

Regeneration and Local Services

Delegated Decision

August 2019

Proposed Extension of the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site boundary

Ordinary Decision



Delegated Decision Report of Stuart Timmiss – Head of Development and Housing

Electoral Division(s) affected: Elvet and Gilesgate

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To confirm support by delegation for the extension of the boundary of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site (WHS) for consideration and acceptance by the local World Heritage Site Committee, prior to its submission to UNESCO.

Executive Summary

- 2 The present boundary of the WHS is drawn around the castle, cathedral and Prebends Bridge). The proposed boundary change encompasses the castle precinct, walls, North and South Bailey, and defensive riverbanks and river (see Appendix 2 for plan of existing and proposed areas).
- 3 These features are considered to better support the attributes of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Values (SoUVs) as listed in the 2017 WHS Management Plan.

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- 4 The proposed minor boundary changes to the WHS are supported by the Council and this shall be submitted to the WHS Committee as part of its request for endorsement of the proposal by UNESCO.

Background

- 5 The original 1986 inscription of the WHS produced a tightly defined boundary around each of the Cathedral, Prebends Bridge, principal Castle buildings and surrounding defences of the Peninsula. This was modified in 2008 uniting the Castle and Cathedral but omitting the majority of the walls of the Castle precinct, defensive riverbanks and river. (Appendix 2 refers)
- 6 The WHS Management Plan (approved 2017), states that *the current boundary does not fully encompass all the attributes and features that convey the property's Outstanding Universal Values*. The steep banks of the River Wear, an important component of the property's defensive role, and the full extent of the Castle precinct lie outside the existing boundary. The proposed boundary would encompass these areas.
- 7 The submission was developed through consultation with the WHS Coordinating Committee, comprising Durham County Council, Durham Cathedral, Durham University, St. John's College, The City of Durham Trust, Historic England and a representative of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) UK. The process is in accordance with UNESCO's Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention and has to date been agreed by the respective boards of key stakeholders including Durham Cathedral and Durham University; both whom have significant land ownership interests in the extended area.
- 8 A period of public consultation led by the committee commenced in November 2018, which included public lectures and engagement with all potential new occupants and landowners within the expanded site boundary, immediate neighbours and residents' groups. Durham County Council has negligible land ownership interest in the WHS area.
- 9 On 19 March 2019, following the public consultation, the WHS Coordinating Committee agreed to take the proposal forward for approval by their respective governing bodies prior to submission to UNESCO by February 2020.

Main implications

- 10 The proposal is consistent with the emerging WHS policy within the County Durham Plan, as signed-off by Cabinet. The proposal is also in accordance with saved Policy E4 of the adopted City of Durham Local Plan; World Heritage Site – Extension.
- 11 The revised boundary would encompass a greater area of Durham City as shown in Appendix 2, with some minor amendments to the ownership of land affected by the proposal.
- 12 The modification will, through its clear boundary designation and descriptions of significance, assist in understanding the impact of development within the WHS area and its setting, and this is supported by emerging policy within the County Durham Plan.

Conclusion

The proposed WHS extension is a minor modification; which encloses the area that supports the attributes as described in the revised Statement of Outstanding Universal Values (approved 2013) and detailed in the 2017 WHS Management Plan.

Background papers

Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site – Submission for Minor Extension of the Site Boundaries, World Heritage Site Committee 19/03/2019

Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site Management Plan 2017-2023, Durham World Heritage Site, February 2017

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The proposal has been developed in full compliance with UNESCO's *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention: Minor Modifications to World Heritage Properties* throughout its process and has been checked with the UK approving bodies, (Historic England and the UK National Commission for UNESCO).

The report has been deemed appropriate to be determined as a delegated decision to the Head of Development and Housing under paragraph 16 of the Council's Constitution, May 2019; 'to determine all forms of planning and other applications and all notifications submitted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990 or under any related principal or secondary legislation'.

Finance

There are no financial implications.

Consultation

The WHS Coordinator has managed consultation with landowners within the site boundary, immediate neighbours and local resident's groups.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no equality or diversity implications.

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications.

Crime and Disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications

Accommodation

There are no accommodation implications.

Procurement

There are no procurement implications

Appendix 2: Existing and Proposed WHS Boundary

