

# **Durham City Masterplan Update**



**Durham County Council**

**October 2016**

## Context for Masterplan Update

Masterplan Updates are being prepared for the majority of the largest towns in County Durham. This one for Durham City is a shortened update of the 2013 Regeneration Masterplan. It provides details on what has been delivered across Council services in the recent past and sets out key activities for the future, including in the town centre, in housing, in retail, in leisure and tourism, in education, and in terms of sustainable travel.

This Masterplan Update addresses matters that have and are already happening to meet challenges and address opportunities including:

- Securing a 'thriving Durham City' in accordance with the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy (2014-2030);
- Encouraging private sector investment;
- Enhancing the vitality of the city centre;
- Developing the leisure and tourism offer in Durham City;
- Achieving balanced communities;
- Addressing air quality issues; and
- Improving public transport, cycling and walking facilities.

## Profile

Durham City lies at the heart of the County and its historic character and landscape setting are of prime importance not only nationally but internationally. With the Cathedral and Castle World Heritage Site spectacularly positioned on the peninsula and with a core retaining much of its mediaeval street pattern, it is nevertheless a living city containing a University of international renown, is a significant administrative and cultural centre, and is a public transport hub for much of the County. The Council is aware that a priority will always be to ensure that as it evolves, the outstanding character and setting of this unique City is not compromised.

Durham City is the key Public Transport Hub in the County, reflecting its role as the focus for its locality and a wider area, with good rail access and the bus station links to settlements in its locality and other main towns in the County as well as to the centres of Tyne and Wear and Teesside. Park and Ride has also proved a success and although the compact and hilly nature of the city and generally narrow traffic routes through the centre doesn't allow for straightforward development of cycle and walking routes, they do exist in places and there are opportunities to improve them.



The public sector makes a major contribution to the city's employment public sector, reflecting the presence of a major hospital, police and council headquarters, the Passport Office, The Land Registry and NS&I.

Durham University is a world class institution which brings huge prestige and economic benefit to the city and county. Durham University makes a strong, positive contribution to the local, regional and UK economy, for example through direct investment, as a large employer, an extensive supply chain and staff and student spending. It produces high calibre graduates who in turn can generate wealth.

New College also provides excellent further education opportunities on its redeveloped campus while East Durham College (Houghall Campus) is currently being successfully redeveloped to bring its facilities up to the highest standard.

The city continues to attract major cultural and sporting events, many supported by the Council, and these bring huge benefits for the local economy. The Cathedral remains the greatest attraction, with 850,000 visitors and worshippers in 2015. Challenges remain, however, including seeking to attract new staying visitors and lengthening the time that visitors spend in the city.

## What has been delivered?

The amount of projects, events and initiatives that have been delivered by the Council and partners within the city in recent years is extensive and reflects the importance that the Council places upon the city in its own right and as a hub for the whole county while improving its infrastructure and protecting its historic fabric. These include:

### Durham Area Action Partnership

- In the 2015/2016 financial year the AAP awarded grants totalling £314,000 and achieved £302,000 of match funding was secured and spent on a total of 48 projects including footpath maintenance, environmental improvements, play equipment and community projects and activities.

### Business

- The successful relocation, in partnership, of the Passport Office and NS&I into high quality new offices at Freeman's Reach, successfully retaining these jobs in the city and at the same time freeing up the Millburngate House site for redevelopment.
- The attraction of Atom Bank to the Aykley Heads site and the securing of planning permission for a new 4200 sqm headquarters on 1.75 hectares.

### City Centre

- Running the Best Bar None and Nightsafe schemes and continuing to support the Durham Business Improvement District.

### Events and Tourism

- The biennial Lumiere is now recognised as the biggest and best light festival in the UK
- The International Pearl Izumi Cycle Road Race is of national stature
- The Durham International Brass Festival is well established
- The 2013 visit of the Lindisfarne Gospels which drew 100,000 visitors and the similarly successful Magna Carta event of 2015.



### Housing

- The compact nature of the city, the need to protect key open spaces, the limited availability of previously developed land and pressure from other uses does limit the ability of the city to provide for large scale housing development. The exception to this is the new housing development underway at Mount Oswald and on the site of

the former Police HQ at Aykley Heads and at the former Fire & Rescue Service HQ at Framwellgate Moor. These latter two proposals have also enabled the redevelopment of high quality replacement facilities for these important public services.

### **Student Housing**

- The spread of student housing into the existing housing stock, in and close to the city centre, has raised concern amongst some residents. To address this, the Council has introduced stricter control on the development of Houses in Multiple Occupation (via the introduction of an Article 4 direction and an Interim Planning Policy) and has permitted purpose built student accommodation at appropriate locations.



### **Leisure/recreation**

- The £3 million regeneration of Wharton Park (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery Fund and the Council) was complete in the summer of 2016 and has renovated and enhanced its facilities including play equipment for all ages, a new café, heritage centre and outdoor learning space and an amphitheatre to host live music.

### **Transport and Highway Improvements**

- Work has just been completed on a major improvement to the city's highway network – these works are part of the wider SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique) project with traffic lights installed at both Gilesgate and Leazes Bowl roundabouts. These can be synchronised with the lights on Milburngate Roundabout allowing us to better control the flow of traffic, more predictable journey times through Durham City which will help local bus services as well as motorists, we'll be able to better manage any impact on the road network of accidents or planned events, and help improve air quality in the city.

### **Improvements to educational facilities**

- The Council continues to support the development of new and improved school facilities across the county but the recently opened replacement Trinity School and Sports College at Aykley Heads represents a flagship scheme for the priority school build programme. In addition, a £418,000 extension to Neville's Cross Primary was carried out in 2015.

## Health

Within the town there is provision of:

- Specialist Health Trainer support through Adult Wellbeing in Targeted Communities which operates in the Waddington Street Centre in Durham
- Crees (based on the Australian “men’s sheds “model).
- The Social Prescribing Programme which is available across the County and there is a centre in the town.
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centres.
- Mindfulness courses and refresher days.
- Contraception and Sexual Health Services.
- G. U. M. (Family Planning and Sexual health) clinic.

The following countywide provision is also being delivered within the town:

- Wellbeing for Life, which targets the most deprived areas in County Durham and does work in some MSOAs in/around the town. This geographically targeted work is supported by the programme via outreach and work with particular groups of people such as the LGBT community.
- If U Care Share, based in Great Lumley and provides support for people affected by suicide across the County.

## What will be delivered?

Despite the ongoing financial uncertainty the Council is committed to making appropriate improvements and taking forward and supporting projects that will improve the infrastructure of the city. These measures not only bring benefits for residents, businesses and visitors but make the city more attractive to investors and can attract more visitors. These include:

### Durham University

- The University's new academic strategy identifies the future size and shape of the University which will be needed to support their vision of 'world-leading in research, education and the wider student experience'. This will include a growth in student numbers including the relocation of students and staff from Queen's Campus, Stockton. To enable this new strategy the University has recently consulted on its Estate Masterplan. This document provides a guide to how the University could develop its estate over the long-term and will be finalised in 2017.

### North Road Refurbishment

- The improvement works, currently underway, include replacement of paving, the creation of wider areas for outdoor seating, and alterations to the road layout to improve traffic flow and road safety.

### Cycle path - Durham Railway Station

- Infrastructure access improved to allow people to reach the station more easily via paths alongside the A691 (Framwellgate Peth).

### Development of Business Incubator Centre

- The recent acquisition of Salvus House (formerly Sunderland Marine) at Aykley Heads allows the development of a Business Incubator in association with New College and Durham University.

### A New Bus Station

- To be on the site of the existing A690 roundabout and adjacent buildings. The relocation will free up the unattractive current site for redevelopment to support the regeneration of North Road, while the replacement of the roundabout will allow traffic light control to improve



traffic flow, with air quality benefits, safe pedestrian crossings and improved facilities for cyclists along with a higher quality bus station. Consultation is ongoing.

#### **The River Walks (formerly The Gates)**

- The Council has supported the redevelopment, now underway, of The Gates Shopping Centre that will become The River Walks, including cinema, dining, shops & student accommodation.

#### **Former Swimming Baths off Old Elvet**

- The Council continues to actively pursue options to see the site either brought back into an appropriate use or to see it redeveloped sensitively.

#### **Redevelopment of Millburngate House**

- Following the relocation of NS&I and the Passport Office to Freeman's Reach, the site is now available for redevelopment.
- The council will work through the planning process to ensure a high quality and sensitive scheme is developed on this exceptional site within view of the World Heritage Site.

#### **Heart of the City: Market Place and Vennels**

- Installation of lighting to Elvet Bridge area.

#### **Back Elvet**

- Public realm improvements - reconstruction of surface (paving) of 100m of heritage route to the riverbanks from Elvet via Jailors Yard.

#### **Pelaw Woods - Land Slip**

- Ground stabilisation works and re-instatement of footpath