

Durham – Neighbourhood Plan

Pre Submission Consultation Draft May/June 2019

WHS Coordinator's Comments

The Neighbourhood Plan as refined from the previous draft is again particularly welcome in relation to its inclusion of the World Heritage Site (WHS) and its setting. The descriptions of heritage and how it relates to Durham and the support for the WHS Management Plan 2017 help the WHS Committee deliver its action plan.

I would like to note policies of particular interest for the WHS and make comments as follows.

Theme 1: A City with a Sustainable Future

Policy S1: Sustainable Development requirements of all Development and Re-development Sites Including all New Building, Renovations, and Extensions

Conservation, preservation and enhancement of Our Neighbourhood by:

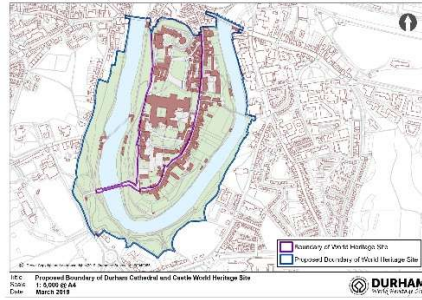
- c) Harmonising with its context in terms of scale, layout, density, massing, height, materials, colour, and hard and soft landscaping;*
- d) Conserving and enhancing the setting, character, local distinctiveness, important views, tranquillity and the contribution made to the sense of place by Our Neighbourhood's designated and non-designated heritage assets;*
- e) Protecting and enhancing the diversity of Our Neighbourhood's natural environment in terms of biodiversity / geodiversity, designated wildlife sites and protected species, seeking biodiversity net gain wherever possible;*

Policy S2: The Requirement for Master Plans

In combination these two policies should be very useful in requiring developments to respond fully to the special historic context of the historic city core, the WHS and its setting.

Theme 2A : A Beautiful and Historic City – Heritage

The plan included in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan of the proposed WHS expansion (Map 1 Page 38) is now superseded by the plan that very shortly will be submitted to UNESCO for final approval. It has sufficient approvals to now be included in the Neighbourhood Plan in its final form. This plan is below and can be copied from the word version of this response:



Policy H1: Protection of the World Heritage Site

(Repeated below -particular interest for WHS)

- a) taking full account of both the historical and present uses of the World Heritage Site; and*
- b) proposing high quality design which harmonises with the World Heritage Site; and*
- c) using traditional materials; and*
- d) proposing decorative schemes which are appropriate to the setting of the World Heritage Site; and*
- e) seeking balance and avoiding overbearing massing which conflicts with the World Heritage Site; and*
- f) avoiding the cumulative impact of developments within the World Heritage Site in terms of their height, massing and the spaces between the buildings.*

Proposals for development throughout Our Neighbourhood must be shown to sustain, conserve and enhance the setting of the World Heritage Site by:

- d) carrying out an assessment of how the finished development will be viewed in, from, towards and within the World Heritage Site; and*
- e) protecting views of the World Heritage Site from viewpoints outside the World Heritage Site (such as the world famous view from trains crossing the Viaduct); and where practicable, by opening up views of the World Heritage Site from within and from outside the World Heritage Site.*

Policy H2: The Conservation Areas

Requiring the safeguarding of WHS views and its SOUV is very helpful. Dealing adequately with new development in relation to the WHS and as amplified in the conservation areas policy should also help in protecting the WHS setting by ensuring an appropriate townscape setting for the WHS. Both policies are valuable for the future of the WHS.

Policy H3: Our Neighbourhood Outside the Conservation Areas

This is also useful in that it tackles development and distinctiveness in areas of the WHS inner setting outside of the Conservation Area.

Policy H4: Heritage Assets

The inclusion of unlisted as well as designated heritage assets can contribute to the significance of an area and its distinctiveness – their role in the townscape/roofscape setting to the WHS is substantial and protection is useful.

Theme 2b: A Beautiful and Historic City – Green Infrastructure

Policy G1: Protecting and Enhancing Green Infrastructure

Protecting green corridors (defined in para. 4.65 and 4.66, and Table 1)
Protecting biodiversity, habitats, protected species and geological features
Protecting trees and hedgerows
Protecting and enhancing the banks of the River Wear
Protecting dark corridors

The City's green infrastructure is of high significance in retaining the scale and defining the original historic core. The banks of the Wear lead out from the central Peninsula area. These are key elements of the green areas of the WHS inner setting and of great importance to its OUV. The importance of the Peninsula Riverbanks as a natural area is capable of further understanding and increased significance for visitors. This links with the appreciation of the wider green infrastructure and its natural attributes and the provision of quantifiable ecological services. The appreciation of green space for its wellbeing benefits is capable of being increased for by residents, students and visitors and the Peninsula/Riverbanks spaces have a role to play. Erosion of the quality of greenspace and its relationship to the historic city core has been a factor in the negative impact of some river corridor and fringe developments and proposals in recent years.

The role of the River Wear as a 'dark corridor' is key to the night setting of the WHS and its relative insulation against the surrounding town. This is important in maintaining its OUV.

Policy G2: Designation of Local Green Spaces

Including the River Wear corridor around the Peninsula as a local green space is valuable support to the expanded area of the WHS designation. The range of sites also designated as local green spaces mostly includes important elements of the WHS inner setting. Harm or loss to their importance relative to local people is also likely to be loss or harm for the quality of the inner setting and thus to the WHS.

Policy G3: Creation of the Emerald Network

The inclusion of the areas beside the River Wear help to reinforce its recognition and significance as an important corridor through Durham and beyond. This corridor is significant for the number of heritage and natural designations associated with it. It forms historic routes relating to Norman land utilisation and settlement through County Durham and use related to the Cathedral and its monastery. Protecting the Network's connectivity is useful in helping to maintaining the historic connections between these sites.

Policy G4: Enhancing the Beneficial Use of the Green Belt

The 2107 WHS Management Plan identified the key role of the 'green' areas within the inner setting. This general support for the Green Belt, Infrastructure and the Emerald Network will all have role in helping conserve, protect and encourage positive use of these key areas. The Sidegate and Frankland Lane areas are very significant in a key view of the WHS, the historic route out to Finchale and this sector of the WHS inner setting.

Theme 3: A City with a Diverse and Resilient Economy

Policy E3: Retail Development

Policy E4: Evening Economy

A strong and resilient central retail core is essential to the active conservation of the important historic streets that form the visitor's approach to the WHS. A flexible city centre that copes with change in retail patterns and store closures is vital in presenting an attractive City to both local people and visitors. The encouragement of evening economy is useful but this, as with other conversions of upper storeys and changes of use, has been causing some negative impact from development pressure on buildings lining the historic routes. The conditions under **Policy E3** are useful in helping guide these changes.

Policy E6: Visitor accommodation

Encouragement of sensitive visitor provision will help support the WHS.

Theme 4: A City with Attractive and Affordable Places to Live

Policy D2: Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

Policy D3: Student Accommodation in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

Policy D2 may assist in reducing impact from overscaled and large PBSA buildings or elements of development that have been impacting on key WHS approaches and views out to the green inner setting of the WHS. Encouraging more diverse housing use beyond student accommodation will help strengthen the resilience of the city core.

Policy D6: Building Housing to the Highest Standards

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Because of the limited scope for new housing with direct relevance for the WHS this is less of an issue but changes to existing housing can impact on the townscape. The guidelines will prove helpful in active conservation of the historic townscape.

4.5 Theme 5: A City with a Modern and Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

Policy T1: Sustainable transport accessibility and design

Policy T2: Residential Car Parking

The policies focus on new development and scope for immediate impact on the WHS is reduced due to the limited development potential in the key townscape setting areas.

There is generally great merit in improving access and broadening the methods of access without reducing the capacity of the City to attract and draw in visitors. This would help in the attractiveness of the City and access to the WHS for the visitor. There are issues of excessive traffic on Saddler St/Owengate and at times the North Bailey. Access is vital for many functions on the Peninsula and for visitors. Support for balanced solutions under Policy T1 would be welcome.

Theme 6: A City with an Enriched Community Life

Policy C1: Provision of Facilities for Arts and Culture

Policy C2: Provision of New Community Facilities

Policy C3: Protection of an Existing Community Facility

Policy C4: Health Care and Social Care Facilities

A strong arts and culture provision in the City can help with its attractiveness for extending and enriching the stay of visitors to the WHS. A City with a strong community provision is part of its attraction to students and also to a more diverse range of residents. Ensuring the diversity of the City is valuable in ensuring its sustainability – an important factor in conserving the WHS townscape setting.