion of more active sustainable ways of travel, is a key part of enhancing the character, appearance and people’s impression and experience of the city center. In succession by creating better streets and spaces can encourage more people to engage with the historic environment better revealing significance to a wider audience whether by visually appreciating its wealth of historic buildings, visiting those open to the public and the WHS, or enjoying a quiet walk around the riverbanks.

Making the city more navigable, making places easier to find, and removing hinderances help to make movement easier so that everyone can enjoy what the city has to offer.

A calmer, visually attractive environment would help encourage people to visit the city more often and spend more time within it adding to its vibrancy, and economic viability. This can be achieved through physical measures, good management, and through promotion, but an appropriate balance must be struck between accessibility and the need to protect the significance of the historic environment.

**What are good principles when considering accessibility and built heritage?**

- Use independent expert advice and guidance at the early stages of the design process.
- Design decisions should be based on a clear understanding of the significance of the building, and special interest of the place.
- Carefully consider the use of the building or spaces, the location, type, level and impact of the alteration or intervention.
- The approach should be minimal change for maximum benefit, that can include exploring demountable, independent solutions.
- Use appropriate methods, styles, and materials relevant to the specific site and its constraints. This can include honest contemporary design solutions where relevant.
- Ensure ease of future reversibility.
- Routes should be clearly identified that cover the widest possible variety of uses.


- Wayfinding signage should be carefully integrated into the building or place without harming its special interest and qualities.
- Signage to be kept to a minimum, be well-designed, consistent, and appropriately located where clearly visible.
- Designs must ensure suitable readability with regards to colour, contrast, letter size, location and viewing distance.
- Generally, fewer signs are better both in terms of accessibility and minimising visual impacts.
- Explore technology options that have no physical or visual impact.



Historic England provides some guidance on improving access to historic building and landscape for people with disabilities and explains how to make a range of positive changes to historic places while at the same time working with wider conservation principles. **The guidance can be found [Improving Access to Historic Buildings and Landscapes | Historic England](#)**


Accessibility is also an important part of new development, creating an accessible and permeable public realm through connecting places and spaces will help to ensure integration into the townscape and that the daily needs can be met by use of walking, cycling or public transport. The design should take opportunities to create new or reinforce a logical and legible hierarchy of routes, intersections, and public spaces. These spaces must be designed well to accommodate a wide range of activity and to use, articulate and support the needs of local communities, and should have no barriers to access, whether cultural or physical. If well designed the public realm of a new development can contribute very positively to the character and experience of the historic environment.


**Fig 61** examples of well-designed contemporary accessible public realm with legible level routes, and a mixture of steps and ramps within a mixed use area at Riverwalk and Freemans Place.



Historic England

## Easy Access to Historic Buildings




## 2.7 Theme 7

### Major Land Use

The cathedral and university continue to dominate the city centre, both physically and in land use terms. The cathedral and its associated monastic buildings having a commanding presence on the peninsula and, although recent university expansion many of the older colleges and departments are still located within the peninsula and at Old Elvet. Added to this are the other college campuses, individual sites and buildings creating a large scale city wide estate of high heritage significance.

The Cathedral Chapter and the University are major assets to the city, but also acts as the custodian for Durham WHS and for many listed buildings, as well as a high number of non-designated heritage assets.

The university’s masterplan presents a strategy for its growth, building upon its strengths including research, education, and the wider student experience and it provides a guide as to how the university could develop its estate in the long term.

The university continues to invest in the repair, restoration, and upkeep of its historic building stock, while also funding several projects that will provide new uses, enhance, and better reveal significance that is to be applauded and it is important that this good work continues.

**Management Aim 12**  
Seek to continue and build upon the existing close partnership working with Durham University and Durham Cathedral to ensure that their historic estate is managed appropriately.

**Action 12.1**  
Continue the positive proactive engagement process with Durham University regarding repair, restoration, and alterations to the historic buildings within the university estate.

**Action 12.2**  
Engage with Durham University through site specific workshops to ensure that future development proposals as part of their master plan respond to the site’s positive characteristics and are sensitive to its local and wider context.

**Fig 62** rights students outside of Durham Cathedral during graduation.

It is important that that the existing close partner working between the University and Durham County Council continues and is strengthened.

It is also important that detailed management aims and actions under this theme are developed through a series of future workshops to ensure they are in-line with the Universities internal governance and their own heritage strategy, so they are realistic and deliverable.

The above will help to ensure that the special interest of the university estate is protected and where possible enhanced for this and the future generations.





**Management Aim 13**

To sustain and where possible enhance the commercial function of the city centre that is vital to its special character, economic health and vitality.

**Action 13.1**

Seek to protect the existing commercial and leisure uses within the city centres core retail environment and encourage new where appropriate to the site and its surroundings.

The existing retail and leisure provision within the city is very mixed, it suffered a significant downturn in recent years although there is evidence of recovery in Silver Street, the shopping street most notably affected. The city will continue to be affected by out of town shopping centres, the modern shift towards on-line shopping and in being within the influence of major retail centres such as the Metro Centre, which all contribute to the loss of local trade.

The retail and leisure uses within the city can be traced back to the medieval period through to the present day and are a defining and fundamental characteristic of the city that is important to protect.

As such there should be a presumption against the loss of commercial and leisure, ground floor uses, with the local provision enhanced by new appropriate uses as relevant to the location where possible. Uses such as shops, cafes, restaurants, public houses, banks, and estate agents are essential features of the city centre that contribute to its vitality, vibrancy, character, and sense of place, that should not be eroded but rather built upon and expanded so that the city continues to grow.



**Fig 63** the key commercial street of Silver Street.

**Management Aim 14**

Seek to support the wider strategic approach to balanced communities through the planning policy framework.

**Action 14.1**

Ensure through the formal planning process that proposals for enlarging, and the creation of new HMOs, is appropriate to the character of the place and can be facilitated without harm to the historic environment.

There are many historic streets within the city that are in mixed use in terms of residential dwellings and HMOs, some with a greater mixture and higher student population than others, and there is a long-standing objective seeking to achieve an appropriate mixed balance community supported by local planning policies. The student population of the city will continue to rise with the university's expansion aspirations that will add further pressures and have the potential to affect the character of the area in terms of both amenity, and physical effects of associated development and alterations to existing buildings. Harm can also potentially arise from the general appearance of properties, refuse management and parking issues, having the capacity to detract from the character and visual appearance of the place.

**Management Aim 15**

Seek to support the vision and aims of Durham WHS focused on its outstanding universal value (OUV), its physical assets and setting protection and enhancement, promotion and interpretation, exploiting opportunities for economic, social, and cultural benefits.

**Action 15.1**

Continue the positive early proactive engagement process with the Cathedral and WHS Co-Ordinating Committee, when considering and proposing future works and schemes within the estate, while exploring ways to maximise the sites enhancement.

**Action 15.1**

Ensure through the planning process that development within the WHS and its Setting conserves and enhances its significance and OUV.

Standing high on the peninsula and rising majestically into the city skyline is Durham Castle and Cathedral, the crowning glory of the historic city centre. The importance and significance of the site was recognized by being inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986.

The Cathedral estate must be managed in accordance with the key principles of the World Heritage Site Management Plan, and different supporting management plans such as the castle walls management plan and within the overarching planning framework.

The impact of development within the World Heritage Site, and its setting must be very carefully considered at the outset of the design stage. Depending on the nature, scale and extent of the development it may require analysing using the methodology set out in UNESCO’s ‘Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context’ published in 2022. This focusses the assessment of impact onto those attributes of the WHS that express its ‘Outstanding Universal Value’, that is the reasons for its international heritage status. This should include cumulative impacts with surrounding developments where relevant.

**Further guidance can be found**  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/content/documents/advice/he-briefing-unesco-guidance-toolkit-hia-2022>



*Image, Graeme Hall © used with permission.*



## 2.8 Theme 8

### Sustainability

Addressing climate change is of critical importance for sustainable development and is a key theme that runs through the planning policy framework. It underpins all aspects of planning, helping to support regeneration and improve health and quality of life. Durham County Council recognises the threat posed by climate change within the County Durham Plan, working with partners and communities to achieve net zero in carbon emissions across the county by 2045, as indicated in the Councils Climate Emergency Response Plan.

It is widely recognised that the historic environment plays an important role in meeting climate change challenges and in the delivery of wider strategic sustainability objectives. There is a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by decreasing fossil fuel use, increasing energy efficiency, and exploiting renewable sources.

**Fig 64** right, solar panels on St Johns Church, Nevilles Cross the impact reduced by siting on the rear roof slope. Below a high number of solar panels hidden from view on Durham University's Business School building

However, the historic environment provides an invaluable resource handed down from the past, and it is vital that physical change either through new climate change related development or alterations to existing historic buildings to improve energy efficiency is very carefully considered. This is to ensure that that the building/sites special architectural and historic interest is conserved and protected, consistent with heritage related planning policies. This not only applies to the special interest of individual buildings, but their value as part of a group, the streetscene and wider contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, or the WHS, depending on where they are located.



**Management Aim 16**  
Seek to ensure that alterations proposed to historic buildings associated with sustainability are undertaken sympathetically paying due regard to the special architectural and historic interest of the specific site and its surroundings.

**Action 16.1**  
Proposals for addressing climate change within the historic environment will be encouraged but they must be consistent with the detailed guidance set out in DCC's adopted Energy Efficiency, Renewables & The Historic Environment Guidance Document.

**Action 16.2**  
Encourage changes to buildings and in conservation areas in response to climate change where they take into consideration and do not harm the significance and setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

**Action 16.3**  
Seek to ensure through the planning process that new development within the city maximises opportunities for climate change mitigation.

Maintenance and continued use of historic buildings is inherently sustainable, however, there are growing pressures to improve energy efficiency to them in order to reduced carbon emissions. Care needs to be taken when changes are proposed to ensure they are sensitive. For example, the addition of solar panels is to be encouraged but they must not detract from the historic character of the building, street or wider roofscape. But they may be able to be accommodated in places where they are not readily visible from the public realm. It may be possible to upgrade the thermal efficiency of windows by adding secondary glazing, or when windows require replacement by including slim profiled heritage double or even triple glazing.

There must be an appropriate balance between mitigating the effects of climate change and heritage protection. Design decisions must be based upon an understanding of the building's fabric, construction, and performance, its significance and its heritage context using a whole building approach to find a balanced solution to energy saving. There must be an understanding of effectiveness of the measures proposed and an evaluation of their risk.

The starting point should be low risk minimal intervention for maximum benefit by using methods that minimise fabric change and alteration such as refurbishment and draft proofing windows and doors, or installing energy saving curtains, before considering more impactful methods.

**Fig 65** image showing that the installation of renewable energy methods can detract from the historic character and visual appearance of a historic building and terrace streetscene.



**Fig 66** while still visible solar panels integrated into the roof plain on buildings of lower character can be less impactful in the streetscene.



Renewable technologies continue to develop at a fast rate and other means other than standard solar panels should be explored. For example, solar slate that combine the latest solar collector technologies with natural slate that is the main component so maintains the natural properties and look of the roof covering materials. It can also be used as a cladding material for contemporary new builds.



Reducing petrol and diesel car use is critical to reducing carbon emissions and there is government commitment to phasing out their sale over the next decade. Petrol and diesel car use will be replaced by a combination of electric (or other carbon free) vehicles and non-motorised travel modes. Both will require infrastructure changes that will need to be considered in the context of the conservation areas to ensure they are implemented appropriately without harming the character and visual appearance of the place.

Electric vehicles require e-charging points which can be installed within existing car parks and adjacent to street parking bays. Although these are relatively unobtrusive, they could, depending on the style adopted, increase visual street clutter to a degree. Charging electric vehicles in resident parking areas, on the street outside of dwellings, presents a greater challenge with the current technology as personal charging points are expensive and could add considerable additional clutter to the conservation area. However, lamppost charging points and wireless charging may become viable in the future and are likely to be more compatible with a conservation area environment. Other, non-motorised methods of travel should be encouraged.



**Fig 67** above, examples of a free standing at Sidegate carpark and a lamppost electric vehicle charging point product in London.

## What are the opportunities?

- Adding insulation to lofts and below suspended ground floors.
- Draft exclusion around windows and doors.
- Installing thick curtains, internal shutters or secondary glazing.
- If the existing windows are insensitive, modern or beyond the realm of repair, then sympathetic replacement with double/trip glazed windows may be possible.
- Replacement of historic windows must be a last resort and in listed buildings providing thermally upgraded windows would not justify loss.
- uPVC should be avoided as this generally has a service life of 25 years compared to the 100 plus years of well-maintained timber windows. uPVC is not widely recycled and often ends up in landfill sites.
- Solar panels to be sited where they are unseen from the public realm, well-integrated solar slate could be explored.
- Other renewable energy sources could be explored such as ground, air or water source heat pumps, subject to impacts on historic fabric, character and appearance.

New development should incorporate design solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change. This can include optimising solar gain, providing green roofs and walls, minimising the use of resources including energy, water, heating and materials, maximising opportunities for renewable energy technologies and exploring the use of more energy efficient materials and products, while taking the sourcing and delivery of materials into consideration.

The transportation of building materials to site accounts for a significant proportion of the energy used and emissions produced by the construction industry. This can be reduced by pre planning or routes to minimise mileage, job planning to avoid multiple trips or half and empty loads, and use of local material suppliers. In terms of solar gain this can include orientating doors and windows away from direct sunlight, using reflective materials on the glass and building fabric, and insulating walls and roof spaces to prevent indirect solar gains into the building.

Listed building consent and/or planning permission may be required to undertake such works, that would be judged on a case by case basis with regard to the impact on significance, character, appearance and setting of the heritage assets affected. Retrofitting to reduce energy use carries many risks particularly in relation to listed buildings and those within conservation area.

There is no one size fits all solution and what works on one building may not work on another, and a whole building approach is required. **The following is a list of best practice guidance on historic buildings and energy efficiency.**

[Energy Efficiency and Retrofit in Historic Buildings | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/energy-efficiency-and-traditional-homes-advice-note-14/)

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/energy-efficiency-and-traditional-homes-advice-note-14/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/eehb-how-to-improve-energy-efficiency/>

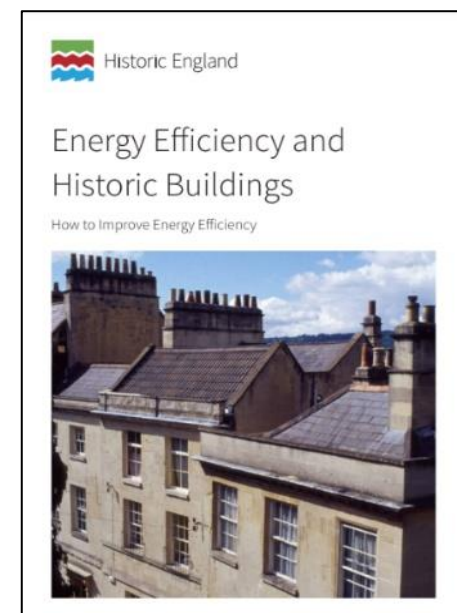
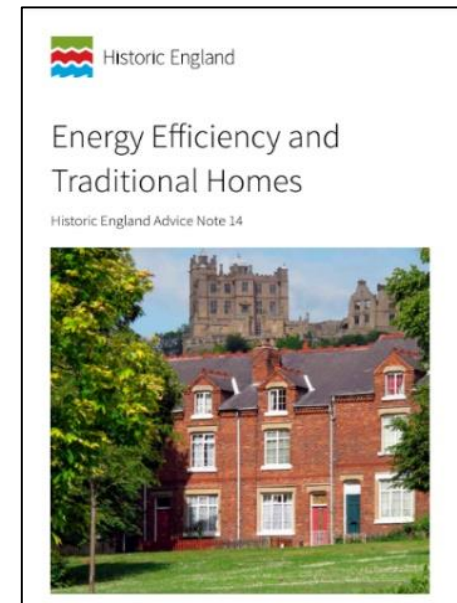
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/traditional-windows-care-repair-upgrading//>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/modifying-historic-windows-as-part-of-retrofitting-energy-saving-measures/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/building-services-engineering/installing-photovoltaics/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/energy-efficiency/making-changes-to-save-energy/>

<https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/energy-efficiency-old-buildings>





## 2.9 Theme 9

### Highways

#### Street Surfacing

Street surfacing is an important part of the public realm that can be visually appealing and help to deliver the areas distinctive local character. The diversity of materials, shapes, styles, finishes and different textures can enhance the setting of buildings and improve the pedestrian experience.

The street surfacing (carriageways and footways) within the conservation areas varies significantly in terms of materials, detailing, quality and condition. There are places where the use of traditional good quality surface treatments such as river cobbles, granite sets, Yorkstone paving, and stone kerbs can be found, that contribute very positively to the character and appearance of the built environment and public realm. The overall quality found throughout the city is variable and predominantly at the medium or lower end because of the prevalence of standard modern materials and their degraded condition. In some specific locations the public realm is adversely affected by vehicles being prioritised, that is causing damage to both traditional surface materials and green spaces.

**Management Aim 17**  
Seek to ensure that the existing traditional surface treatments that contribute positively are protected and conserved, including sympathetic restoration and improvement when possible.

**Action 17.1**  
All surviving traditional surface treatments will be sustained and conserved with sympathetic repair and restoration works in appropriate materials undertaken as necessary when opportunities arise. If significantly deteriorated and replacement is required, this is to be like for like or of equivalent quality.

**Action 17.2**  
Traditional street surfacing treatments will be enhanced through reversal of past insensitive works when opportunities arise.

**Action 17.3**  
Seek to reinstate lost traditional street surfacing and expand use, in appropriate design, materials and detailing relevant to the location when opportunities arise.

Fig 68 below examples of good quality traditional surface treatments within different parts of the city centre



**Management Aim 18**

Ensure that all street surfacing works within the conservation areas are undertaken sympathetically maximising opportunities for enhancement.

**Action 18.1**

DCC Highways and Design and Conservation to work in partnership and establish early dialogue when street surfacing works are proposed within the city to ensure they are appropriate in design and materials relevant to the location.

**Action 18.2**

When street surfacing works are proposed the appropriateness of the existing design, materials and details will be understood. If unsympathetic to the location, consideration will be given to providing a sensitive different treatment.

**Action 18.3**

Seek a method for positive engagement to agree a commitment to sympathetic reinstatement of materials in sensitive locations where essential works are undertaken. DCC to employ a monitoring framework to ensure compliance.

**Action 18.4**

Seek to ensure that proposed works within the highway and public realm adhere to the guidance and principles of Historic England Guidance "Streets for All"

The quality of the public realm is vital to the character and appearance of the conservation areas, and a strong public realm influences the local distinctiveness with the look and feel of the streets and spaces reinforcing the sense of place.

The design of new work to street surfacing treatments must pay due regard to the existing, understanding its importance and the specific character of the location. But this needs to be balanced with technical design requirements and available resources. Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance that historic and traditional surface treatments are conserved and enhanced, the highest percentage of which can be generally found in the older streets of the city such as Hallgarth Street, Crossgate, South Street, Silver Street, North and South Bailey, The College, Dun Cow Lane, Bow Lane, some parts of Gilesgate, with smaller areas found in Church Steet and Allergate, and along the historic bridges.

In other areas where more standardised modern surface treatments are found, the main detrimental impacts generally result from a mismatch of materials, having no interface material between different finishes, previous insensitive repairs in different materials, and deterioration of condition.

In both scenarios there are places where footway surfacing materials are so badly fractured and uneven that they potentially harm accessibility and cause potential tripping hazards.

A common occurrence within the city is work undertaken by utility companies that benefit from "permitted development rights" for works such as laying underground pipes. This has a significant adverse effect on the character of the place for example where cobbles have been replaced with tarmacadam, or where red chip tarmac has been replaced with black leaving an unsightly street long channel.

Opportunities to address such issues would create very positive outcomes. Where there are standard modern materials, like for like replacement, giving a condition improvement, would at least make the roads and pavements provide a neutral rather than a negative visual impact.

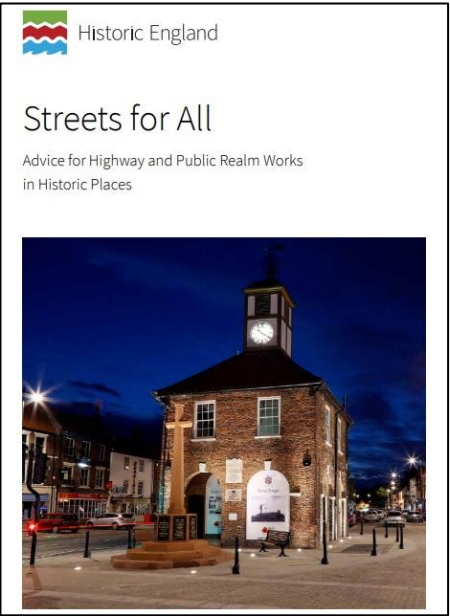


**Fig 69** examples of deteriorated and poorly repaired street surfacing treatments that are commonly found across the conservation areas. Reversal of such impacts and future prevention would be highly beneficial to the character and appearance of the place.



# What should the approach be to surfacing works in the city?

Historic England Guidance, Streets for All provides practical advice in the planning and implementation of highway and other public realm works in sensitive historic locations building upon local distinctiveness and visual quality to ensure appropriate maintenance, preservation and enhancement of historic spaces and streets.



<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/heag149-sfa-national/>

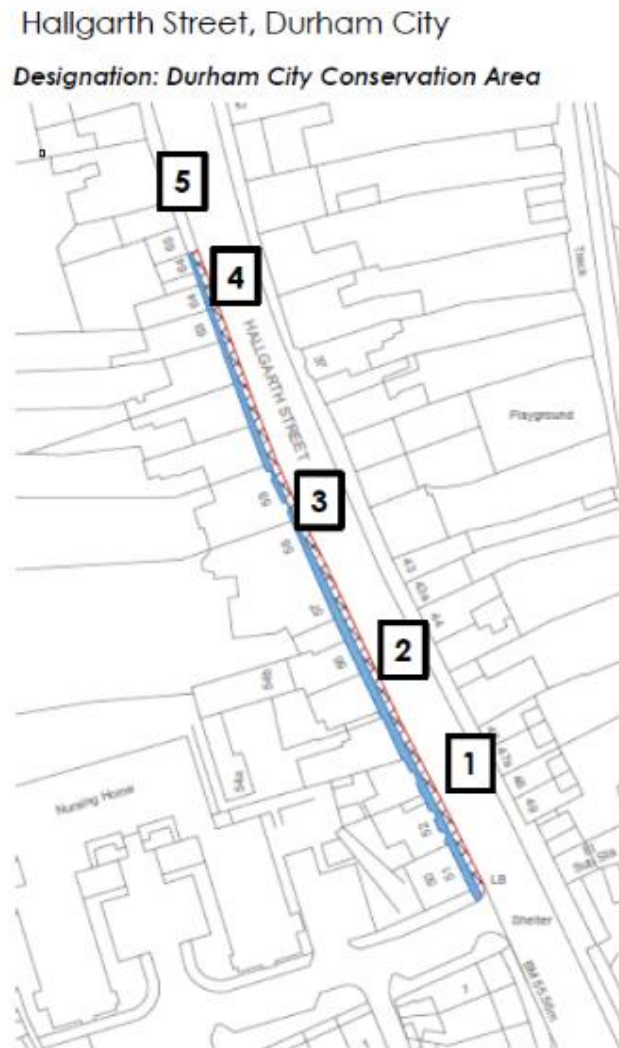
## Key design principles

- Conserve all historic surface materials where they survive (including historic kerbing and drainage etc)
- Undertake sympathetic repair and restoration works to historic surface materials where achievable, exploring opportunities to repurpose surviving historic fabric.
- Explore opportunities to expand and strengthen areas of historic surface materials, for example where split between modern fabric can they be moved to create larger areas.
- Where loss of historic fabric is unavoidable due to condition match, precisely like for like (sandstone flags, cobbles, herringbone setts, granite setts)
- Any new matching replacement material to follow historic laying patterns
- Seek specialist conservation team advise before undertaking works to historic surfaces and floorscape.
- Cobbled surface repairs, restoration and new to follow design team specification and methodology.

- Maintain historic kerb lines to preserve the historical form of the streets
- Seek opportunities to reverse past insensitive material changes.
- Seek reinstatement of traditional surfacing/paving/detailing or alternative cohesive materials if they would result in an improvement.
- Size, form, and layout of cut flags/slabs to match local radius patterns, avoiding regular shapes and uniform patterns where inconsistent with historic character.
- Always avoid using tarmac as a patching material where this does not match the existing or surrounding material unless a short-term emergency measure.
- Relate all new surface materials to their historic streetscape context and distinctive character of the area.
- Alternative materials to traditional may be acceptable subject to what is existing and appropriateness to the specific site.
- Consider the use of red chip tarmac as opposed to standard black were existing in key historic streets of greater character and quality.



**Fig 70** example of a positive designed footway improvement scheme, a similar conservation-led approach should be applied across the conservation areas where relevant.



1



2



3



4



5

### Current treatment and condition

- Historic river cobbles to sides in front of buildings overgrown and some missing stones
- Concrete flags in staggered laying pattern, many broken, with concrete kerbs.
- Fractured concrete flags others replacement with tarmac
- Historic stone flags to sides with concrete flags and areas of tarmac
- Historic stone sets at archway entrance some displaced, missing and insensitively replaced
- Square regularly laid concrete flags
- Historic Herringbone red setts some missing around edges

### Recommendations

- Repair and restore historic cobbled surfaces replacing missing stones
- Potentially reinstate removed concrete kerbs
- Replace/repair any damaged stone flags
- Replace missing setts like for like
- Relay sound uneven paving
- Potentially replace square regular paving to match larger staggered paving

Traffic and Parking

The city is a very busy, ever growing, urban environment with a number of key gateways, destinations and thoroughfares alongside dense areas of residential streets. Therefore, it must be able to accommodate and manage a high amount of vehicle movement and cope with increased parking pressures. As a result, traffic dominates the character of many areas and poses a challenge to conservation area management.

Traffic and pedestrian movement is vital to the success of the city supporting its economic vitality, businesses, and the increasing population. The city is also a through route for people travelling to and from work outside the city centre, has a strong leisure offer, a series of key destinations, and there is naturally an ever increasing number of journeys. For most people traffic and parked vehicles are simply a part of life. But looking beyond this there are a series of related adverse impacts that detract from the special qualities of the place.

**Management Aim 19**  
When and where opportunities arise explore options to improve traffic and parking relates issues and management within the city.

**Action 19.1**  
Seek to investigate different ways, through cross departmental working, to mitigate the different identified effects of traffic and parking within the city.

**Action 19.2**  
Seek to rationalise the number of traffic and parking related street items to declutter identified "hot spots" to improve the visual amenity of the area.

**Action 19.3**  
Support other corporate plans, strategies and initiatives that seek to reduce road traffic, encourage other means of transport, and parking management within the city.

Different places are affected by moving traffic and parked vehicles to different degrees. Generally, the bypass road, constructed in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, provides a very busy urban environment, that is to be expected. But other parts of the city are adversely affected by congestion, high numbers of parked vehicles cluttering historic street scenes, and from the effects from noise and pollution. In some areas conflicts arise between motorists and pedestrians for instance where footpaths are very narrow and parked vehicles overhang the footway, or where illegally parked on pavements obstructing movement. There is greater conflict evident in the medieval street network that was never intended to accommodate cars, buses, and delivery vehicles.

Both moving and parked vehicles have implications for visual amenity, added to where there is a proliferation of traffic and parking related items such as signs, poles, safety railings etc, and from vehicles causing physical damage to important surface treatments.

Traffic may seem par for the course and a minor inconvenience but the constant stopping and starting of vehicles during traffic causes damage to the environment, reduces air quality, and causes noise pollution.



Exploring ways to mitigate the impacts of such issues will help to emphasise the special character and appearance of the individual streets and areas over the effects of traffic and parking, improving the historic and public environment. In places it must however be recognised that such impacts are difficult to avoid and address, but it still poses a challenge to the effective management of the conservation areas in terms of sustaining and enhancing their special character and sense of place.

**Fig 71** images showing the effects of traffic and parking across the conservation areas.



## 2.10 Theme 10

### Tourism

County Durham is a developing tourism destination with more than £1 billion annually flowing into the county from its visitor economy that employs over 13,000 people. High quality attractions, accommodation, cultural events, things to see and do, and places to eat and drink are essential to the visitor experience and also in making the county and Durham City a great place to live, work and study.

Tourism ties directly into the historic environment with Durham City home to one of the most recognisable historic landmarks in the UK, and internationally renowned, Durham Castle and Cathedral WHS, one of over 1,300 WHS in the world, with 31 in the UK. Destinations with a WHS have been known to attract high visitor numbers and increased spending, enhancing destination distinctiveness through uniqueness and authenticity. Added to the WHS are other historic sites and cultural assets including Crook Hall & Gardens, Durham Town Hall, and the riverbanks, with other castles, historic houses, museums and galleries, parks and gardens and railway heritage sites in the wider county such as Beamish Museum,

The Auckland Project, Raby Castle, Bowes Museum, Ushaw Historic House, Chapel and Gardens, and Locomotion.

**Management Aim 20**  
Seek to support the wider strategic aims and objectives of the Durham Tourism Management Plan to enhance the quality of the visitor experience and the viability of the visitor economy building on the already strong partnership approach.

**Action 20.1**  
Work in collaboration with relevant DCC departments and external bodies to explore opportunities to promote and enhance cultural visitor attractions and support their growth and viability where appropriate.

**Action 20.2**  
Seek to explore opportunities to create new visitor attractions and accommodation where appropriate which can be accommodated without harming the areas special interest, character and qualities, maximising opportunities to better reveal significance.

The visitor economy continues to be a growth sector that is recognised by DCC in its regeneration statement and in a range of frameworks and strategies concerned with the city and wider County’s economic development and growth. The emerging 2024 Durham Tourism Management Plan sets out the County’s visitor economy performance, the value of tourism, including the contribution made by Durham City, and sets out the strategic vision for growth.

The priorities for growth are **increased visitor retention** getting visitors to keep coming back or increase the frequency of their contribution to the economic viability of Durham. **Increased visitor acquisition**, attracting new visitors by understanding and capitalising on new market trends and improving the Durham offer in line with them. **Increased visitor dwell time and spend**, increasing the number and proportion of overnight stays and the length of breaks, as well as increasing visitor spend.

These must draw from the fact that Durham is fundamentally a heritage and countryside destination with an emerging arts and cultural offer to attract new and repeat visits, with heritage the product that visitors most closely associate with it. Evidence demonstrates that local heritage plays an important role in attracting people to place, and that visitor numbers demonstrate continuous recovery post-Covid, with admissions to historic attractions 35% higher in 2022 than in 2021.



**Further information** [The Contribution of the Heritage Sector to the Visitor Economy | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

The city has a series of annual events that are very positive in terms of economic, community and social impacts, with “signature events” such as Lumiere, Durham Regatta, Fire and Ice, Durham Pride, Brass Festival, and the Miners Gala. They attract a large number of visitors to the city that are very important economically to local businesses while appealing across ages, genders and social profiles. These events have strong cultural heritage links with the challenge being to sustain the strong branding of such events and to build upon them in the years to come.

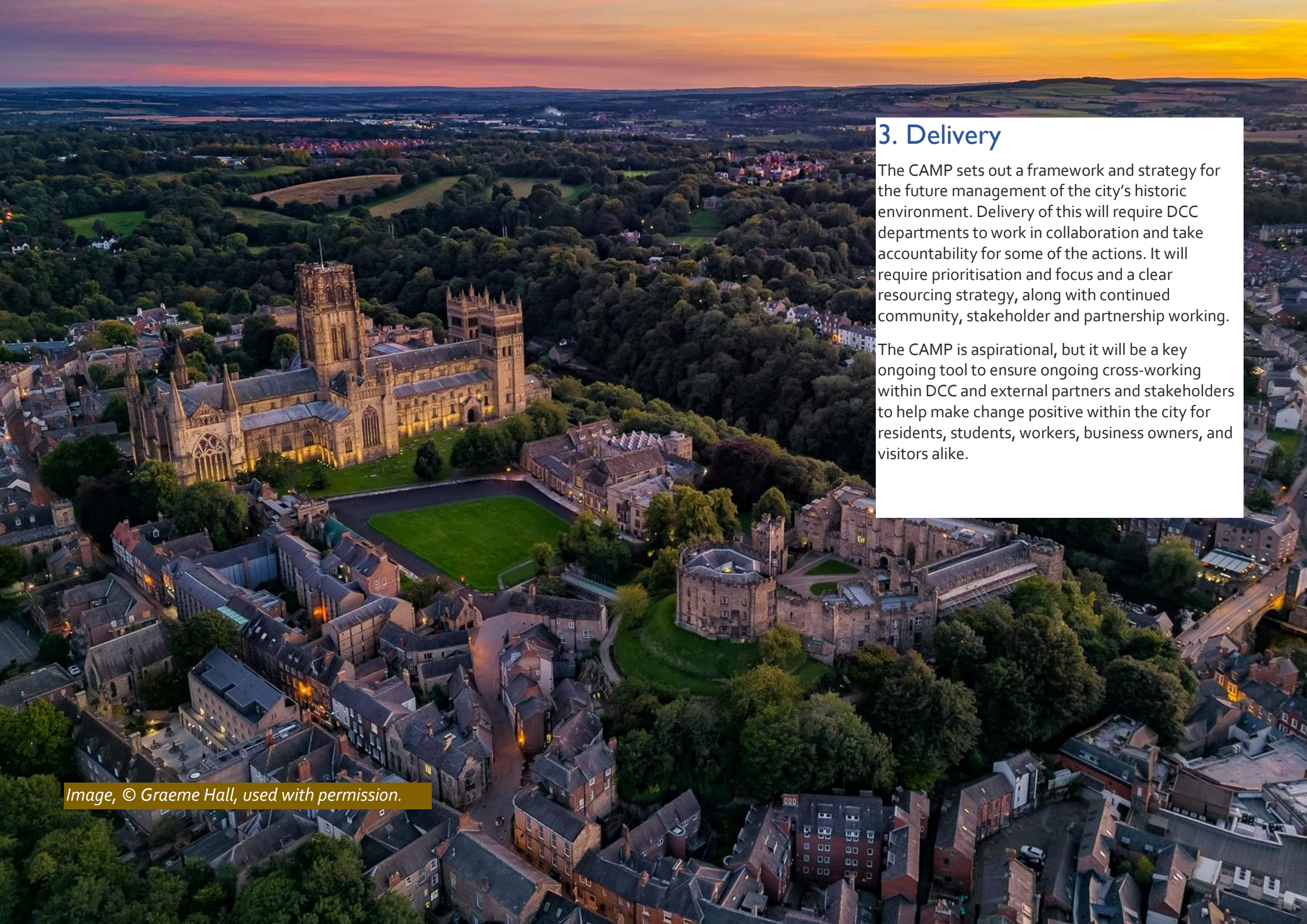
The CAMP supports the delivery of the wider strategic tourism aims and objectives by helping to build on the successful tourist economy through culture-led regeneration, attracting inwards investment, supporting the event portfolio, and enhancing the city’s historic environment, to broaden and improve the tourist offer and experience for visitors.

The **Durham Tourism Management** will be made available on [www.visitcountydurham.org](http://www.visitcountydurham.org).



**Fig 72** images from popular annual events held in the city, Lumiere, The Brass Festival and The Miners Gala.





### 3. Delivery

The CAMP sets out a framework and strategy for the future management of the city's historic environment. Delivery of this will require DCC departments to work in collaboration and take accountability for some of the actions. It will require prioritisation and focus and a clear resourcing strategy, along with continued community, stakeholder and partnership working.

The CAMP is aspirational, but it will be a key ongoing tool to ensure ongoing cross-working within DCC and external partners and stakeholders to help make change positive within the city for residents, students, workers, business owners, and visitors alike.

*Image, © Graeme Hall, used with permission.*



### 4. Monitoring & Review

Monitoring the success of the CAMP is important to ensure it is being delivered and that it is effective, it will also indicate what needs to change in response to circumstances as the city centre is constantly evolving.

The CAMP should be reviewed within 5 years of its adoption. The review should assess changes to the condition of the conservation areas, identify any new threats to significance and monitor the progress on the delivery and success of the management recommendations.

The review process should be carried out in accordance with detailed recommendations in the management plan. Added to the above there will be annual monitoring based upon the same criteria as set out in relevant policies of the County Durham Plan.

### Monitoring Criteria

- 1) Number of heritage assets lost.
- 2) Number of heritage assets removed from At Risk category.
- 3) Number of appeals upheld being contrary to heritage, Landscape, and design policies.
- 4) Number of enforcement cases taken against the owners of listed buildings.
- 5) Number of enforcement cases taken against unauthorised works to non-listed buildings in the conservation areas.
- 6) Number of applications approved in Durham WHS or its setting where harm was identified.
- 7) Number of housing schemes achieving Building For Life 12 accreditation.
- 8) Number of approved developments meeting design code requirements.
- 9) Number of gap sites resolved securing appropriate development and planning approval.
- 10) Number of new developments, householder extensions and alterations approved against conservation team advice.

- 11) Number of detracting buildings and sites resolved through appropriate redevelopment, or aesthetic uplift and planning approval.
- 12) Number of buildings, ground floor and upper floors brought back into use.
- 13) Number of GI assets lost.
- 14) Number of GI assets enhanced.
- 15) Annual percentages of vacancy, different retail uses, and new uses created.
- 16) Renewable energy capacity of approved and completed schemes.
- 17) Net loss of trees/woodlands/hedgerows because of new development.
- 18) Percentage of proposals permitted which would result in the loss of biodiversity or geodiversity where mitigation or compensation has not been secured.
- 19) Annual visitor economy data.
- 20) Updated condition surveys.
- 21) Number of implemented public realm improvement schemes.

### 5. Article 4 Direction

In conservation areas minor forms of development such as domestic alterations and some extensions can often be undertaken without planning permission under the provision of the Town & Country Planning Act (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) (as amended). The Article 4 of the GPDO give the LPA the power to limit/remove these “permitted development rights” to residential properties only, when it is considered necessary to protect the character and appearance of the area.

This means that what are considered minor alterations, that can be very harmful, for example replacement of traditional timber sliding sash windows with uPVC alternatives, are brought back under planning control and considered on a case by case basis through the planning process.

in conservation areas fronting a highway, waterway or open space but they can also be used to control other forms of development which might harm the significance of heritage assets, such as alterations to boundary features, installation of renewable-energy microgeneration equipment or erection of outbuildings.

Within Durham City there are presently two Article 4 Directions in operation. One covering properties within Crossgate and the Crossgate Peth area served in 2007. The other within The Avenue, Hawthorn Terrace and adjacent streets, Albert Steet, Waddington Street, Mowbray Street, parts of Sutton Street, Claypath, Gilesgate, Church Street and Hallgarth Street, served in 2016.

As part of the CAMP, and review of the existing conservation area, there is a requirement to review and assess the Article 4 Directions to bring forwards potential changes for further protection and enhancement based upon the robust evidence base. Furthermore, since the serving of the existing Article 4 Directions there have been changes in planning policy, as well as physical changes within the conservation area.

The imposition of the current Article 4 Directions has had a positive impact. There have been a number of cases where enforcement have instigated the replacement of inappropriate materials and details carried out without the benefit of planning permission, and cases where the planning process has secured the re-installation and re-use of traditional materials, and period style features. This has served to conserve and enhance the character and visual appearance of the conservation area.

**Fig 73** images showing examples properties included within the 2016 Article 4 Direction.



are most commonly used to control changes to elevations or roof coverings



As part of the CAMP review process, this identified that many historic terraced streets and individual historic buildings were not included in the existing Article 4 Directions, and the reason for their omission is unknown.

The decision making process involved a two stage approach. Firstly, a full review of all of the properties covered by the existing Article 4 Directions, this was to establish if the properties were still worthy of inclusion and to capture their character and visual appearance at this point in time. This was achieved by making a dated photographic record of each individual property and completion of a survey form noting its age, use, features such as doors, windows (materials and style), elevation and roof details and any obvious existing alterations.

Secondly, was a robust review of the properties excluded from the original Article 4 Directions. Properties were identified with a strong public presence owing to their street frontage locations and contribute positively to the townscape because of their historic interest, character, aesthetic appeal, group value, and level of intactness.

The level of contribution considered such that it is desirable to impose additional planning controls to ensure they are preserved, and in some instances, to reverse previous adverse changes should the opportunity arise in the future.

Without such controls in place, harm to the character and visual amenity of the area and/or damage to the historic environment, through insensitive changes that could not be controlled, remains a realistic threat. The same recording method was used for such properties, all of which are mapped on the following page.

**Fig 74** images showing examples of properties added to the Article 4 Direction to ensure the preservation of traditional fabric, features and special character.



**Fig 69** Map showing the currently properties covered by the Article 4 Direction and the proposed inclusions, these are listed below and continuing on the following pages.

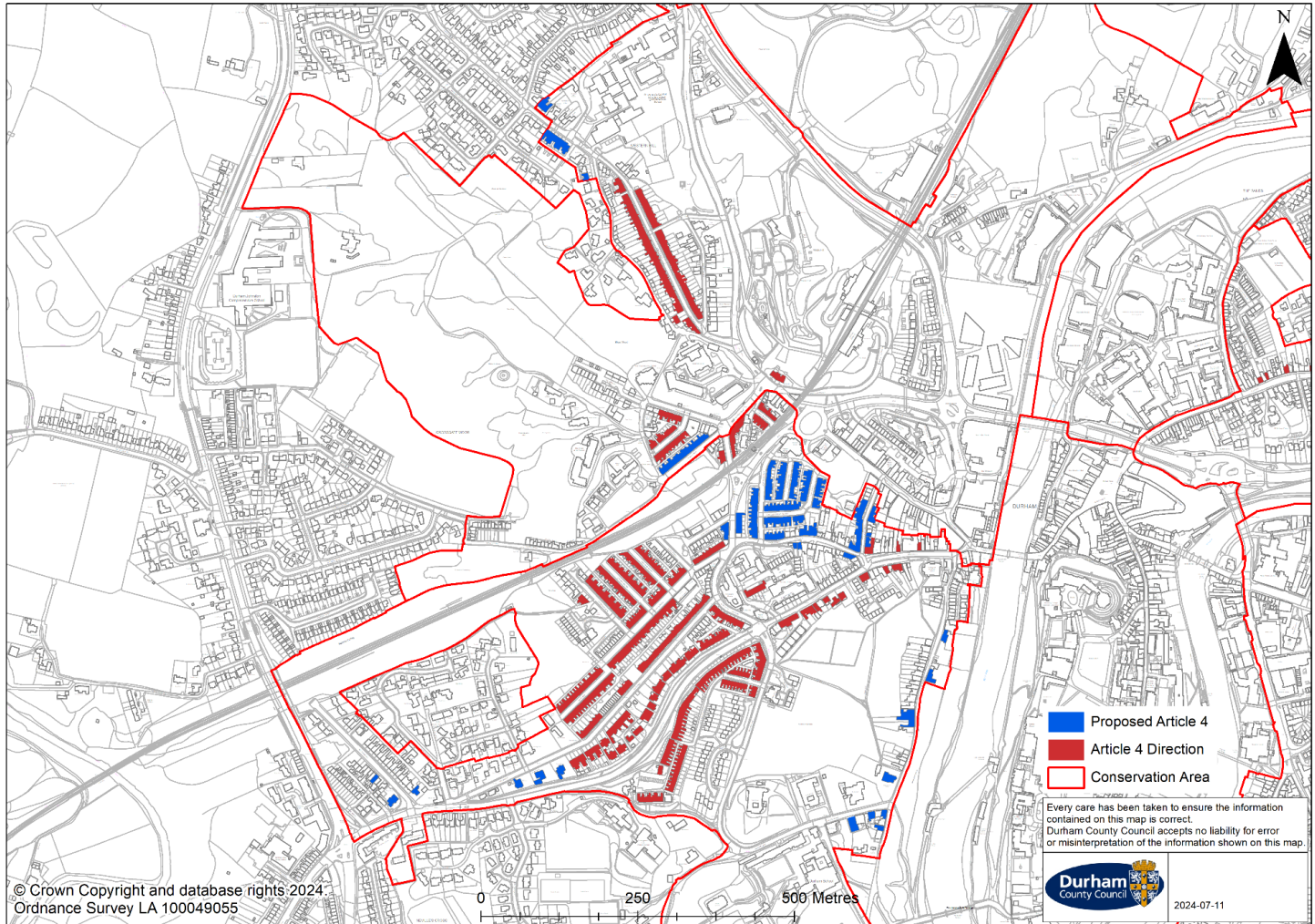
**Existing Article 4 properties**

**Served 2007**

5,6,8,20,21,23,26,27,28,30,31,32,52,59,64  
Crossgate;1-25, Maple Lodge, Aspen Lodge  
Crossgate Peth;1-37 Nevilledale Terrace;1-14  
Summerville; 1-13 Brierville;1-7 Beech Crest; 1-7 St  
Margarets Garth; 1-13 Alexandra Crescent; 1-15  
Palatine View

**Served 2016**

1-63, Field House, Milbank and Normalea, Albert  
Street; 1-9 Anchorage Terrace; 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17,  
18, 25, 27a and St Oswald’s Vicarage, Church  
Street; 18-28, The Anchorage, 35 and 36 Church  
Street Head; 1-7 Church Street Villas; 41, 43, 48, 54,  
55, 55a, 58, 59, 61, 62 and 63 Claypath; 10-12, 14-  
19, 20-22, 24, 24a, 57, 58, 60-65, 68a-70, 72, 76, 77,  
80-83, 86, 89, 93, 93a, 97, 99, 102a, 132a, 137-139,  
147-149a, 159-161, 166, 172, 215, 221, Caselaw,  
Woodlands and Southlands, Gilesgate; 1-4  
Gladstone Villas; 16, 16a, 34, 35, 36, 38-49, 50-53,  
60-66, 72, 74, 76, 80, 82 and 84 Hallgarth Street; 2-  
57 Hawthorn Terrace; 1-6 Highwood Terrace; 1-23  
High Wood View; 1-12a and 19-21 Laburnum  
Avenue;





1-8 and 10-14 Lambton Street; 1-34 Lawson Terrace, 1-32 May Street; 1-28 Mistletoe Street; 1-16 Mount Joy Crescent; 1-18 Mowbray Street; 44 and 45 North Road; 1 and 2 Palmers Close; 1,2,3,4a,4b and 4c Parkside; 3-10 Ravensworth Terrace; 18-27 and 30-32 Sutton Street; 1-28 and 36-64 The Avenue; 1a, 1b, 2 and 3 Union Place; 4-9 Waddington Street; 1-7 West Terrace.

**Proposed Article 4 properties**

21,22,38,39,40 South Street; Avenue House, Dunstar House, Oak Lea The Avenue;1-5 Allergate Terrace;1-3,12,13,17-20,27-29 Allergate;1-21,22-34 Atherton Street; 1-10,11-19 East Atherton Street;1-6 Fieldhouse Terrace; 1-2 DLI Cottages; 1-2 Springwell Villas;2-15a Flass Street;1-5, Cedar House, Ash Tree House, Holly Tree House, Willow Tree House, Holly Street; 1-12, 13-24 Mitchell Street; 7-18, 20-28 Neville Street;2-11,12-20 New Street;

