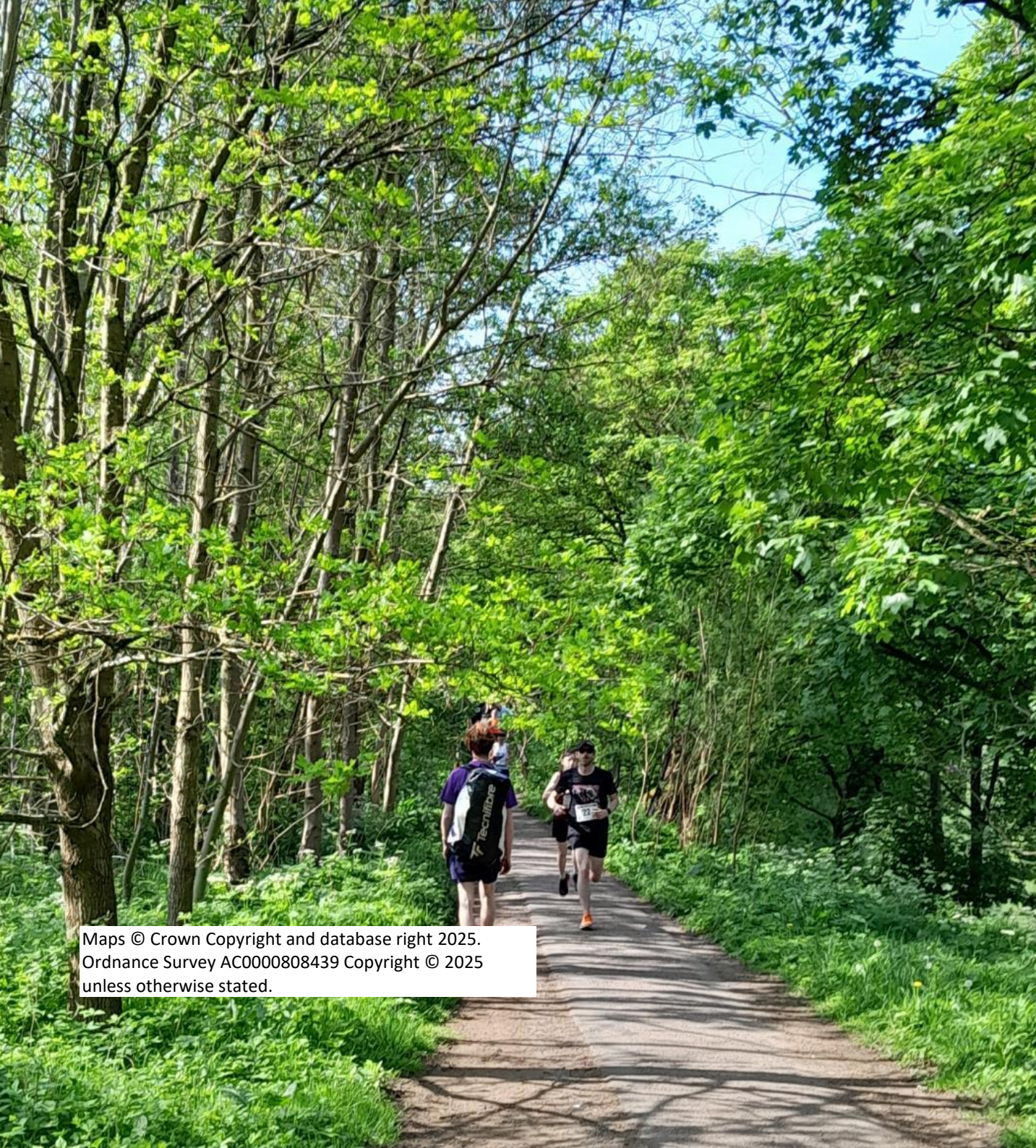


An aerial photograph of Durham City, showing the River Wear winding through a lush green forest. In the background, the city's historic architecture is visible, including the prominent spire of Durham Cathedral. A stone bridge with multiple arches spans the river in the foreground. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds.

Conservation Area Management Plan

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Durham City Old Durham Conservation Area



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I. Introduction



1.1 What is a conservation area?

The statutory definition of a conservation area, as defined in the primary legislation, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is:

"An area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"

In determining the above there are no specific set criteria upon which an area is designated. But there are several key elements that are generally considered. This includes the topography and landscape, building ages and architectural styles, the materials used and detailing, street patterns and grain, land uses, the public realm, green spaces, boundary treatments, and views.

The extent to which buildings and structures contribute generally derives from their frontages onto the street that is most experienced in the public domain. But in many places the sides and rears of buildings and streets can also be viewed, particularly in Durham City where many buildings and areas can be seen three dimensionally. This is due to how the buildings have developed in response to the landform and how the city has evolved over the centuries, spreading out in all directions from the peninsula.

Spaces can contribute very positively, connecting buildings and places, dictating movement, and creating interactions. These range from key open historic civic spaces such as Durham Market Place, to the contemporary Millennium Square, intimate medieval streets, narrow historic vennels and green lanes, and the riverside footpaths.

Green spaces are in abundance in Durham City, and they contribute significantly to its special character, distinctiveness, and sense of place. They vary greatly in type, use and extent, ranging from large areas of dense ancient woodland, local nature reserves, community allotment gardens, public parks, private front gardens in the streetscene, roadside verges, the riverbanks, and street trees.

Such green assets and the wider surrounding landscape have high scenic and aesthetic qualities that enhance the setting of buildings, streets, spaces, and the city as a whole. All of the above, and the varying topography, create and provide different visual experiences, and ambiances, with notable historic landmarks featuring in a range of different views.

Added to the above, the river is a wonderful blue asset, which has played a critical role in shaping the city and is a significant part of the character and experience of the city. The River Wear corridor is a special and unique part of the region's natural environment and a significant natural component of the wider city that crosses and unites multiple conservation areas.

It has high aesthetic, social, and recreational value and it provides an important wildlife corridor through the heart of the historic city.

The designation of a conservation area under the Town and County Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/69> gives the Local Planning Authority (LPA) certain statutory and general duties:

- **s69(1)** requires the LPA to designate from time to time any areas which they consider to be of special architectural or historic interest as conservation areas,
- **s69(2)** requires the LPA to review such designations from time to time.
- **s71(1)** requires the LPA to formulate, prepare and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas from time to time.
- **s72(1)** requires that when assessing applications for development in conservation areas, the LPA must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation areas.

1.2 What is the purpose of this appraisal?

The key objective of this character appraisal is to define the special interest of Durham City Old Durham Conservation Area. It identifies and evaluates the contribution of the different elements and features that form the area’s distinctiveness, sense of place, character and appearance that justify its designation. It then identifies any issues, problems, and potential threats the conservation area faces, and the opportunities, that help to inform the overarching realistic and deliverable management aims and actions set out in the management strategy.

The appraisal will provide an important tool and evidence base to inform the area’s on-going management, to ensure its special architectural and historic interest is conserved and where possible enhanced moving forwards. It has been prepared in accordance with Historic England’s *Advice Note 1, Conservation Area, Appraisal, Designation and Management*, 2nd ed. (2019).

The individual character appraisals form **part 2** of the Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) process. **Part 1** is the Durham City Strategic Context document, and **part 3** the overarching Management Strategy. These documents should be read in combination.

The purpose of the CAMP Strategic Context document is to:

- Set out the approach to the protection of the City’s special architectural and historic interest and how this can deliver other positive outcomes.
- Set out an overview of the city in terms of its special interest, history timeline, topography & landscape context.
- Provide an understanding of the seven individual conservation areas, their interrelationships and how in combination they inform the overall heritage significance of Durham City.
- Provide an understanding of the process and methodology that has been carried out.
- Set out how the Durham City Conservation Area has evolved from its original designation in 1968 through to its subdivision to seven conservation areas.
- Set out the justification for the designation of the seven new conservation areas.
- Set out how the documents work
- Sit alongside other strategies and plans that are in place and emerging.

Owing to the uniqueness of Old Durham, and land ownership, individual management aims and actions for Old Durham Gardens, are required to reflect this; these are set out in Section 5.



Fig 1 above. Image of the approach to Pelaw Woods from Sherburn Road playing fields in the north and bottom an image from Bent House Lane showing the Old Durham Farm buildings nestled in their scenic landscape setting and locally designated area of high landscape value.

Together the conservation area character appraisal and CAMP overarching management strategy will:

- Help decision makers to be able to assess the impact of new development proposals and change upon the area's special interest, character appearance and significance.
- Provide a detailed understanding of the area's special interest that can be used to inform future planning decisions.
- Identify positive features to be preserved, negative features to be improved and identify potential future risks to the areas special interest and character.
- Offer solutions to the issues and potential risks through the management aims and actions.
- Identify positive opportunities for change and improvements.
- Support the delivery of good design and assist in the preparation and implementation of enhancement and regeneration opportunities when they arise.

Fig 2 below. The splendid view out from Pelaw Woods from the upper ridge line. The trees frame the view over the river towards Old Elvet and Durham Cathedral demonstrating the intrinsic relationship between the conservation area and the historic urban core of the city centre.



2. Overview



2.1 Location and description

Durham City is centrally located within County Durham, with the Cathedral and Castle at its heart set on a dramatic peninsula overlooking the River Wear. The city is well connected to many strategic road and rail routes, including the A1(M), and the east coast mainline.

Old Durham Conservation Area is located one mile from the Durham Peninsula across the eastern side of the River Wear. Here it loops around The Racecourse and Maiden Castle southwards down towards Shincliffe Village. In the north the area is bounded by the mid-20th century housing estate at Sherburn Road with the Front Street leading eastwards to Sherburn Village and beyond.

Old Durham is unique in the historic city centre owing to its distinctive, idyllic, rural character. It comprises an isolated farm settlement of three distinguishable groups, and the 17th century public pleasure gardens that have been shaped and modelled over the centuries by different landowners.

The built form is low density that sits within open farmland of high scenic quality, visually contained by the surrounding dense woodland on steeper slopes. The west side of the conservation area comprises Pelaw Woods on a steep valley cliff that includes a large area of ancient woodland (woodland that has existed continuously since 1600) and contains a variety of natural habitats.

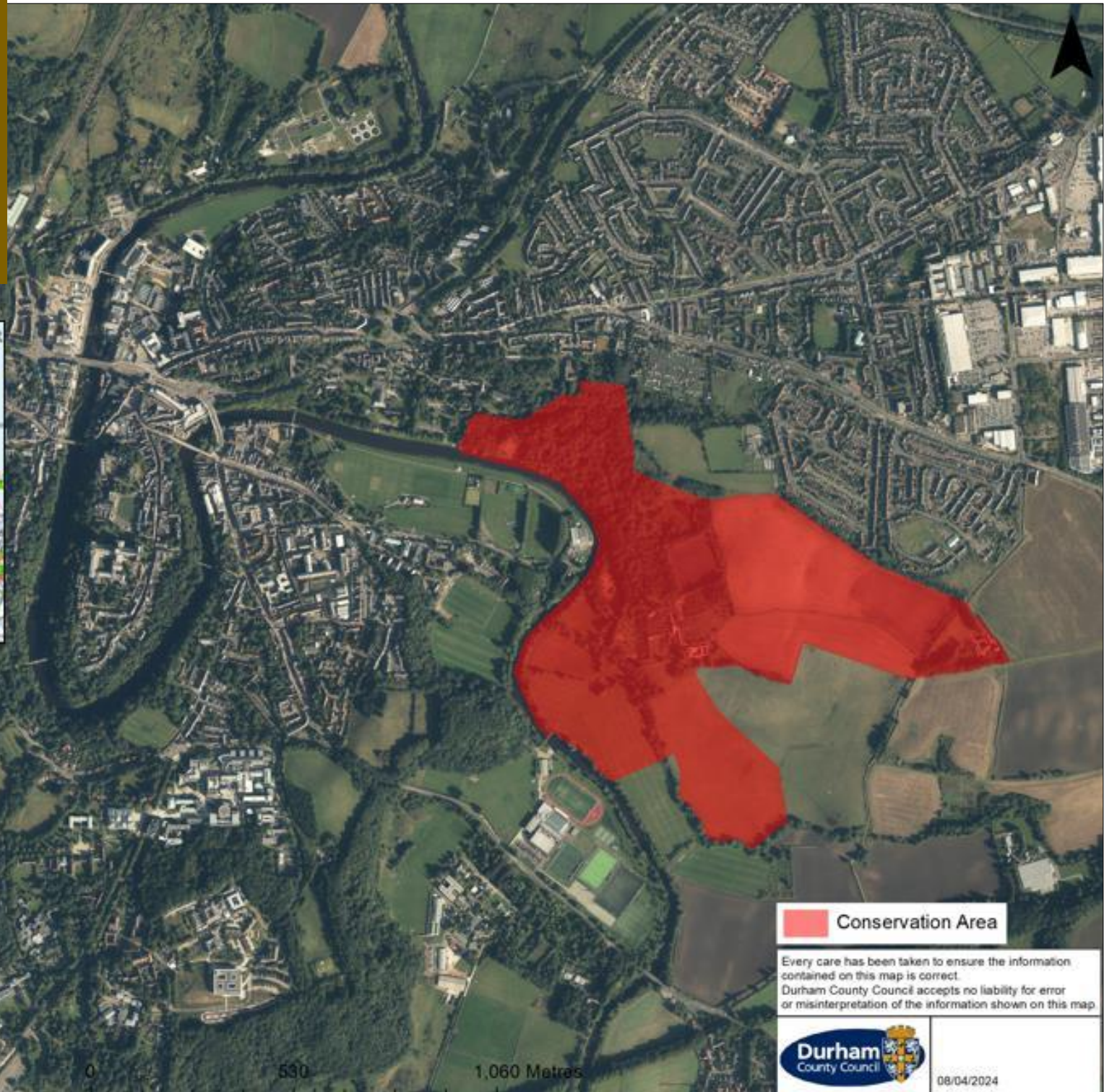
Location plans and a detailed plan of the Old Durham Conservation Area boundary can be found on the following pages.



Fig 3 above. An image southwest from Bent House Lane showing the characteristics of the historic rural landscape, with Maiden Castle Wood in the backdrop to the right.

Map 1 Location plans

A location plan of Durham City highlighted in the wider county context (inset below) and an aerial map showing Old Durham Conservation Area in the wider city centre settlement context.



 Conservation Area

Every care has been taken to ensure the information contained on this map is correct. Durham County Council accepts no liability for error or misinterpretation of the information shown on this map.



08/04/2024

2.2 The conservation area boundary

Boundary Description

The conservation area boundary in the north skirts around the edge of the housing estate at Sherburn Road, and the playing fields associated with Laurel Avenue Primary School. It travels along the perimeter of the grounds of the former College of St Hild and St Bede down to the riverside. From here it follows the course of the River Wear downstream to Maiden Castle footbridge. The southeast boundary partially follows the course of Old Durham Beck then the fields around Old Durham Farm and those on the south side of Bent House Lane up to, and around Bent House Farm.

The north western edge shares a common boundary with Gillesgate Conservation Area where Pelaw Woods meets the parkland at the former College of St Hild and St Bede site.

The River Wear in the west provides a common boundary between Old Durham Conservation Area and Elvet Conservation Area. Finally, it bounds Shincliffe Village Conservation Area between the playing fields opposite Maiden Castle sports complex.

An important part of the appraisal process is to provide an understanding as to how the boundary has been drawn, what is included and what has been excluded, and why certain physical features have been used to define it.

The following provides a list of key points that have informed the Old Durham Conservation Area boundary identification process:

- A separate conservation area for Old Durham is appropriate and meaningful given the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the place compared to the rest of the urban city centre.
- The boundary is generally informed by the Old Durham historic estate and the sub-character area identified within the 2016 appraisal. However, it includes an extension eastward to capture the start of the splined view of Durham Cathedral, preserving the indivisible link between Old Durham and the historic core of the city.
- The east boundary extends across Bent House Lane to capture Bent House Farm again once part of the Old Durham estate. It therefore has a historic, physical, and intangible connection with Old Durham.
- The boundary in the southwest has been extended to cover more of the land of the site of Old Durham civilian type Roman villa, potentially the first known settlement around the outskirts of the city.
- The north and western boundaries are ordered by the natural features of the River Wear and the perimeter of Pelaw Woods, the latter separating Old Durham from the College of St Hild and Bede and housing in Gillesgate.

The conclusion is that the Old Durham Conservation Area boundary is logically informed by archaeological, topographical, historic landscape and built features. These combine to create a unique place of high significance, and legible character to merit designation, which deserves careful management to be preserved or enhanced.

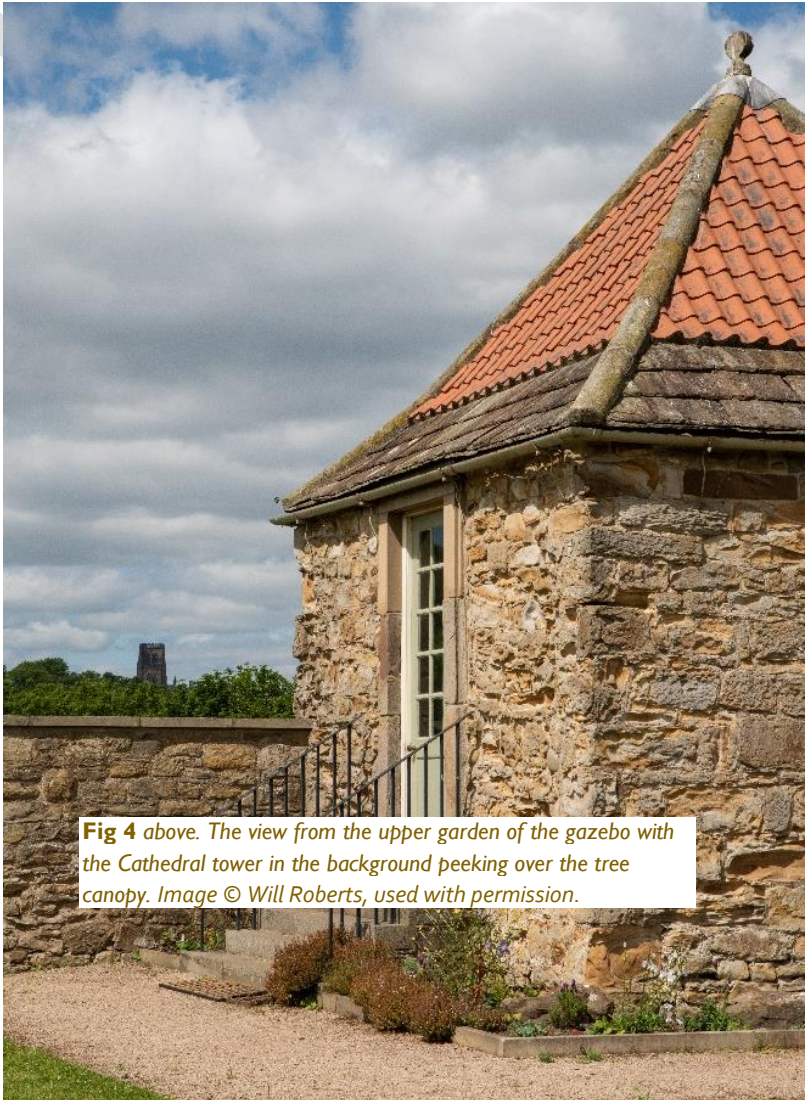
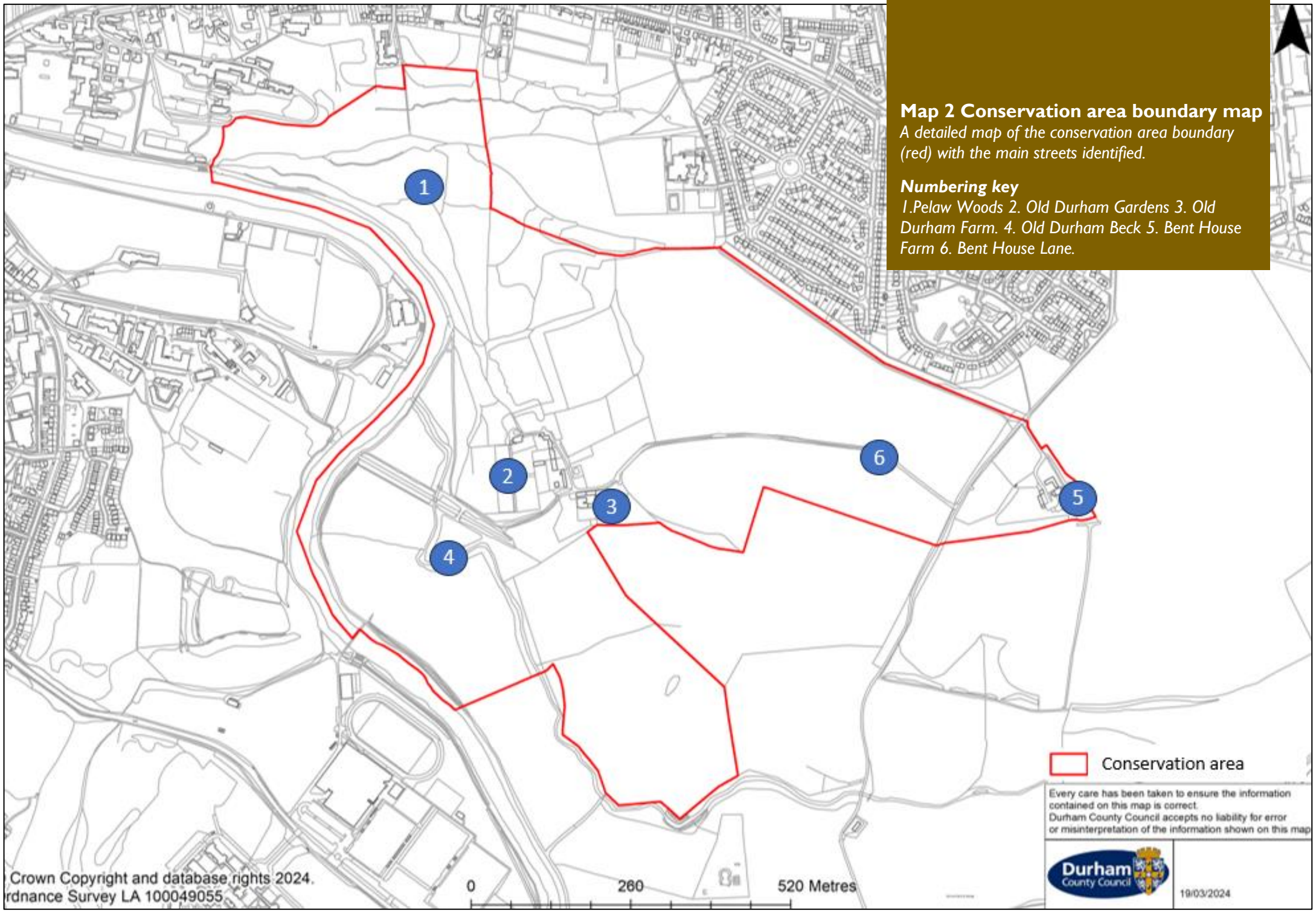


Fig 4 above. The view from the upper garden of the gazebo with the Cathedral tower in the background peeking over the tree canopy. Image © Will Roberts, used with permission.



Map 2 Conservation area boundary map

A detailed map of the conservation area boundary (red) with the main streets identified.

Numbering key

- 1. Pelaw Woods
- 2. Old Durham Gardens
- 3. Old Durham Farm
- 4. Old Durham Beck
- 5. Bent House Farm
- 6. Bent House Lane

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**Map 3 Conservation area boundary map
(aerial map)**

The aerial map shows the boundary in detail and the distinction between the urban and natural environments with the surrounding city faded out to give greater clarity



 Conservation Area

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27/11/2024

0

280

560 Metres

OS/2024/001

2.3 Summary of special interest

Architectural interest

- The architectural distinctiveness, quality and preserved agricultural character of the historic farm buildings.
- The majority of the buildings are either listed buildings, or non-designated heritage assets, testifying to the special architectural and historic interest of the place.
- The uniqueness and architectural quality of the gardens comprising three walled compartments on different terraced levels with the upper wall punctured by the square plan gazebo, which has been restored as a reflection of the gardens’ former glory.



Fig 5 above. The historic cottages at Old Durham.

Historic and evidential interest

- The archaeological evidence that Old Durham was originally a Roman settlement, and its further archaeological potential.
- The area’s significance during the medieval era as part of the Kepier Hospital Estate. Its associative values relating to later ownership by well-known wealthy Durham estate families.
- The historic and evidential value of the gardens and pleasure grounds as a rare and fine example of formal historic garden design developing over the centuries.
- The historic interest and diverse range of late 17th to 19th century farm buildings including barns, long byres, former daily, cottages and farmhouses.
- The remnants of the dismantled Elvet railway, dating from the late 1800s, important in reflecting the former industrial heritage of the area and as part of that of the wider county.
- The historic landscape of the whole area that has changed little since its detailed recording on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map c.1856.

Topography and setting

- The distinctive and varied topography that is part of the river valley, combined with the dramatic steep ridges of Pelaw Woods.
- The intrinsic relationship and landscape setting contribution of Old Durham, to the other city conservation areas and the setting to Durham World Heritage Site.
- The high value of the topography in terms of the significant and broad views it creates.
- The combination of the area’s position, topography, and landscape features that create containment and sense of isolation to the area, distinctive and separate from the historic urban core of the city.
- The diversity and unspoilt nature of the historic rural landscape, of high aesthetic quality.



Fig 6 above. A view from Bent House Lane across the farmland towards Maiden Castle.

Green and blue infrastructure assets

- The highly significant green infrastructure assets of Pelaw Woods and Old Durham Gardens. The importance of gardens is recognised by being a grade II listed park and garden of special historic interest.
- The variation, aesthetic value, and high quality, of the designed historic garden spaces of the lower orchard comprising contemporary mid-17th century planting, and the 18th century planting scheme in the upper walled garden.
- The contrast of the open valley slopes, farmland, dense mature woodland, and flat floodplain land that provides high scenic quality.
- The area's intrinsic contribution as part of the landscape of the River Wear corridor down to Shincliffe Village.
- The high value of the groups of trees, tree belts, hedgerows lining field boundaries, and scrub land that contribute positively, strengthening the rural character.
- The high value of the landscape in terms of enhancing the setting of the historic buildings and the natural separation it provides.

Views

- The strong visual relationship between the area, Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site, the river, wider townscape, and landscape of high visual quality.
- The high significance of the sequential visual experience of the Cathedral and the sequence of views approaching Old Durham from Bent House Lane.
- The high value of the unfolding views approaching the gardens along the riverside.
- The aesthetic values and views of the gardens enhanced by the historical background and authentic restoration.



Fig 7 above. The glimpsed view of Vane Tempest Hall from the footpath at St Giles Close leading into Pelaw Woods.

Public realm

- The informal nature of the public realm appropriate to the rural character of the area.
- The public realm being largely pedestrian only, a rarity of the city conservation areas.
- The high number of public rights of way and other informal routes giving rise to high pedestrian permeability and providing changing visual experiences.
- The feeling of isolation, away from the busy urban environment of the city centre and its tranquil ambiance.
- The recreational and leisure value of the area that is well used.
- The high significance of the gardens being a community heritage asset and accessible to the public.



Fig 8 above. The public realm along the edge of the lower garden near the riverside.

2.4 Topography and setting

The unique topography (*the physical form, features, and appearance of land surfaces for example rivers, valleys, hills*) of Durham City is one of its most significant features. It has shaped its plan and built form and is a defining characteristic of its special interest and sense of place.

The city lies within a wide belt of coal measure in a broad valley at the confluence of two rivers, the River Browney, and the River Wear. In the Ice Age, glacial deposits of sands and gravels were left and blocked the river valley. In order to avoid the buried river valley, the river cut into solid rock and created a narrow steep sided gorge, resulting in the dramatic meander around the peninsula.

The historic core of the city is focussed on this deeply incised gorge forming a tight bend in the river which provided a strong defensive site and an arresting setting for the Norman Castle and Cathedral. The medieval city lay on the peninsula behind its defensive walls, spreading out across the neck of the peninsula and onto the opposing riverbanks from Framwellgate and Elvet bridges and up the ridge to the north-east towards Gilesgate.

In the Old Durham area, the absence of significant development in the main river valley moving eastwards out from the city, gives rise to a very open form that is characterised by undulating farmland and woodland.

The area occupies the side of a river valley terrace where the slope falls down from the A181 in the north to Old Durham then to the lower flatter River Wear floodplain land. The area is part of the topographical feature known as the "Durham Bowl." This is created by the encircling hills and ridges that surround the historic city centre and provides the setting to the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site. It is partially visible in shallow views from some higher vantage points across the city.

The combination of woodlands on steep hills and ridges and trees surrounding and spreading across the farmland gives this area a high tree canopy cover that contributes significantly to its character and the quality of views. The encircling high ridges and hills such as at Pelaw Woods, Maiden Castle, Whinney Hill and Great High Wood further afield provide both a wide and immediate scenic green backdrop to this part of the city and beyond.

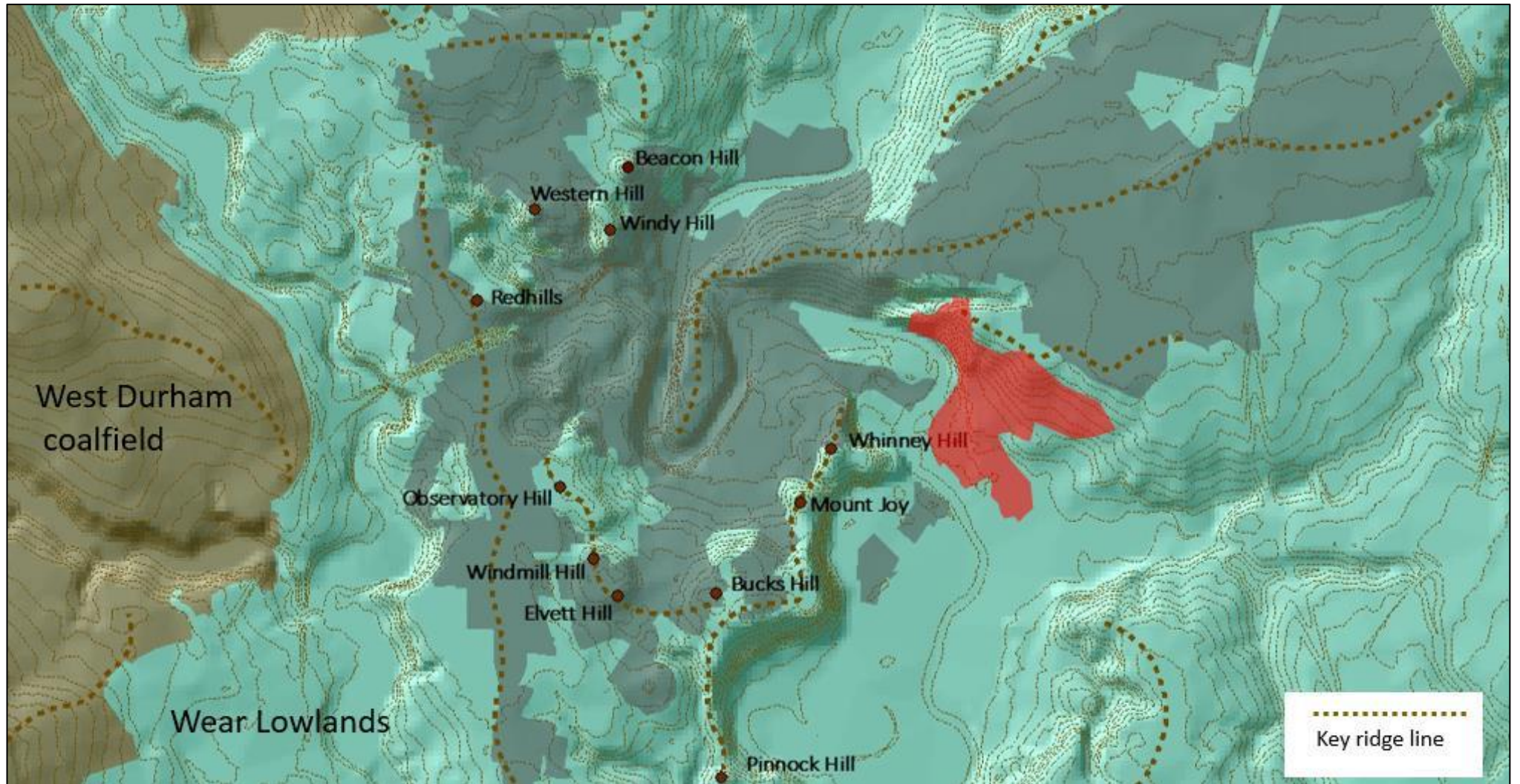
In the north the setting changes to a contrasting dense urban character along the high ridge line of Gilesgate and Sherburn Road Front Street, while in the west the natural open riverside setting transitions to the historic city core.

This provides a setting to the conservation area that is a distinctive blend of dense urban, rural, and agricultural elements, contributing significantly to its special interest and character.



Fig 9 above. *The wide landscape view from Bent House Lane towards Shincliffe Village. Bottom: the River Wear corridor from New Elvet Road Bridge showing the woodland of Pelaw Woods merging into the leafy parkland of St Hild and Bede College providing natural containment to the Elvet area.*

Fig 10 below. A digital terrain map showing topographical context of the city and the main ridge and hill lines with the conservation area highlighted in red.



An important attribute of the significance of Old Durham Conservation Area is the role it plays as an essential part of the wider city. It therefore has intrinsic group value with the other Durham City Conservation Areas that inform the special historic and architectural interest of the city as a whole. In combination they provide a major portion of the inner setting of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site elevating their significance.

A settlement is known to have existed at Durham by the 10th century, with recent archaeological evidence of prehistoric occupation of the peninsula. It was chosen as the final resting place for the community of monks carrying St Cuthbert's coffin in 995 owing to being a naturally defensible site. The Castle and the Cathedral were constructed by the Normans, and the city spanned out beyond the defensive Castle walls where development emerged between, along, and at the edges of key routes.

The city retains the medieval historic street pattern together with its largely 19th century expansion, with swathes of green space that in places create a semi-rural character. Whilst some 20th and 21st century development has altered the townscape; it remains characterised by a wide variety of historic buildings of different periods giving it a strong historic identity and sense of place.

The topography allows the historic evolution and multi-layered built development to be experienced and appreciated, while generating a series of high value views with Durham Castle and Cathedral the focus of many.

Old Durham Conservation Area therefore has significant group value and an indivisible historic connection and physical relationship with the other Durham City Conservation Areas. This is evidenced, and can be understood, by the city's history, evolution, and the framework of the different approaches along principle historic streets and other old routes. Further by the different visual connections and experiences moving from place to place.

As referenced earlier in this section, the landscape surrounding the city and penetrating into the urban core is fundamental to its special character, aesthetic quality, and provides distinctive changing experiences. Old Durham Conservation Area plays an inseparable role in such attributes of significance.

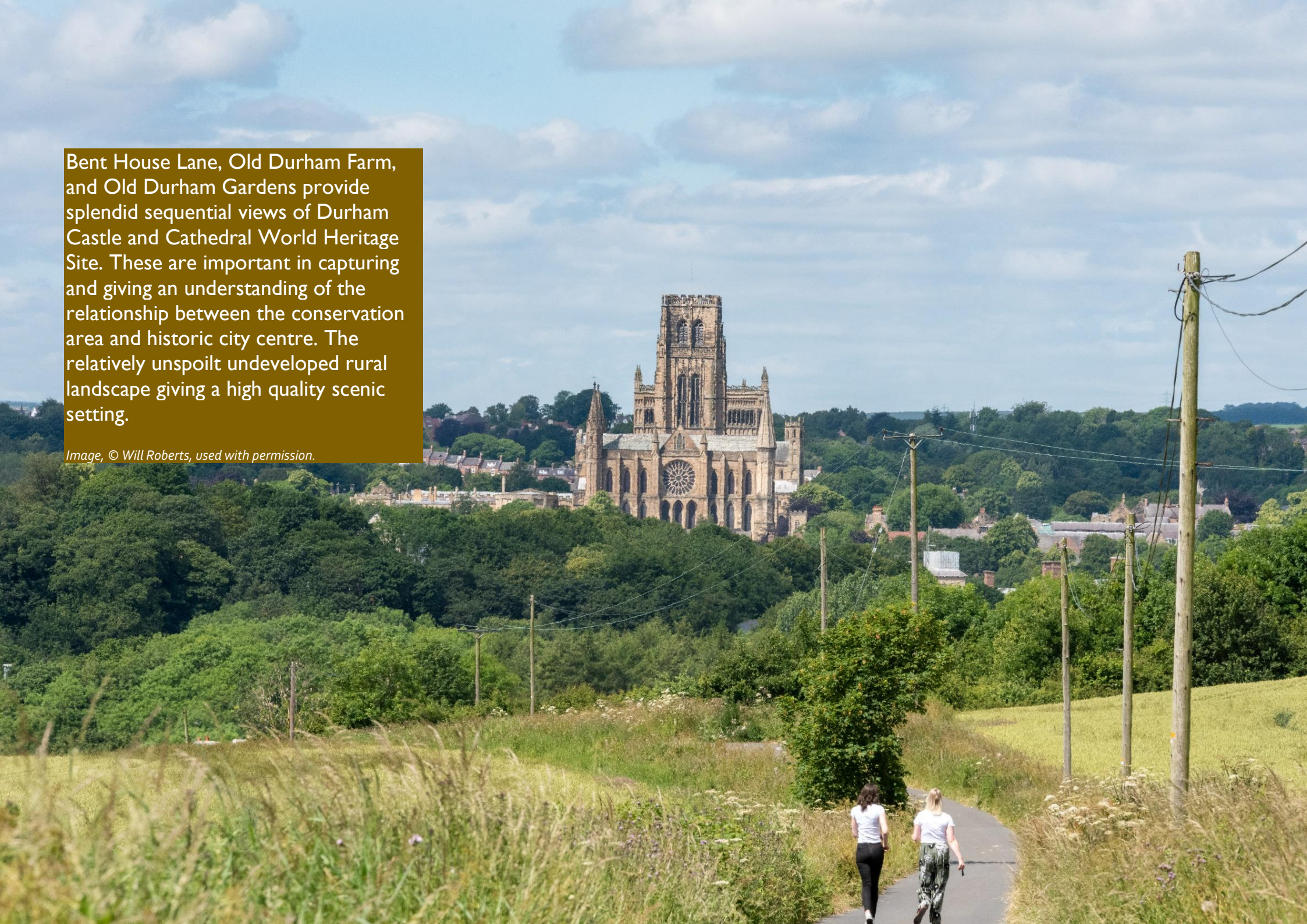
Old Durham Conservation Area provides a unique experience and series of distinctive approaches into the city centre. They are characterised by tranquillity and a mixture of open rural character and inwards dense woodland, before entering the vibrancy, hustle, and bustle of the historic city core.

Of further significance is the archaeological evidence of Roman occupation at Old Durham, including routes between it and the city, and connections with finds on the peninsula providing a historic and intangible relationship.

The medieval manor house that once stood at Old Durham along with the later 17th century pleasure gardens have a western alignment utilising a raised terrace. This created axial views of Durham Cathedral by intentional design. The gardens were a place of public resort and a feature of Durham life for its residents and visitors throughout the centuries. These factors create more intangible links between Old Durham and the wider historic city centre.

Bent House Lane, Old Durham Farm, and Old Durham Gardens provide splendid sequential views of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site. These are important in capturing and giving an understanding of the relationship between the conservation area and historic city centre. The relatively unspoilt undeveloped rural landscape giving a high quality scenic setting.

Image, © Will Roberts, used with permission.

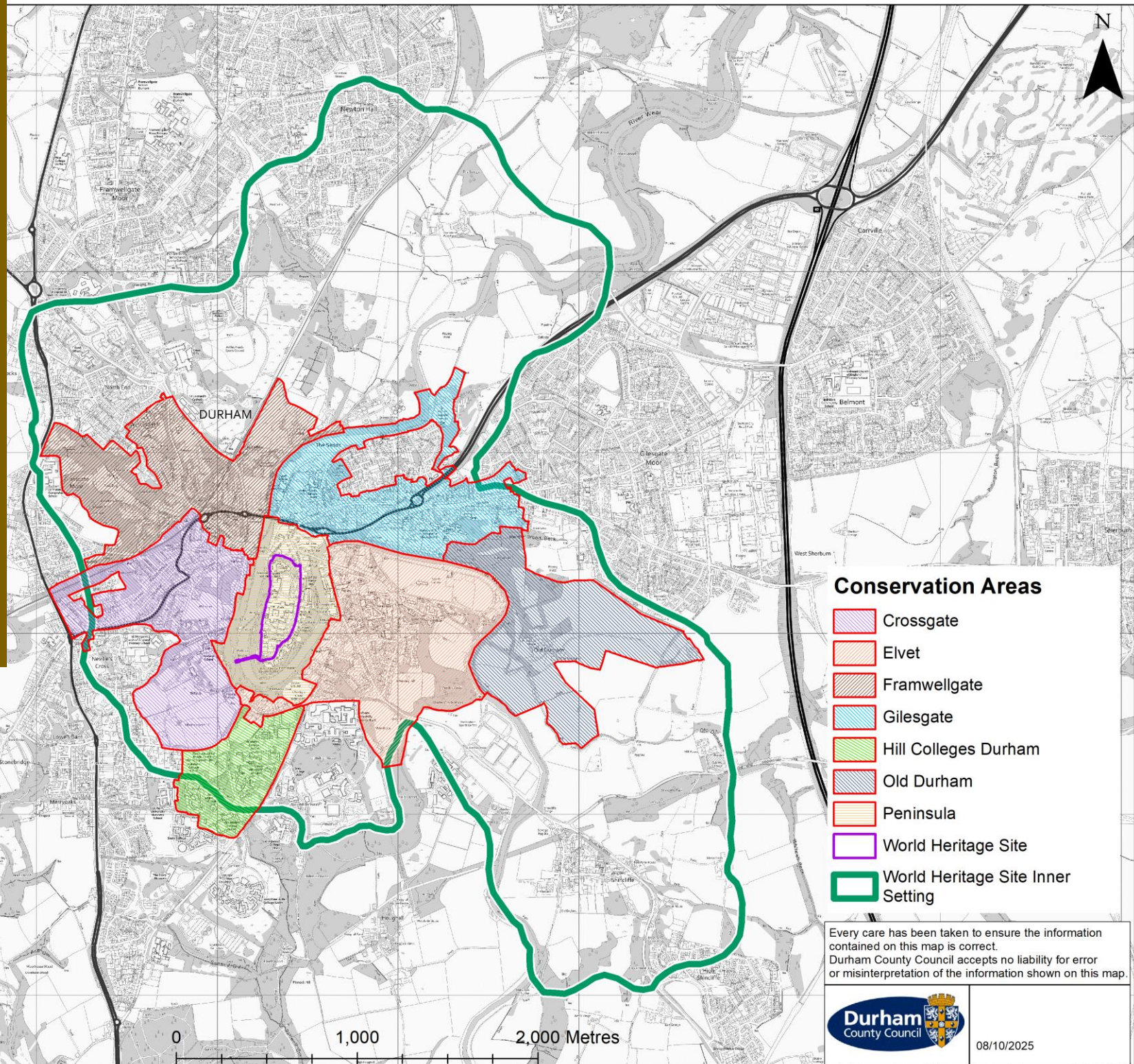


Map 4 Setting

The map shows the 7 Durham City Conservation Areas in combination and the inner setting of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site, demonstrating the intrinsic relationship.

It should be noted that the World Heritage Site inner setting boundary is not tightly delineated but is more “zone” like where the topography, tree coverage, buildings heights, road and street patterns determine the Castle and Cathedral’s visibility.

The map on the following page shows Old Durham Conservation Area picked out to give more clarity to its relationship with the other conservation areas.



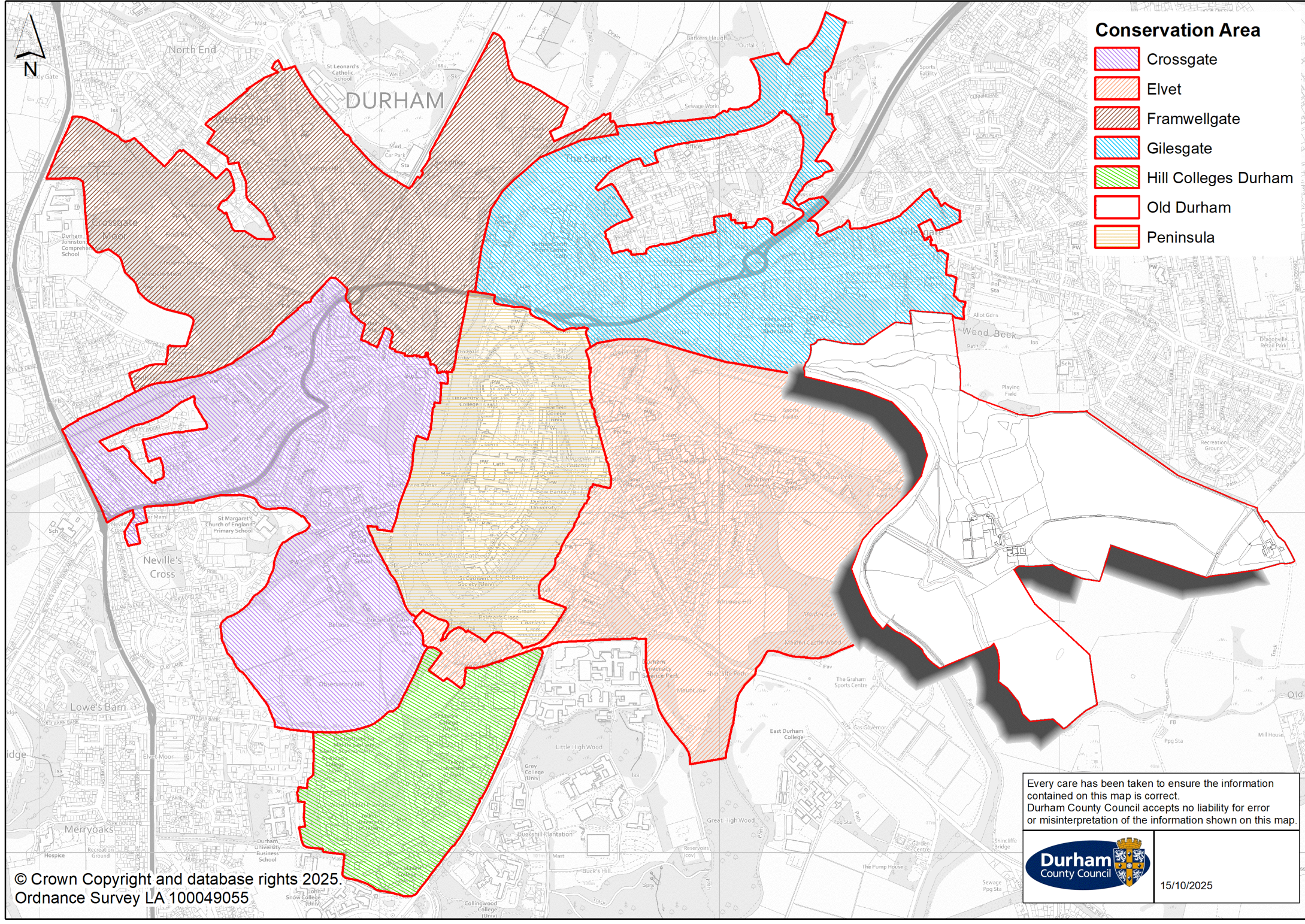
Conservation Areas

- Crossgate
- Elvet
- Framwellgate
- Gilesgate
- Hill Colleges Durham
- Old Durham
- Peninsula
- World Heritage Site
- World Heritage Site Inner Setting








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08/10/2025



Conservation Area

-  Crossgate
-  Elvet
-  Framwellgate
-  Gilesgate
-  Hill Colleges Durham
-  Old Durham
-  Peninsula

Every care has been taken to ensure the information contained on this map is correct. Durham County Council accepts no liability for error or misinterpretation of the information shown on this map.



2.5 Historic development

Occupation at Old Durham can be traced back to Roman times when the remains of a civilian type of Roman villa and bathhouse were uncovered in the 1940s and 50s dating back to the 2nd century AD. Further, there were Roman roads in the area and archaeological work recorded two other circular buildings from the period. It is said to be the most northerly villa in the Roman Empire, while a Roman road existed in the area near the gardens that travelled north to Kepier and Chester-le-Street beyond.

A manor house is known to have existed at Old Durham. This was first mentioned in 1268 when a chapel and private oratory (*a private place of divine worship*) were established by grant of a licence from the Prior of Durham to "Galfrid de Helme" of the Rectory of St. Nicholas. In 1443 land owned by St Nicholas, including Old Durham was appropriated by Bishop Neville and given to Kepier Hospital.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries across England between 1539 and 1541 involved the seizure and break-up of ecclesiastic estates, including those held by Kepier.

This resulted in the Old Durham estate being passed into private ownership in the mid-16th century when it was sold to the Heath family. An inventory made in 1592 gives the impression of a modest manor house at Old Durham.

Old Durham continued in the possession of the Heaths, passing through various generations until Elizabeth, sole daughter of John Heath IV, and wife of John Tempest I, M.P. for Durham, inherited the estate on her father's death in 1665.

During the latter part of the 17th century and the early years of 18th century the gardens appear to have developed to their fullest extent. The Tempest family moved to Sherburn Hall in 1719 and eventually to Wynyard. They kept their house and gardens at Old Durham in family use, finally leaving c. 1735-48. They let the whole estate to a commercial nurseryman, John Thackray, who by 1748 was already developing the gardens as a popular recreational venue for the local populace. In 1776 estate documents show a fully developed garden at Old Durham but no mansion house, and it seems likely that the gardens had by this time already been accessible to the public for some years.

In 1794 the estate passed to John Tempest's nephew Sir Henry Vane-Tempest. Later in 1813 Sir Henry's sole daughter and heir Frances Anne inherited the estate and in 1819 she married Charles William Stewart, 3rd Marquis of Londonderry.

The precise age of the buildings in the wider Old Durham Estate is difficult to establish. Old Durham farmhouse probably dates from the 17th century, the barn is mid-late 17th century in date with adjoining farm buildings built in the later 17th and 18th century. While Bent House Farm can be traced back to 1771, the main farmhouse is a later Victorian building.

In 1834 the Pineapple Inn was already established as the public house serving the gardens. They had become a very popular public pleasure ground and remained so throughout the late 18th to the mid-20th centuries. In 1926 the Pineapple Inn lost its license, but the gardens remained a feature of Durham life between the Wars. In 1918 Pelaw Woods were presented to the City of Durham by the 7th Marquis of Londonderry in memory of his father the 6th Marquis.

After the second world war the gardens became devoid of purpose and gradually slipped into decline and significant disrepair. In 1985 the former City of Durham Council purchased the gardens to enable a programme of phased conservation and restoration to be undertaken that was faithful to the gardens' history successfully bringing them back to life.

Fig 11 below. A conjectural sketch of the gardens in the mid-18th century © Martin Roberts, used with permission. Right the 1776 Tempest estate map, the earliest map of Old Durham.

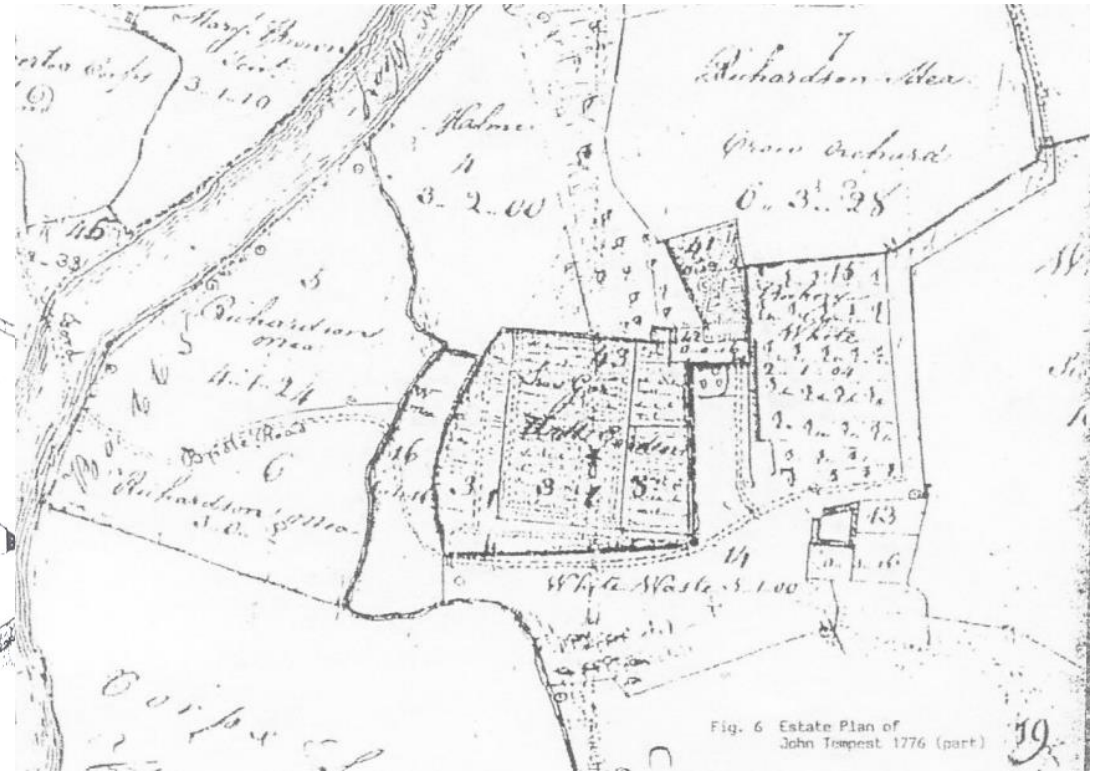
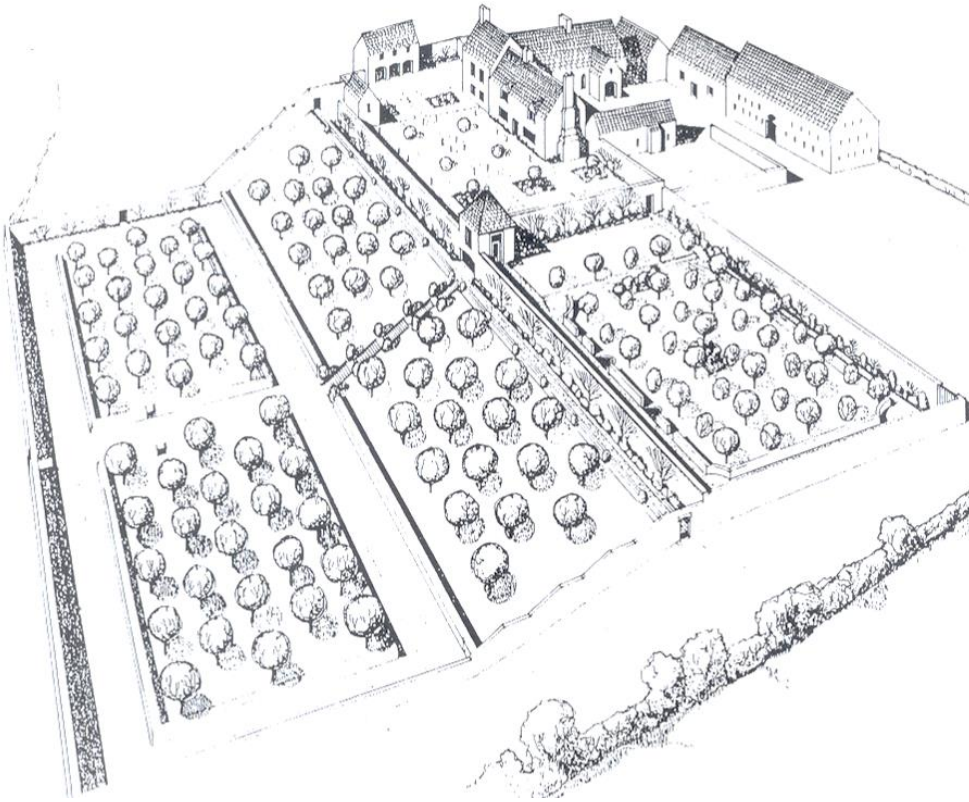
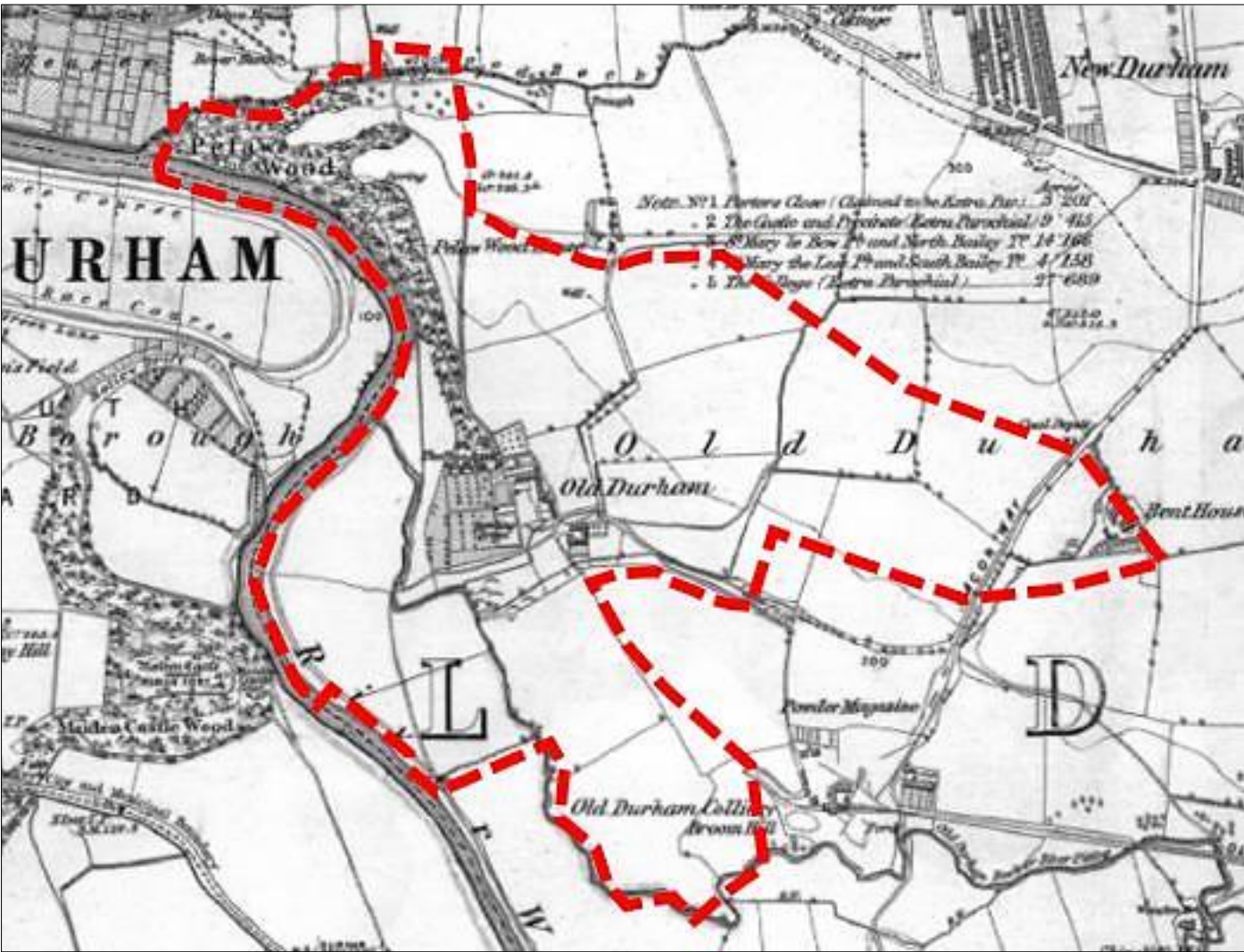


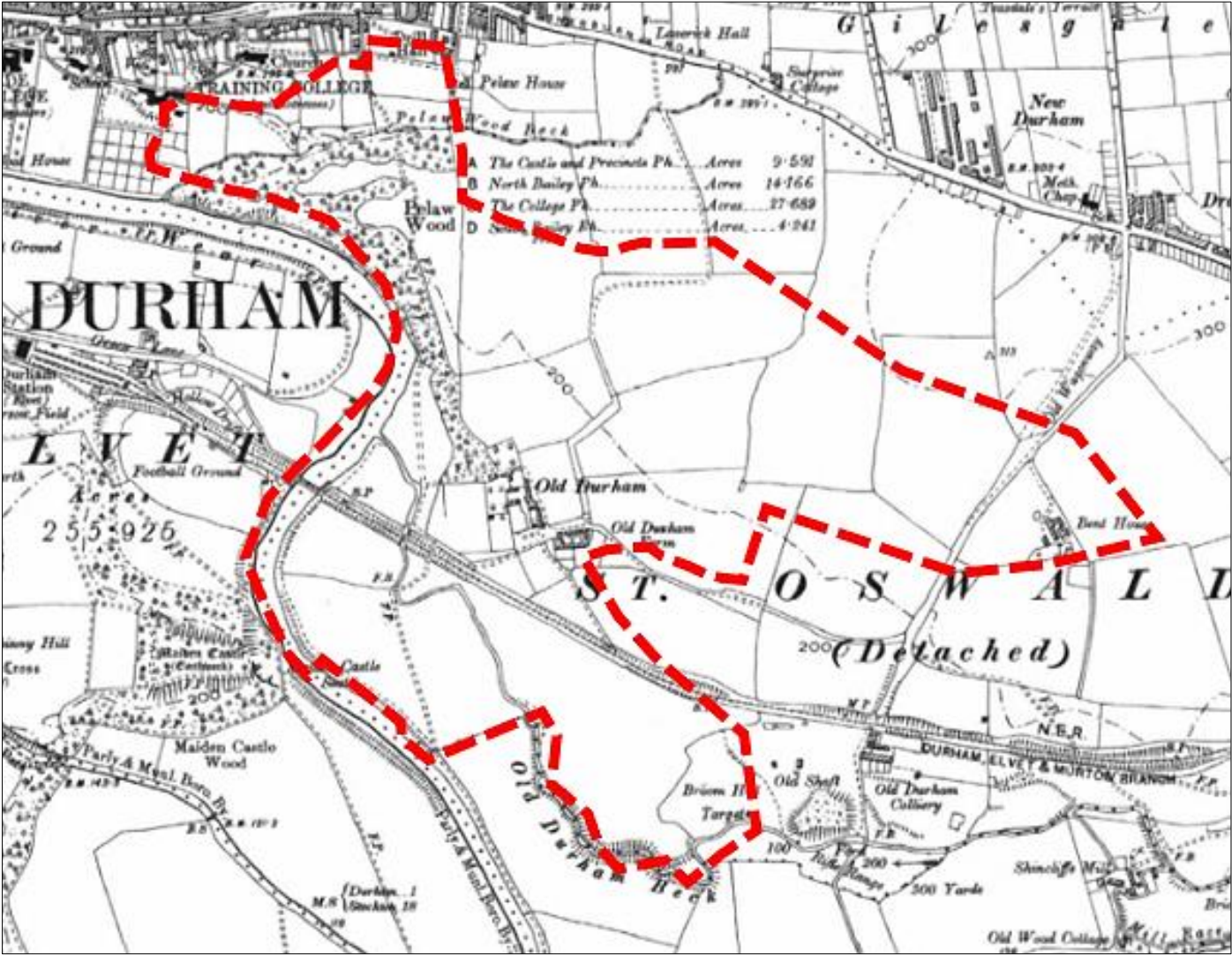
Fig 12 above. John Tempest's 1776 survey of his Old Durham estate. It shows the curving line of the 'Bridle Road' coming from Durham, across the Wear, possibly deliberately swung north to cross Old Durham Beck via a ford on the axis of the Gardens as a planned glimpse view before turning round and climbing along the southern side of the gardens (DCRO).

Fig 13 right and the following pages. A sequence of historic ordnance survey map extracts followed by an overview map on page 25.

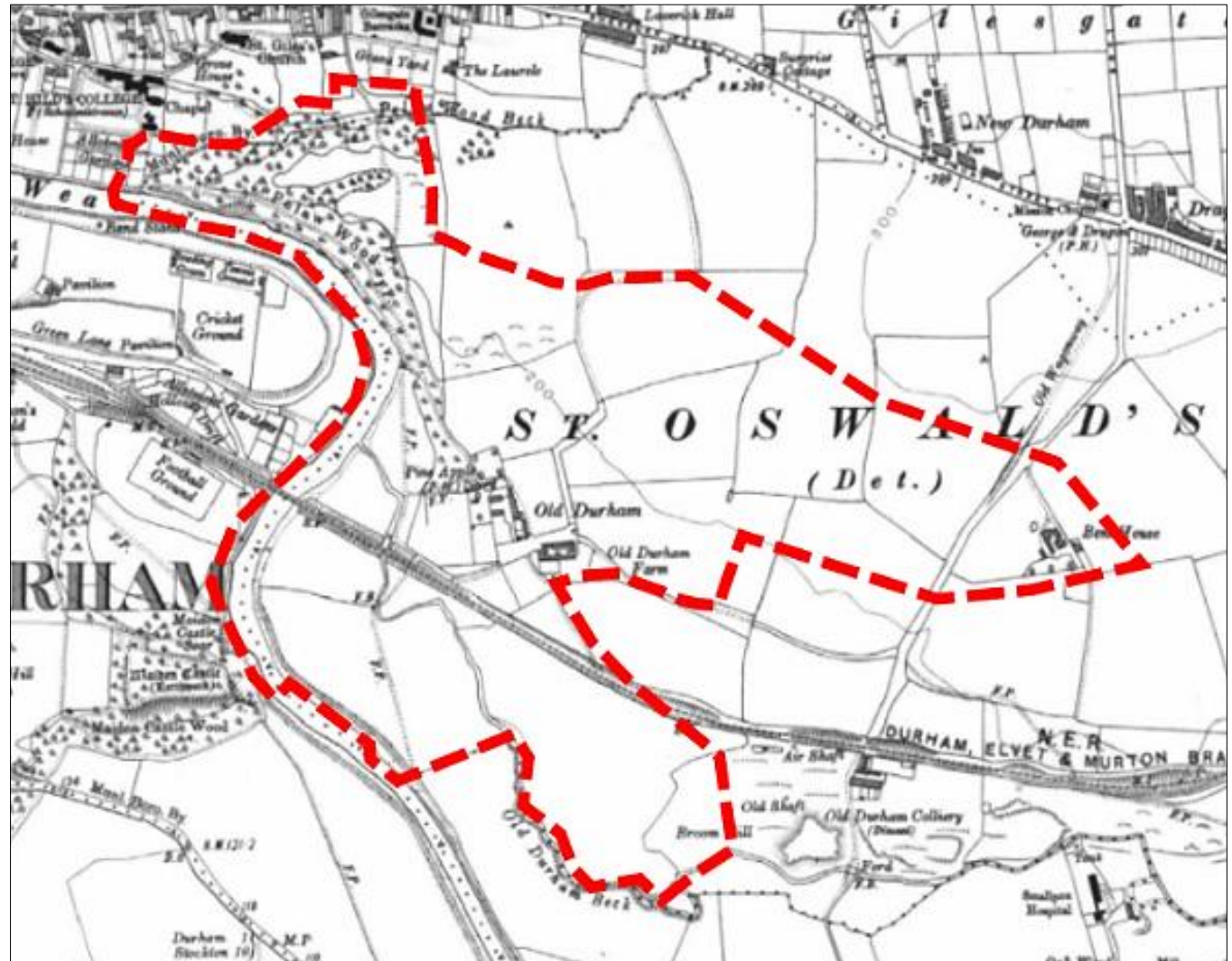
OS map c.1856 - the detailed 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of c.1856 shows coal mining activity in the south. The route of Bent House Lane is a wagon way leading to Old Durham Colliery with a second wagon way travelling eastwards to Sherburn House Station. Old Durham Colliery is recorded as opening in 1849 on the estate by Lord Londonderry. The map shows the layout of buildings at Bent House Farm largely as they exist today.



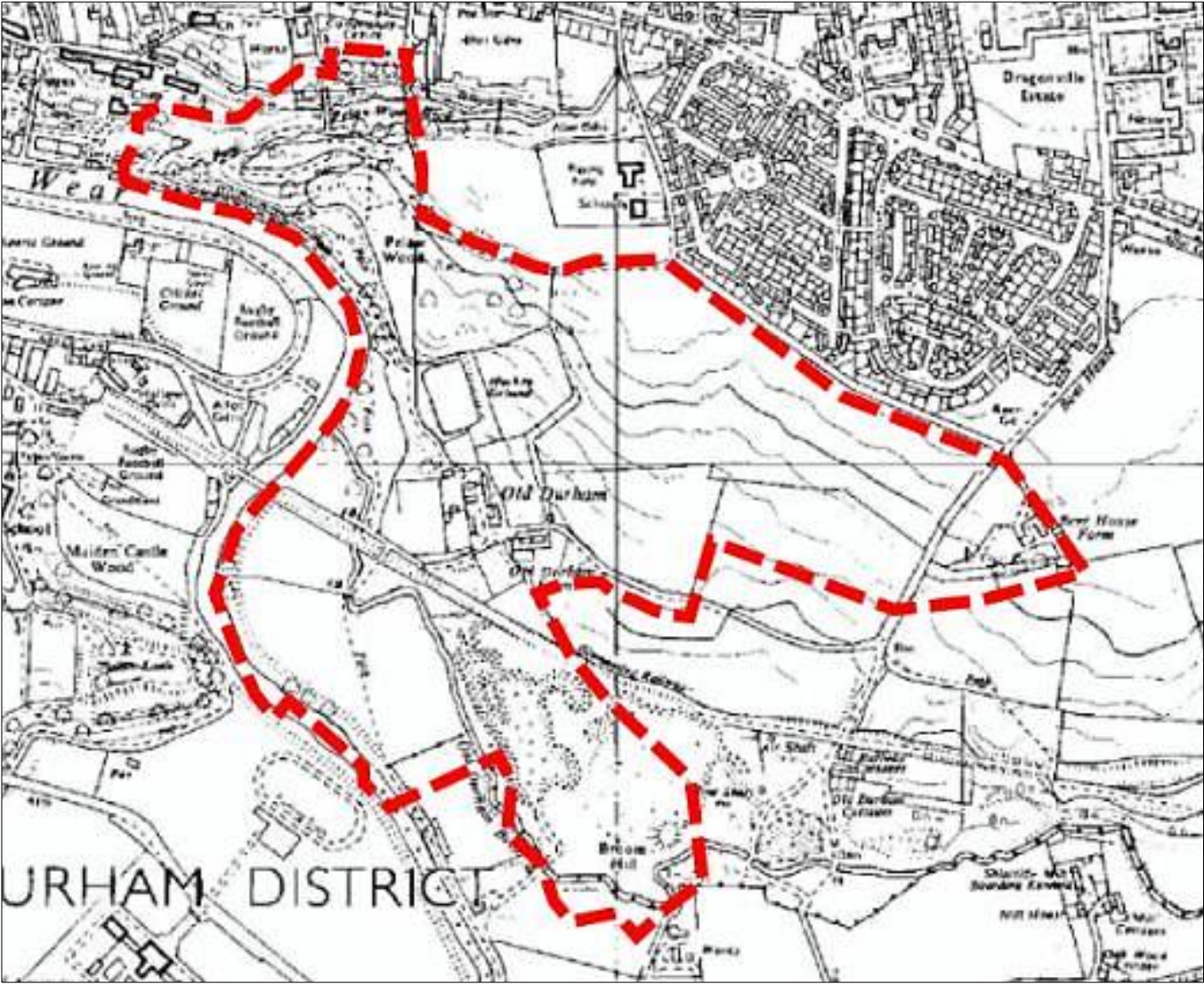
OS map c.1896 - the 2nd edition OS map of 1896 records one significant change with Durham Elvet and Murton Branch Railway Line cutting through the southern part of the area. The line connects Elvet Station at the end of Green Lane in the west with Sherburn House Station. Despite industrial development in the area most of the landscape remains in agricultural use in the 19th century.




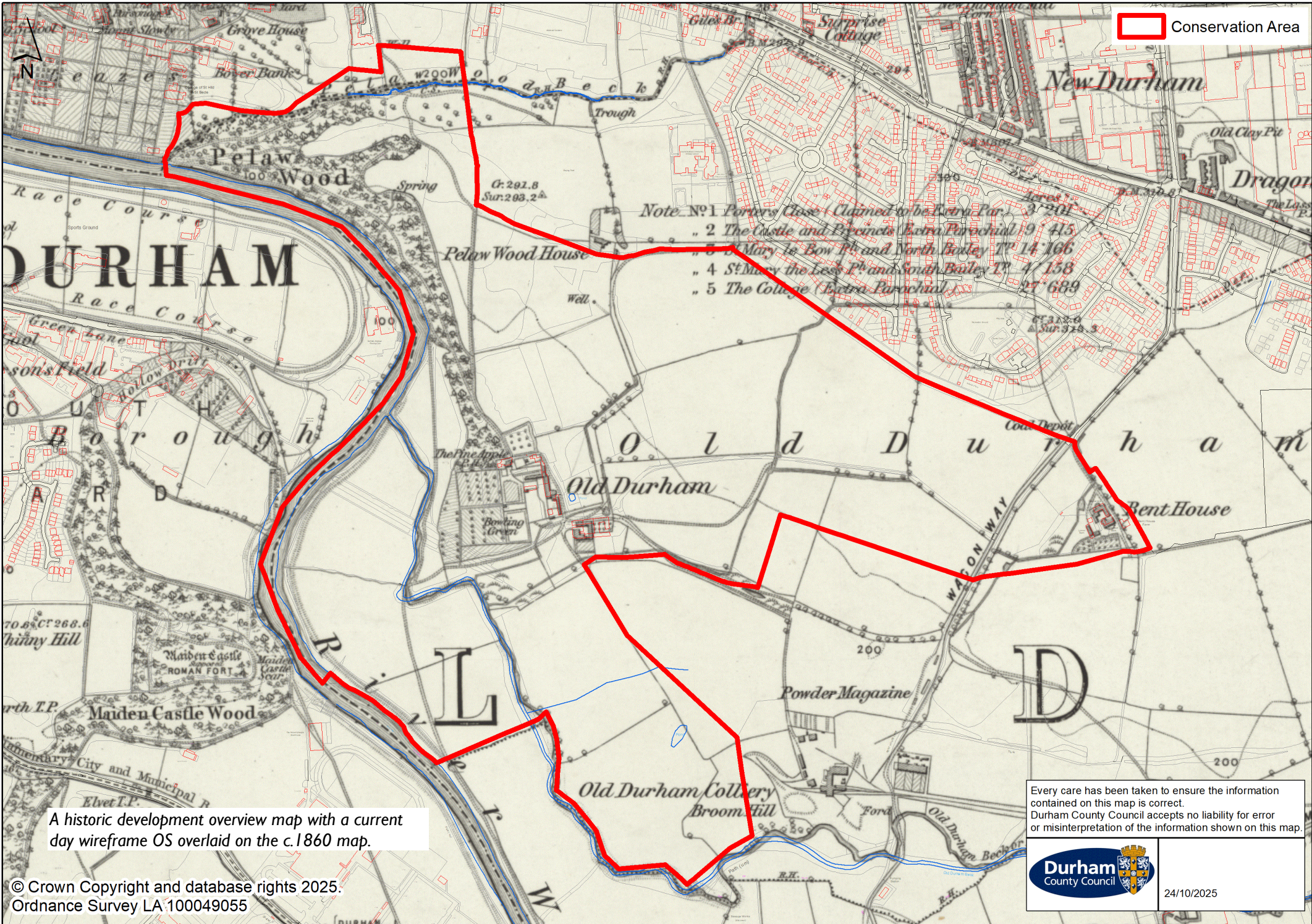
OS map c.1923 - the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map records no obvious changes, but Old Durham Quarry is disused. Between 1923 and 1938 OS mapping shows the encroachment of the Sherburn Road housing estate into the farmland in the north. By the 1950s the narrow country lane is named Bent House Lane. In the 1960s the railway had been dismantled, and a hockey ground is shown on the south edge of Pelaw Woods.



OS map c.1970-79 - the map first records the introduction of the A1(M) cutting north-south through the landscape along the west side of the Old Durham area and an industrial estate at Dragonville built to the north the A181, Sherburn Road. Again, during the 20th century, the undeveloped nature of the majority of the rural landscape remains.



 Conservation Area



A historic development overview map with a current day wireframe OS overlaid on the c.1860 map.

Every care has been taken to ensure the information contained on this map is correct. Durham County Council accepts no liability for error or misinterpretation of the information shown on this map.



24/10/2025

2.6 Heritage Assets

Old Durham Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset in its own right, contains numerous individual heritage assets including both designated and non-designated buildings, structures, and sites. These create its historic identity and distinctiveness making an invaluable positive contribution to the conservation area.



Fig 14 above. The grade II listed barn, a sensitively converted former threshing barn, dendrochronology for its roof timbers dating it to c.1630-1665.

The designated and non-designated heritage assets within the conservation area are identified on the following page.

Definition of heritage assets

Scheduled monuments

Archaeological sites and monuments which meet the test of national importance may be scheduled.

Listed buildings.

Listed Buildings are buildings and structures defined by the Secretary of State as being of "special architectural or historic interest." They include buildings and structures that are deemed to be of importance on a national scale.

Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest, (only c.2.5% of listed buildings)

Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest; (c.5.8% of listed buildings)

Grade II buildings are of special interest; (c.91.7% of all listed buildings)

Non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) and Locally Listed assets

There are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas, landscapes, or archaeology, identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of their heritage interest but which do not meet the criteria for listing.

Fig 15 below. The grade II listed Gazebo and garden wall seen from within the upper walled garden. It dates from the late 17th or early 18th century and was fully restored in the 1990s. Below the 19th century buildings at Old Durham Farm.



Image, © Will Roberts, used with permission.



Map 5 Designated heritage assets

The map identifies the designated heritage assets within the conservation area.

Listed buildings can be searched, and other information found, on the National Heritage List which includes listed buildings and other statutory designations at:

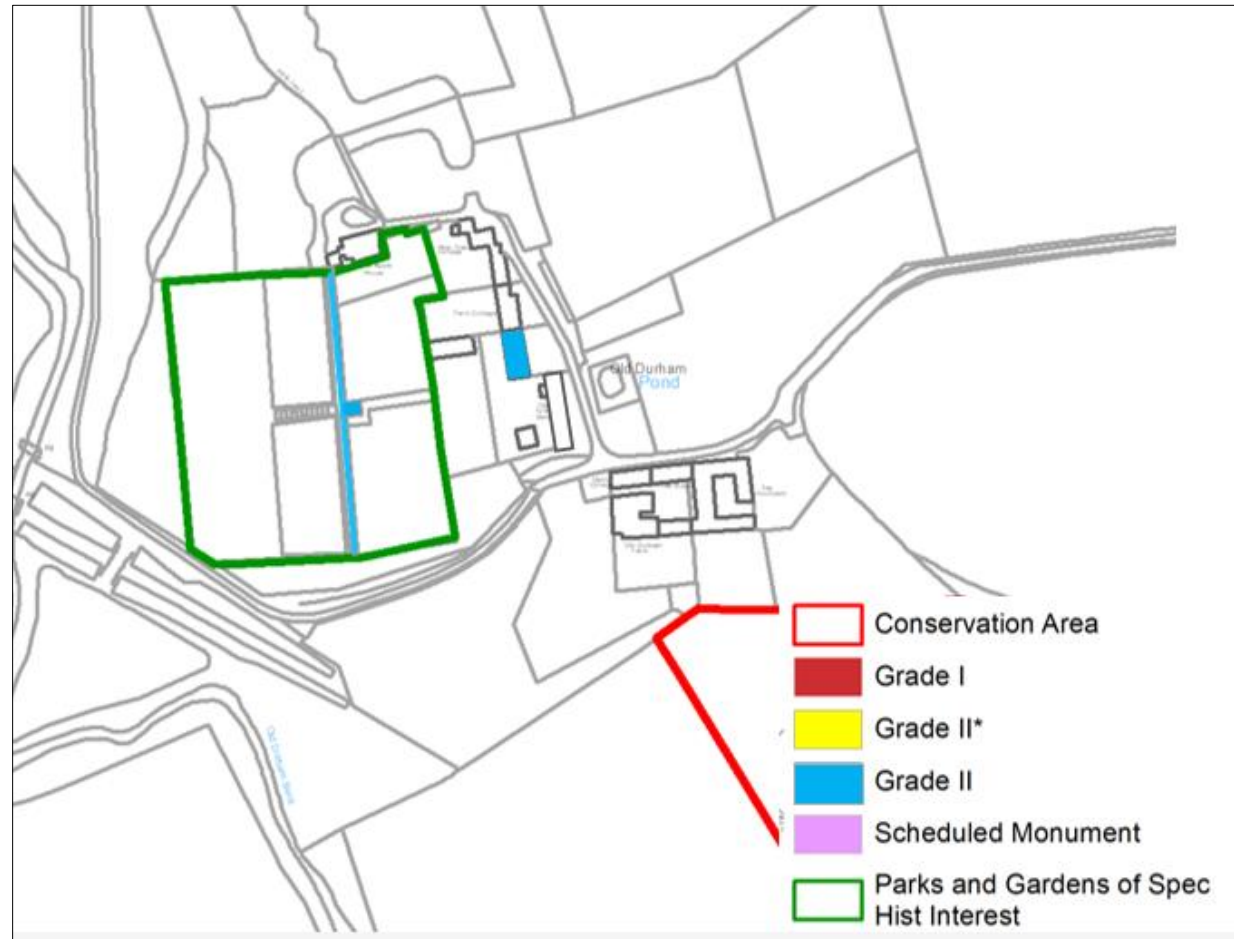
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

The listed buildings at Old Durham are the barn north west of Old Durham Farmhouse (grade II), and the long retaining wall and gazebo on the west side of the upper garden (grade II).

Old Durham Gardens is a designated heritage asset being included on Historic England’s “Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest,” that currently identifies over 1,600 sites of such particular significance. [OLD DURHAM GARDENS, Non Civil Parish - 1001396 | Historic England](#)

The emphasis of this type of heritage designation is on gardens, grounds, and other planned open spaces, many being the grounds of private houses, public parks, and cemeteries.

They are included on the register because they are of intentional design, have skilfully planned surroundings, and can reflect the landscape fashions of the day. Being on the register recognises their important as fragile and finite resources that make a place distinctive and deserve recognition and conservation.



Map 6 Non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) and positive contributors

The map identifies the NDHAs identified within the conservation area, and the buildings that contribute positively.

The CAMP Strategic Context document describes the process by which NDHAs are identified. It should be noted that the NDHAs identified can be subject to change with further identification. The omission of a particular building, structure, or feature, at this time should not be taken as an automatic assumption that it is not a NDHA.

NDHAs: 1. Bent House Farm group, 2. Old Durham Farmhouse and associate agricultural buildings, 3. remains of railway infrastructure, 4. the former Pineapple Inn, 5. "Silver Link" footbridge Pelaw Woods.

Details of the above NDHAs can be found at Section 6 – Appendix A.

There are other buildings of low to moderate significance which make a positive contribution to the area's character and appearance but do not meet sufficient selection criteria to be classified as non-designated heritage assets. It is important that such positive contributors are identified separately, as such buildings still help to shape the area's character, identity, and sense of place.

Positive contributors: 1. Barn north-west of Old Durham Farmhouse, 2. Farm Cottage, 3. North and west boundary walls to the lower garden at Old Durham Gardens.

It should be noted that these are not definitive lists, the omission of any particular building, structure, or feature, should not be automatically taken to imply that it is of no interest.



2.7 Landscape, green and blue infrastructure assets

Green infrastructure is the term used to describe the network of natural features within both urban and rural areas. They are not just limited to green spaces in the traditional sense such as public parks but can be a variety of types, uses, different spatial scales and character that thread nature into the urban environment. Such green assets can contribute significantly to the area's special character, visual quality and to the setting of its streets, spaces, and buildings. Furthermore, they enhance biodiversity, generally improve the quality of the environment, help with climate change mitigation, and people's sense of wellbeing.

Two categories of green infrastructure assets have been established as part of the CAMP. The first is the broad range comprising of common features like roadside verges, roundabouts with soft landscaping, street trees, play spaces and private gardens visible in the streetscene. The second category are the more significant green spaces that have added historic, evidential, communal, social, and/or aesthetic values.

Old Durham Conservation Area is landscape dominant with an abundance of green assets. At the broader level they include hawthorn hedgerows bounding lanes and defining field

boundaries, tree belt such as that screening Sherburn Road estate, and the areas of woodland seen spread across the landscape, while broad historic farmland characterises the majority of the conservation area.

The green assets of higher significance include the designed avenue of trees and landscape at Bent House Farm that has a semi-parkland character. The farm is also covered by an area Tree Preservation Order, served to protect the trees in the interest of the amenity of the local environment.

Old Durham Gardens is the main green feature, a grade II listed park and garden of special historic interest, with the lower garden still open to the public as historically intended. Pelaw Woods, is a local nature reserve, and part of the estate of Old Durham. It comprises of 12.8 hectares containing a variety of natural habitats with dense areas of ancient woodland, areas of open scrubland and wildflower meadows.



A valuable part of the conservation area's landscape character is the blue infrastructure corridor of the River Wear. This forms the full extent of Old Durham's western boundary. It also includes the rivers tributaries of Old Durham Beck and Pelaw Woods Beck, possibly realigned in connection with industrial workings. Other water features include ponds that contribute positively, adding natural variety.

Fig 16 below. A selection of images of green assets including the lower orchard garden and mature woodland behind, land at Bent House Farm, vegetation and open field bounding the footway down to the riverside.



Fig 17 below. Pelaw and Old Durham Becks, including hilly farmland, the lower garden at Old Durham Gardens, the tree lined edge of Sherburn Road housing estate, hedgerows, trees, and scrub along a lane.



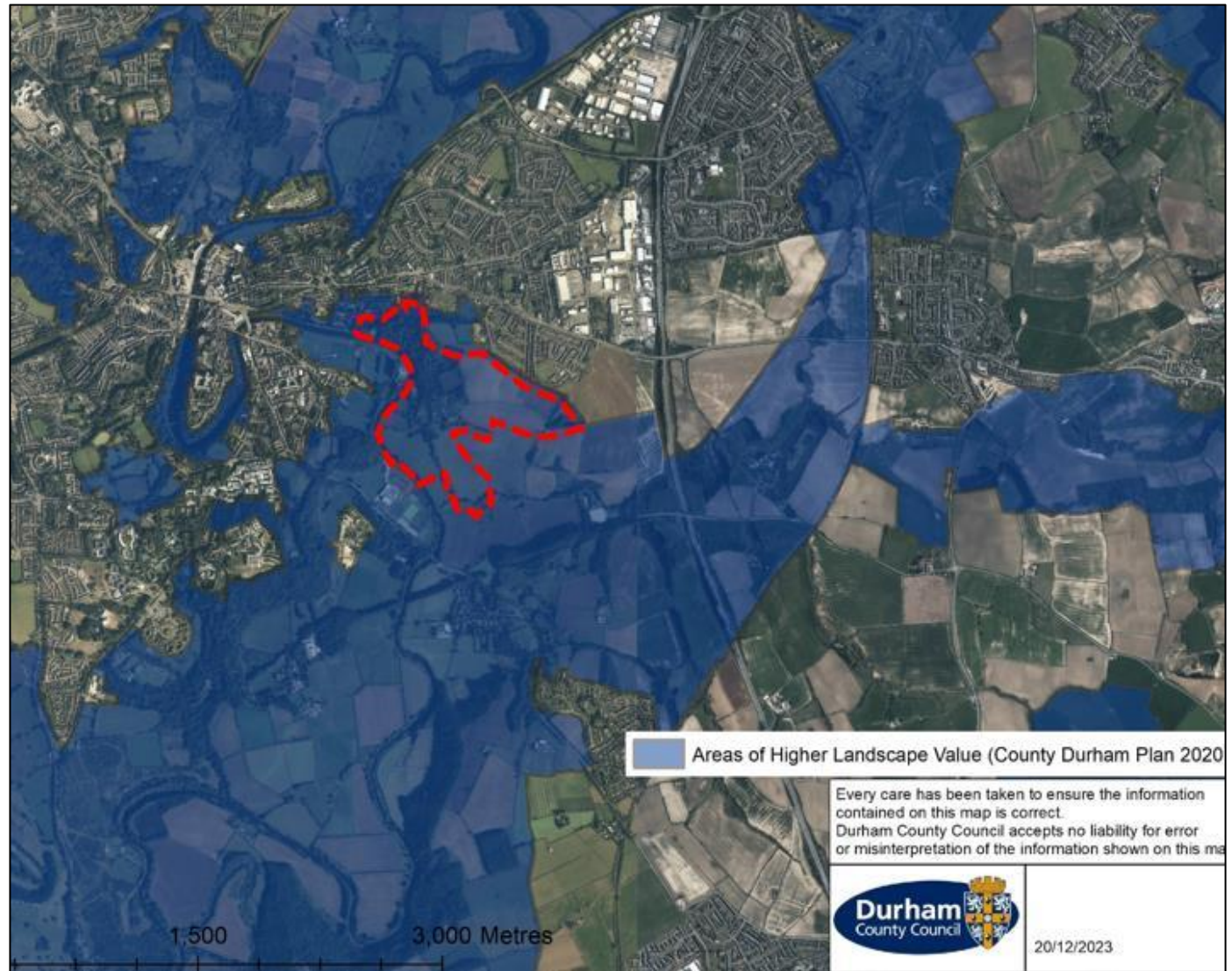
Map 7 Area of higher landscape value

An aerial map showing the designated area of higher landscape value with the conservation area highlighted in red.

An area of higher landscape value is an area of land that is designated due to being of high landscape quality with strong distinctive character that makes it particularly sensitive to development.

All of Old Durham Conservation Area is covered by this landscape designation testifying to its intrinsic rural character and natural quality that contrasts with the dense urban part of the city centre.

The diversity of the landscape is a product of both natural and human influences with varied land forms, differences between exposed open areas, and enclosed sheltered spaces, which influence the experience and sense of place in a positive way. It is enhanced by the variable land form and feature such as a historic field pattern, trees and hedgerows of landscape, amenity and biodiversity value that contribute significantly to the character and appearance of the conservation area.



2.8 Landmarks, views and vistas

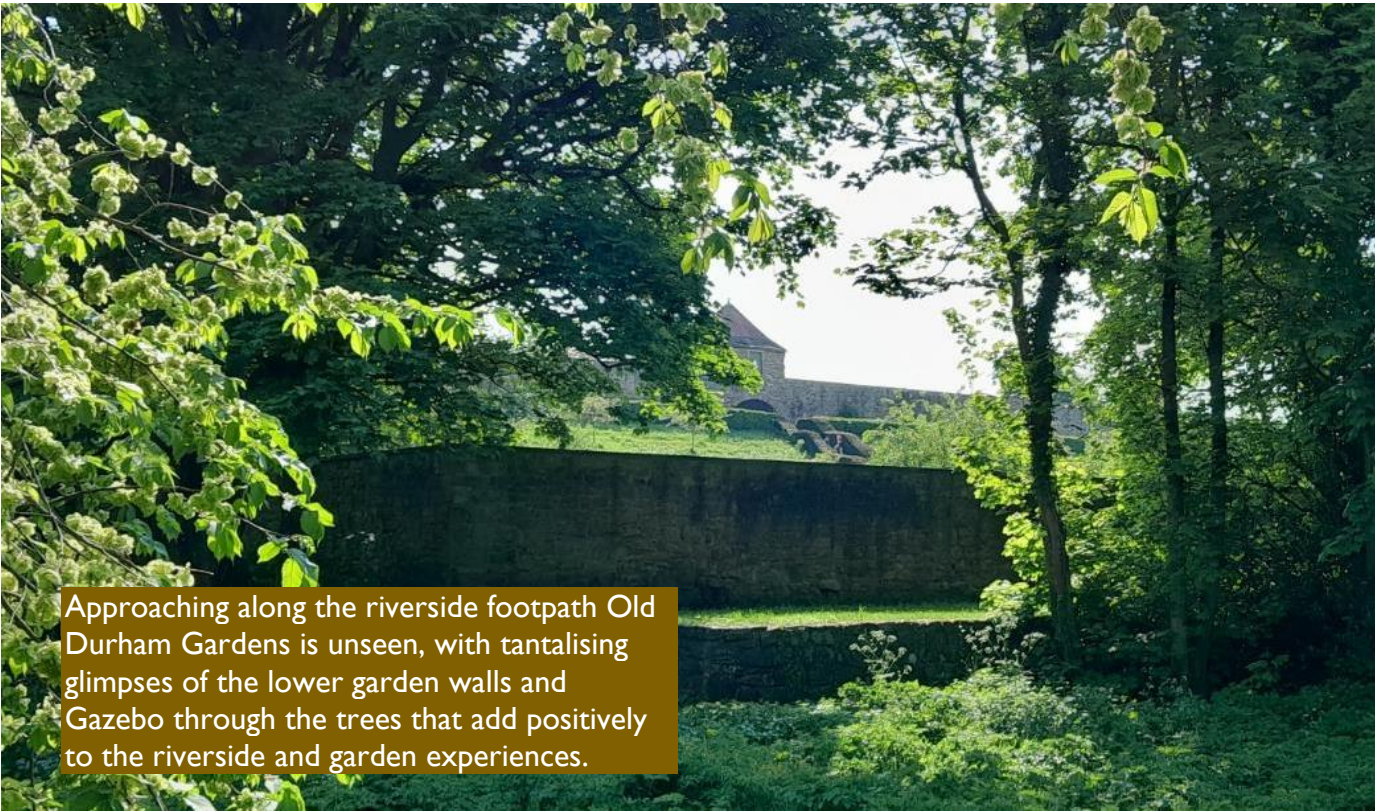
Durham is a city of views where the topography, historic development, layout, built and natural environments combine to generate a high number of important and evolving views¹. These contribute significantly to its special character and how this is experienced. Views can be sequential, static, or dynamic ¹, they may be short or long range, glimpses between or above buildings, or panoramas, with many historic landmarks and focal points.

The higher ground in the north at Old Durham provides significant sequential views of Durham Castle and Cathedral. When approaching Old Durham from Sherburn Road Front Street along Bent House Lane, at first these buildings are unseen. Then passing Bent House Farm there are tantalising glimpses of the Cathedral through the trees before it fully reveals itself as an eye catcher in its broad landscape setting with glimpses of the city buildings.

Approaching Old Durham along the east-west lane, the Cathedral is visible in greater detail, alongside the Castle with farm buildings visible in the foreground and Maiden Castle Wood in the background, providing high visual quality.

From the higher ridge lines within Pelaw Woods there are gaps in the tree cover that provide splendid panoramic views out over the river, Old Elvet and to Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site.

The most impressive views of Old Durham Gardens are at close quarters from the footway around the lower garden and through the upper garden gate, where the different historic garden designs can be enjoyed. While views of the Cathedral out from the gazebo and gardens are subtle yet significant because of the intentional axial design.



Approaching along the riverside footpath Old Durham Gardens is unseen, with tantalising glimpses of the lower garden walls and Gazebo through the trees that add positively to the riverside and garden experiences.

¹ a view where the focal point draws in with movement and is not at first always apparent

Nighttime views

Durham City possesses a unique night-time environment, with dark areas of natural landscape sitting close to the illuminated urban core which combine with a pattern of light generated by the activity of the city. This takes place amongst a rich and diverse collection of historic buildings, streets, urban and green spaces, crowned by the Castle and Cathedral illuminated by an architectural lighting scheme. Importantly the city has not been dramatically over-lit improving the quality of the night-time visual experience.

Part of the special interest and character of Old Durham Conservation Area is that it is generally devoid of urban lighting. This provides a distinctive dark sky environment at nighttime that give it a greater sense of remoteness and peacefulness. From certain places, however there is some detracting caused by the level of illumination at Maiden Castle sports ground in the background of the distinctive dark environment.

Within the conservation area two key night-time views are identified that are important in terms of contributing to its character and appearance. These align with the key daytime views from the same vantage points but provide a very different visual experience. These are from Bent House Lane and Pelaw Woods.

The key views are identified and described in more detail in **Part B Street Characterisation** section of this document.

A selection of representative views is shown on the following. It must be stressed that these are a selection only and there are likely to be others that have not been mentioned, but this does not mean that they do not contribute positively to the conservation area. In addition the map includes key buildings identified as landmarks that often feature in views.

Fig 18 below. A night-time view towards the city centre from Bent House Lane showing the Cathedral illuminated in the dark skyline with the dark woodland and rural landscape in the foreground dramatically elevating its visual presence.



Map 8 View/vantage point map

The map identifies a selection of important views/vantage points. Exclusion should not be seen that others do not contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

1. Short view southeast at Bent House Farm
2. Panoramic view west from Bent House Lane.
3. Panoramic view west from Bent House Lane.
4. Short views of the gardens from the footpath.
5. Axial view through the riverbank's trees, to the gazebo, and from the gazebo to the Cathedral, established by 1776.
6. Sequential views approaching the gardens along the riverside footpath.
7. View from elevation within Pelaw Woods.
8. View from riverside emerging out from the woods.

Landmark

- A-Durham Cathedral,
- B-Durham Castle
- C-Old Durham Gardens.

Key night-time views

- 2 Bent House Lane, 6 Pelaw Woods



2.9 Movement, activity and atmosphere

Old Durham conservation area is a very distinctive part of Durham City owing to its unique position in the river corridor, geography, rural character, and absence of any significant growth in modern times. It has a very simple single route layout that dictates movement and creates a pedestrian focussed area, a rare occurrence of the Durham City Conservation Areas.

There is only a single, two-way, vehicle access point from the north at the busy road junction of Front Street and Dragon Lane. The route changes to a more informal, positive, and quieter green lane approach progressing south and continuing along a straight path out of the conservation area down to Shincliffe Lane.

Some 170 metres from Bent House Farm the lane turns southwest curving down to Old Durham Farm. It is level at first with open hilly farmland on either side, fixing the walker very firmly in the rural landscape. It then drops steeply to the collection of farm buildings, where it is bounded by grazing paddocks; providing a very positive pedestrian experience.

Outside the gardens there is a small informal car parking area, but this does not detract from the pedestrian dominance and the rural sense of place.

The lane turns to pass Old Durham Gardens on its south side then turns north. At first it follows the path of the old railway line that provides an interesting historic boundary feature, then it intersects with the riverside footpath network that provides connections to the city centre to the east, Maiden Castle to the southwest and Shincliffe to the south.

Traffic is infrequent and tends to be associated with the residential dwellings or visitors and friends of Old Durham Gardens, so does not spoil the rural character nor the tranquil atmosphere.

The routes are popular with walkers, dog-walkers, joggers, and cyclists, and at times there is activity on the river. Overall, it offers a unique peaceful retreat from the hustle and bustle of the main city core just a short walk away.

In contrast to Old Durham’s openness, Pelaw Woods is an extensive valley of primary broadleaf woodland with pockets of scrubland, and open meadow, which provides a very quiet place with an intimate feel and enclosed character. It features an extensive network of public footpaths and informal paths (approximately 1.4 miles in total) that snake across the hilly landform.

All these paths add interest with the occasional surprising view. In contrast to the riverbanks, within the woods seeing other people is a rare occurrence, which gives the place a strong feeling of isolation that is its fundamental characteristic.



Fig 19 above. The conservation area is an important place for leisure, recreation and social activities, top is the view west from the riverside path towards Durham Rowing Club. Bottom, the view south at the western boundary of Old Durham Gardens.

Fig 20 below. A selection of images showing the different routes found within the conservation area.

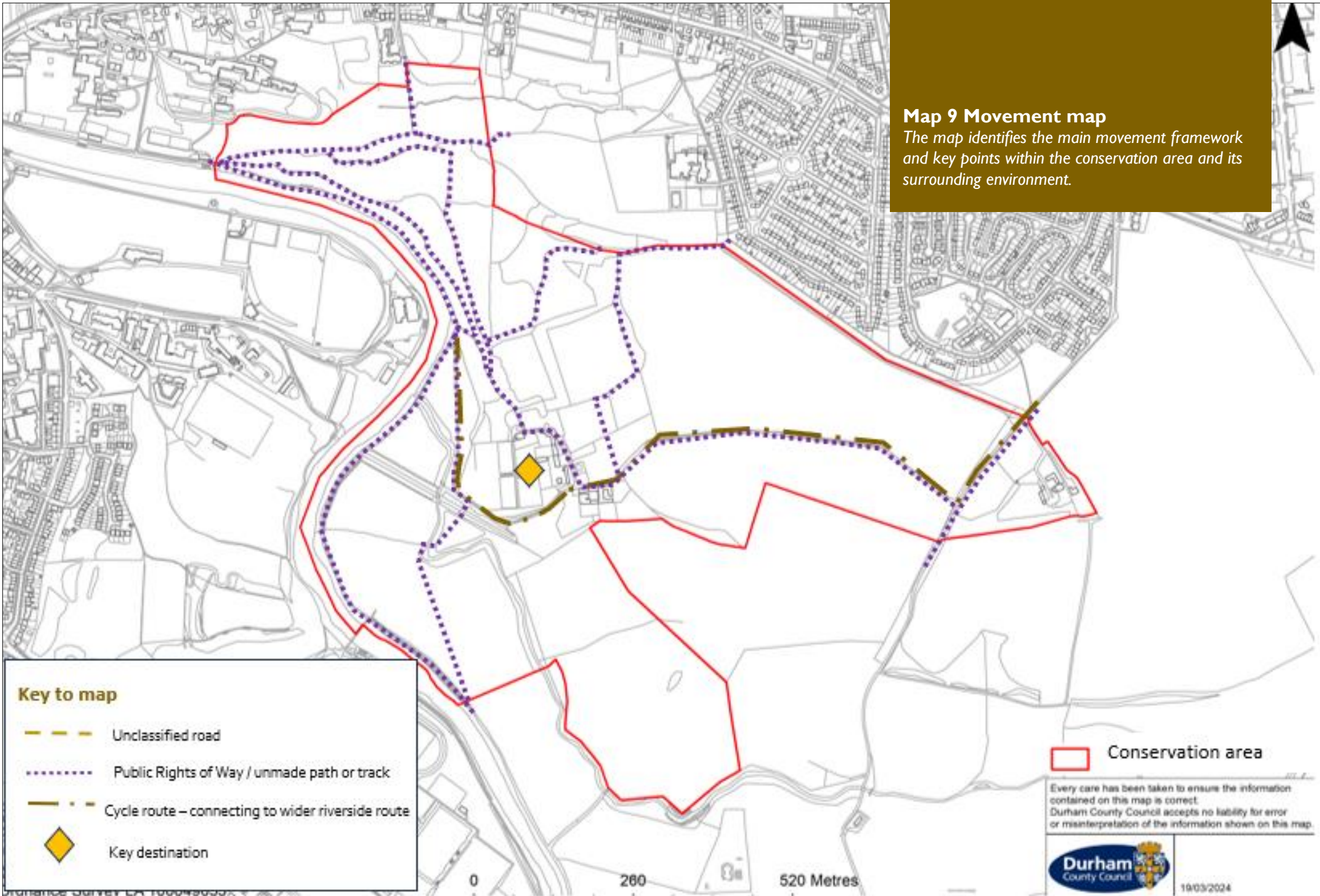


The north end of Bent House Lane passing the housing estate followed by the informal route passed Pineapple House to the woods.

Examples of typical timber steps and different paths found in Pelaw Woods, then the formalised riverside path.

Map 9 Movement map

The map identifies the main movement framework and key points within the conservation area and its surrounding environment.



Key to map

- Unclassified road
- Public Rights of Way / unmade path or track
- . - Cycle route – connecting to wider riverside route
- ◆ Key destination

Conservation area

Every care has been taken to ensure the information contained on this map is correct. Durham County Council accepts no liability for error or misinterpretation of the information shown on this map.



19/03/2024

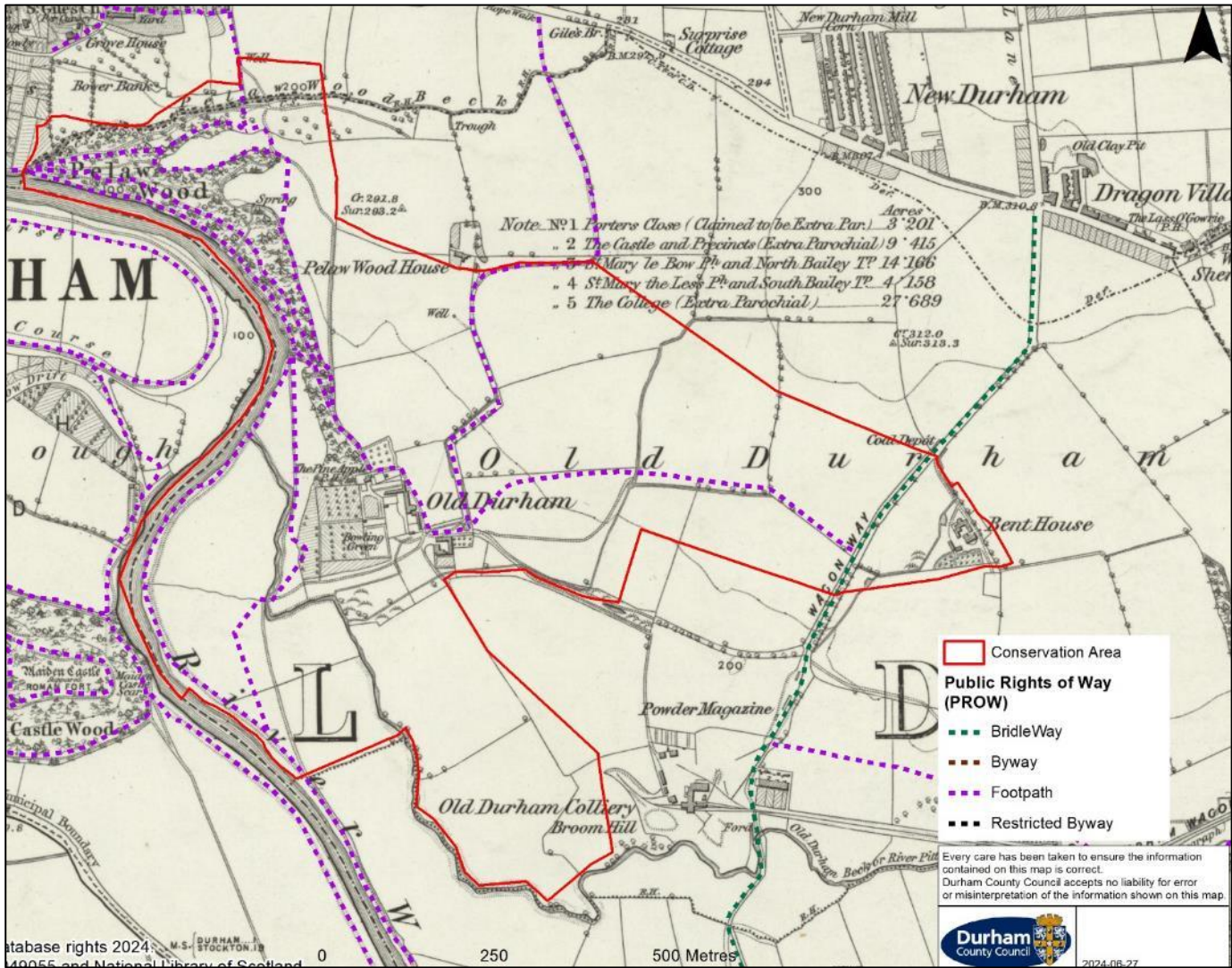
Map 10 Movement map (historic)

Movement map overlaid onto a 1st edition Ordnance Survey map c.1860 showing the pattern of historic routes many likely pre-dating the detailed recording.

The early layout of the road pattern combined with the historic lanes, paths and tracks have a formative impact on access and movement through the area and wider city. They are characterful distinctive routes contributing positively. The historic routes are still legible and navigable, with some potentially part of the pilgrim trail to the Cathedral, although this is conjectural, adding to the better known linkages to Finchale, Beaurepaire, and Kepier, and the route of Cades Road.

Cades Road is an undefined Roman route believed to have been constructed between 138 and 161AD, a decade or so after Hadrian's Wall. It represented a north-south link between York and the Tyne, in County Durham passed Chester-le-Street, Kepier, Old Durham and Shincliffe. It is named after John Cade of Durham, an 18th century antiquarian who in 1785 proposed its existence and possible course.

The historic routes are key to understanding the historic development of Durham and thread together all the historic assets, offering a tangible link back to Durham's past, some with elevated importance leading to the Cathedral and providing dynamic and sequential visual experiences on approach.

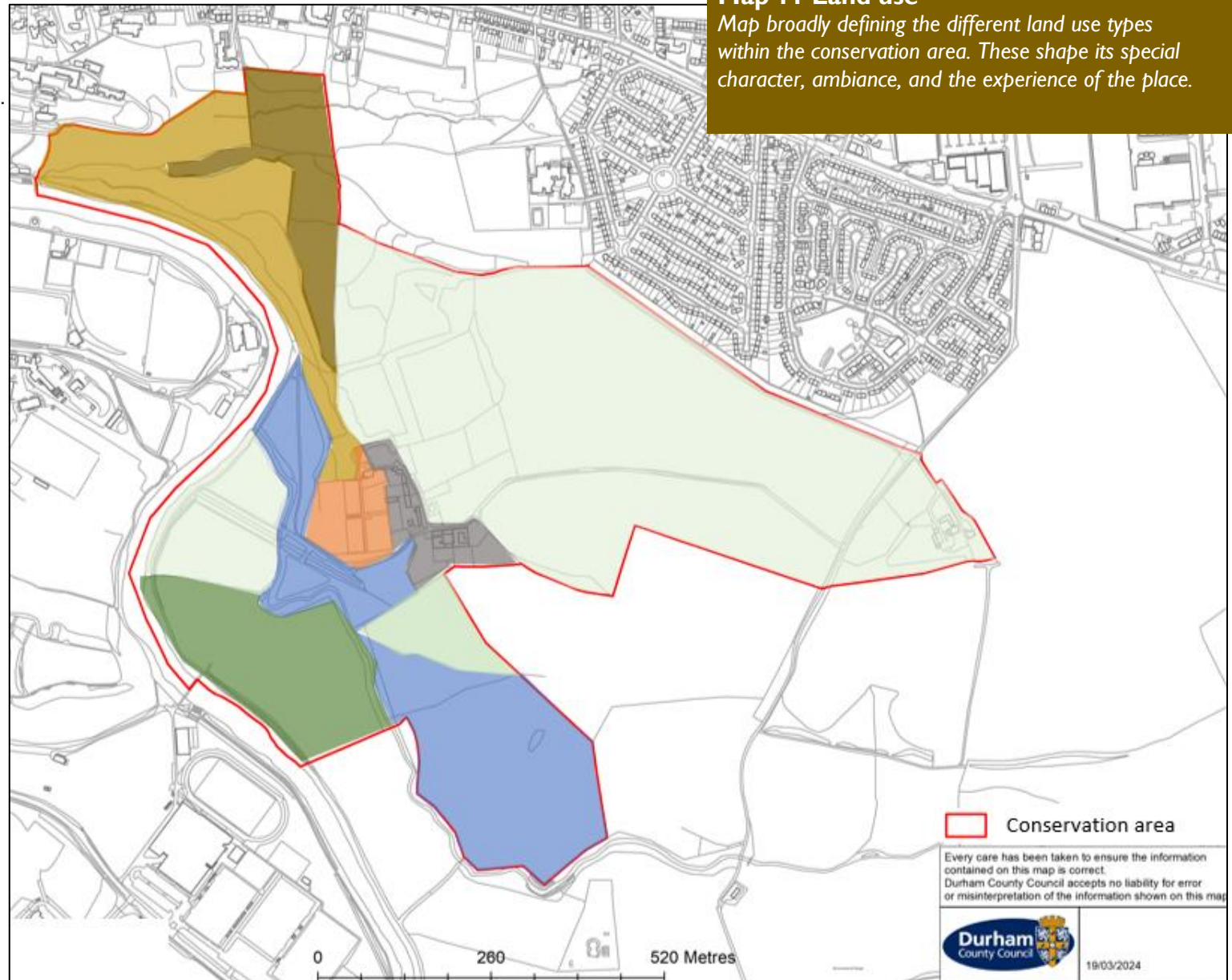


2.10 Land Use

Land use defines building types and character that changes from place to place. The plan broadly illustrates the land uses within Old Durham Conservation Area. Given the distinctive rural character of the area, the land use is based on a landscape sub-type approach. These land uses all contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area and add a variety of landscapes and features that create further interest.

Key to map

-  Ancient Woodland
-  Secondary Woodland & Pasture
-  Floodplain farmland pasture
-  Ornamental / Pleasure Gardens
-  Urban
-  Playing Fields
-  Farmland / Old Field Enclosures



2.1.1 Layout, pattern and grain

The settlement at Old Durham was established well in advance of its detailed recording on the first edition Ordnance Survey map c.1860. This is evidenced by the establishment of a medieval manor house. While the exact position of the manor house has not been established, it is thought to have been situated in the north-eastern garden aligned with the east end of Durham Cathedral. It was demolished between c.1720-1787.

The buildings and spaces as recognised today date mainly date from the 17th and 18th centuries. This sets the areas development pattern which has remained largely unaltered.

The plan form of the area is very simple comprising three separate legible groups, Bent House Farm in the north east, Old Durham Farm in the south west, and Old Durham Gardens, connected by a single road cutting through the farmland. The buildings at Bent House Farm are set well back from the roadside, while those at Old Durham tightly bound it.

The farm groups display typical historic farmstead characteristics with the buildings built around small courtyard spaces, the various functions carefully placed in relation to one another with scatters of ancillary farm buildings close by.

This historic plan form and overall character is well preserved contributing positively to the conservation area, this includes residential conservation of former agricultural buildings.

Adjacent to Old Durham Farm in the north facing two large paddocks is a staggered linear group of three buildings, orientated north-south, up to the edge of Pelaw Woods. These comprises of converted barns and cottages of different character adding positive variety. At the north end of this group Pear Tree Cottage provides a west return, beyond which is the detached Pineapple House set in the northwest corner of a generous rectangular garden.

The house is bounded in the south by Old Durham Gardens. This comprises of two walled enclosures on the upper east level land and to the west side a larger open ended enclosure on lower land. The overall plan form of the gardens is rectangular in shape with the long terrace orientated north south. The gazebo is placed centrally, aligned by both the wide stone steps leading down to the lower terrace and the east-west cross wall on the upper terrace. The site designed to look out to the west towards Durham Cathedral.

At Pelaw Woods there is no pattern or grain, the Silver Link Bridge is the only structure providing a straight crossing point over the steep-sided gully. The bridge is followed by a number of public rights of way and unmade tracks/paths, these are a mixture of high and low level routes that link to the city centre, the gardens, and Gilesgate.

Fig 21 below. Images below top, the buildings at Bent House Farm set back at the end of the long drive in spacious private grounds, bottom the road travelling east west through the farmland.



Fig 22 below. A 3D model demonstrating the general pattern and characteristics of the conservation area, and elements of its setting.



2.12 Character areas

The conservation area can be sub-divided into two “character areas” - smaller places which have their own identities.

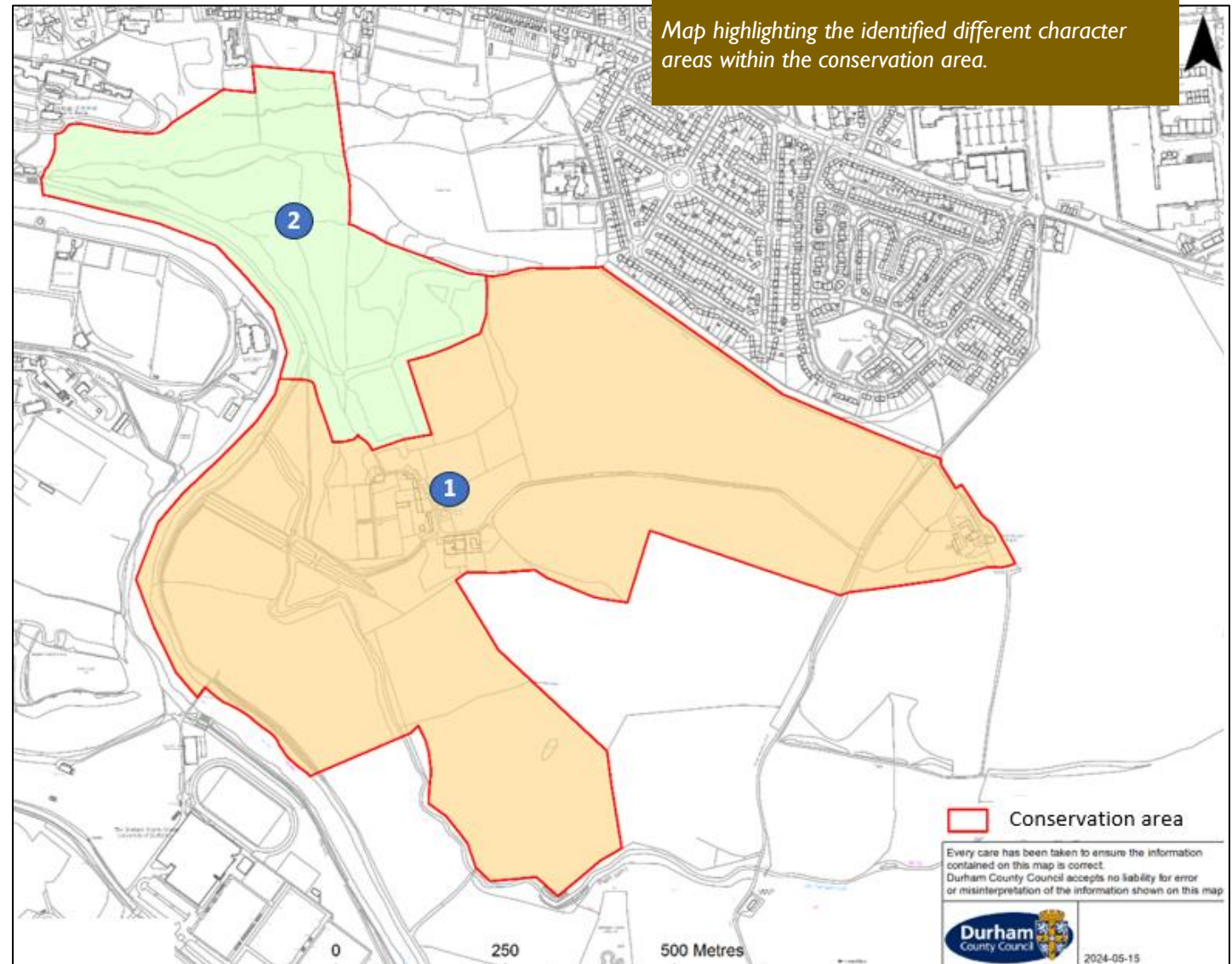
Identifying such areas is important in order to provide a detailed and practical analysis, identify the issues, problems and opportunities that vary from place to place, and to develop appropriate policies for future conservation and enhancement.

Character area 1 – Old Durham, based upon the Old Durham Estate plan of open rural character with three distinct dispersed groups of historic buildings and the historic focal point of Old Durham Gardens.

Character area 2- Pelaw Woods an area of dense ancient woodland with a distinctive enclosed, intimate inward looking historic landscape character.

Map 12 Character areas

Map highlighting the identified different character areas within the conservation area.



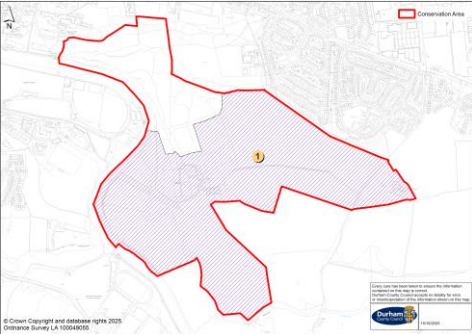
3. Street characterisation

3.1 Character area I (Old Durham)

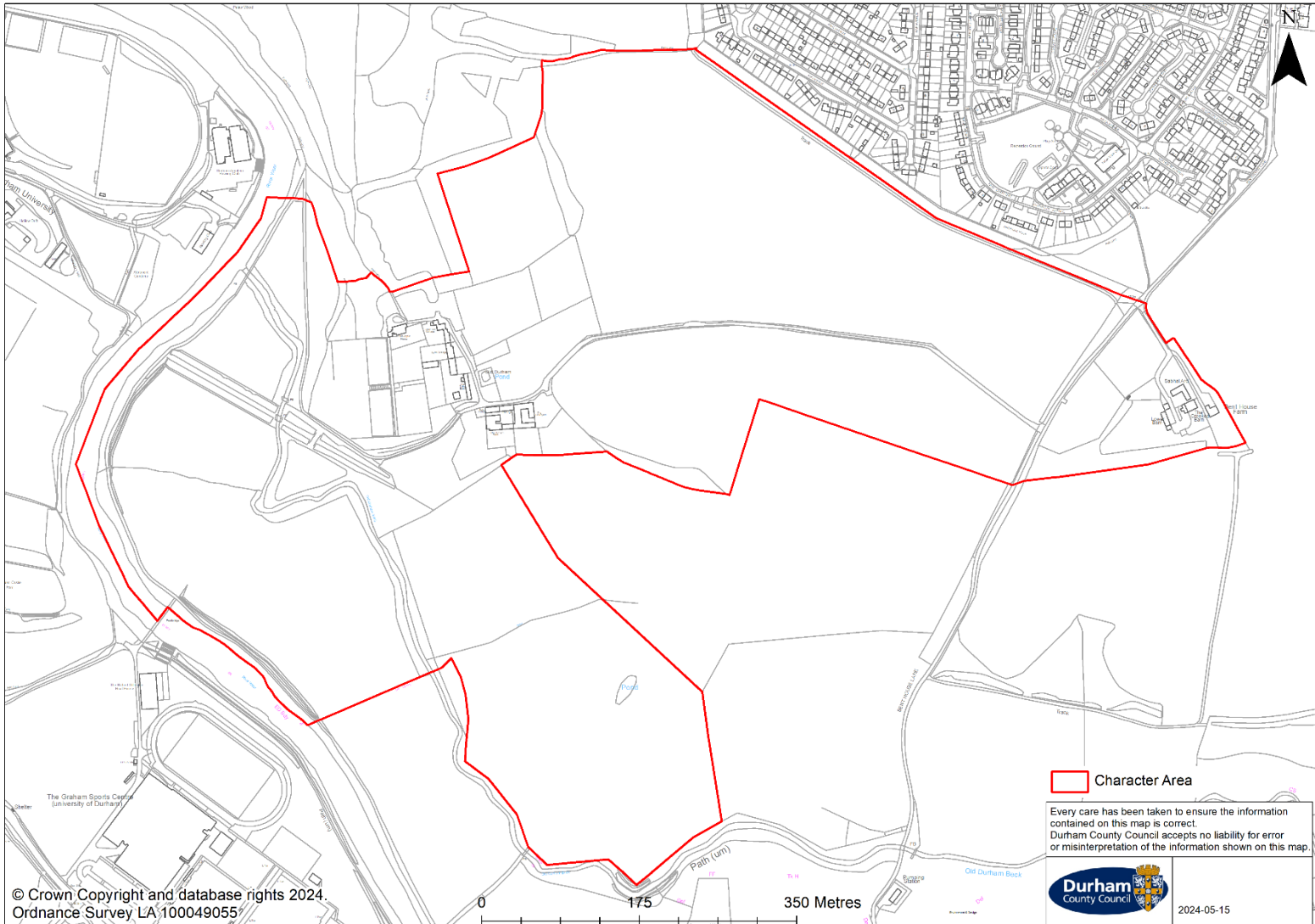


Map 13 Character area 1

A detailed Ordnance Survey map of
Character area 1 – Old Durham.



Above, Character Area 1 in the
context of the wider conservation
area for reference.



3.3.1 Location and summary of special interest

The character area comprises three groupings of built development, Bent House Farm, Old Durham Farm, and Old Durham Gardens, along with the surrounding farmland, and the open playing fields on the lower flood plain land on the west side of Old Durham Beck.

The area extends outwardly in the southeast capturing the fields that were excavated as part of the former Craigs Quarry where the Old Durham Roman Villa site was discovered providing historical context. This land has high visual amenity value as part of the continuity of landscape along the River Wear corridor up to the boundary of Shincliffe Village Conservation Area.

The setting to the area is inherently rural where the topography and openness provides views westwards with Durham Castle and Cathedral skyline landmarks, and south towards Shincliffe Village.

In the north the setting is mixed, dense and urban deriving from the countryside intrusion of the mid-20th century housing estate, the recent housing development on the east side of Bent House Lane, and the edge of Dragonville Industrial Estate.

What gives the area its special historic and architectural interest and character?

- The high value and scenic quality of the historic rural landscape and low density of built form contained within it.
- The scarcity of modern development in views across the valley landscape in comparison to other more developed parts of the city.
- The high historic interest of the area from the Roman period through to the establishment of a medieval manor house, the gardens and farm buildings of the late 17th / early 18th century.
- Historic interest stemming from the estate ownership by notable gentry of Bishop Neville, the Heath family, and the Vane Tempests.
- The built form comprising almost exclusively of historic buildings of strong agricultural character.
- The variety in age, architectural style and high quality of the historic buildings ranging from the former "Pineapple Inn," the gazebo, garden walls, farmhouses, and barns.

- The high significance of the gardens and terraced walks restored to reflect formal garden designs of the different periods.
- The high quality views of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site, including the "hidden" sequential experience from the north and the designed axial view from the gardens.

Fig 23 below. Old Durham Farm, the grade II listed barn and adjoining Farm Cottage.



3.3.2 Layout, streets, and spaces

Approaching the area from the north there is no hint of the rural character and quality to come. The wide modern road junction, flanked by modern housing with the local retail centre on the opposite side of the road, creates a very busy and noisy urban entrance point.

The carriageway travels south along a relatively straight path bounded by housing. Beyond the 1950s bungalows, there is a positive change to a less formal country lane that provides an appropriate transition between the urban and rural environments.

Bent House Farm is the first group of buildings encountered occupying an enclosed triangular-shaped site on the east side of the lane. The entrance is by a long straight tree-lined driveway with the buildings set well back from the lane. The L-plan farmhouse stands detached on the east side. The other buildings are clustered around small courtyard spaces on the lower west side beyond which are large paddocks, and the entire site is enclosed by trees. This gives the farm its own sense of identity and it has a coherent quality of strong rural character, which is a very positive contributor.

The lane turns to head down to Old Durham Farm where the absence of any notable boundary features creates an open spacious character and high quality far reaching views.



Fig 24 above. A sequence of views along different routes at Bent House Lane junction with the front street, the positive transition to a green lane, and private tree-lined driveway into Bent House Farm.

Old Durham Farm stands at the end of the lane on the south side, seen on approach road nestled neatly into the surrounding rural landscape. The farm group consists of a farmhouse and a complex of agricultural buildings grouped in linear fashion around two internal courtyards. A long byre forms the north range that positively bounds the lane with the large two storey farmhouse standing in the southwest corner facing open grounds to take advantage of the fine countryside view.

Adjacent in the north is a detached second long byre with a north-south orientation bounding an informal track. This building is followed by a linked group of three, a converted barn, Farm Cottage, and Pear Tree Cottage. These have a narrow rectangular plan form and slight staggered arrangement with generous rear plots. Opposite these buildings is an informal track road followed by a wild meadow incorporating a pond, which provide a very appropriate setting and having high visual amenity value.

The informal track continues north narrowing and becoming tightly enclosed by buildings, walls, trees, and hedgerows. It then turns the corner to a small open area of land and on to "Pineapple House" with its enclosed private gardens behind the building. The route then changes to a pedestrian only track that heads into Pelaw Woods. These informal routes and mixture of wide and narrow enclosed spaces enhance the rural feel and character of the area.



Fig 25 above. The tight cluster of buildings at Old Durham Farm nestled in the landscape and below the track road in front of the cottage with an open paddock.



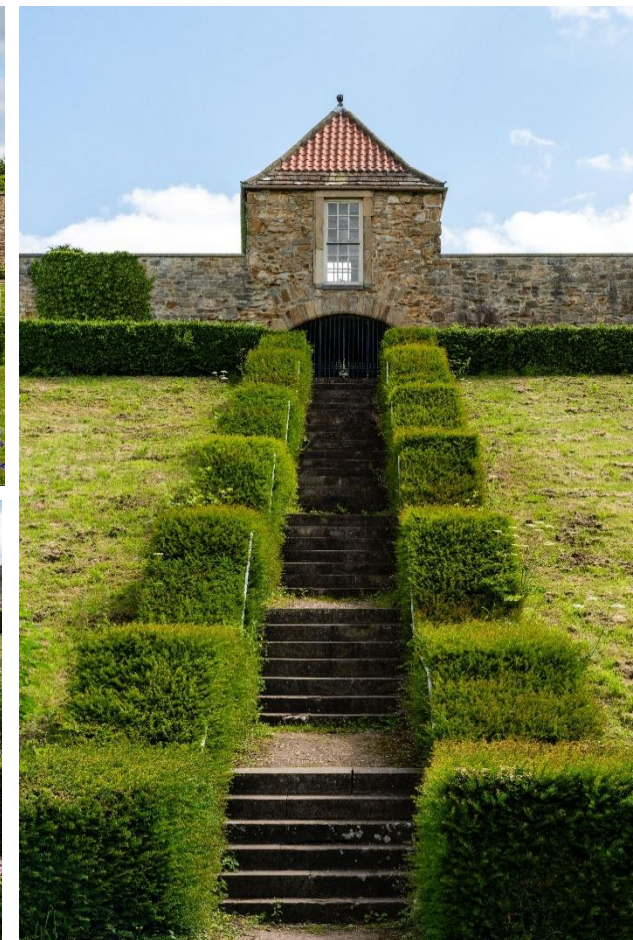
Fig 26 above. The narrow informal lane leading to Pelaw Woods and below the route along the former railway line.

Old Durham Gardens stands proudly as the historic landmark within the area and is a hidden gem of the city. The creation of the gardens over the centuries has shaped and modelled the sloping site into two walled enclosures on the upper flat level. This east garden is initially accessed by a field gate crossing a small area of grassland at the southeast corner. This is followed by a wide opening in the southeast corner of the garden wall, which is thought to represent the original gate position. The garden is bounded on its west side by a long high wall with the gazebo placed centrally and flush as the focal point of the original garden design.

In front is a long narrow terraced walk with a high wall that is accessed by a stone doorway, this is followed by a steep long slope and central wide stone steps down to the level lower (west) garden. Both the slopes and northwest corner of the lower garden are enclosed by garden walls with the southern boundary more open. An opening in the north wall to the lower garden provides access into Pelaw Woods.

Beyond the gardens the footpaths are wider and formalised, but this does not detract from the strong rural character. They remain tightly enclosed by greenery, and this helps to create the positive sense of surprise arriving at the gardens, and when walking north where the area is open to the riverside.

Fig 27 below. The upper walled garden and gazebo, terraced slopes down to the orchard, and the main steps up to the terrace walk.



Images, © Will Roberts, used with permission.

A significant feature of the area is that it only has one carriageway and is therefore very much pedestrian focussed. There are many public rights of way providing valuable pedestrian routes and connections. Bent House Lane continues out of the character area southwards crossing over Old Durham Beck down to Shincliffe Park.

Around the gardens there are informal muddy paths into Pelaw Woods and up to Sherburn Road, and in the west they form part of the wider riverside footpath network. The contrast between the routes through the open rural landscape, and those that are more intimate and enclosed of well wooded character, is an important positive characteristic of the place.

The area is dominated by a historic estate landscape and composition of green elements that provides part of its special character, and achieves high aesthetic quality. It has different character types ranging from pasture land on the lower floodplain, recreation grounds in the form of sports pitches at the riverside, wooded pasture merging into Pelaw Woods, and valley farmland.

The rural character is further strengthened by free standing trees, small groups and tree belts, hedgerows and scrub around the carriageway and fields, and the water features of the beck and field ponds that add natural diversity into the area.

Beyond the conservation area is broad mature tree canopy cover providing a wooded backdrop and visual containment contributing to the areas sense of place and separation from the city's historic core.

Old Durham Gardens is the most significant green space within the conservation area. The restored upper garden includes a planting scheme typical of the early 18th century. This consists of pyramid-shaped yew trees set in a formal grid of narrow planted beds, faithful to the adapted boundary walls and gazebo. The 110mtr-long terrace is planted in the manner of the late 17th century (pre-1700), reflecting a number of similar terrace gardens established at this time in the city and its environs. The restoration of the lower garden (sloping bank and flat ground to the west) involved re-planting of an orchard, faithful to the pre-Restoration period (pre-1660) by when the gardens would have been largely complete.

Old Durham's importance historically and horticulturally rests on the establishment of the ambitious gardens, probably by John Heath IV between 1630 and 1665, while they exhibit the characteristics which distinguish Jacobean gardens from those of their Elizabethan predecessors, the emphasis on scale and grandeur in contrast to the intimacy of earlier gardens.

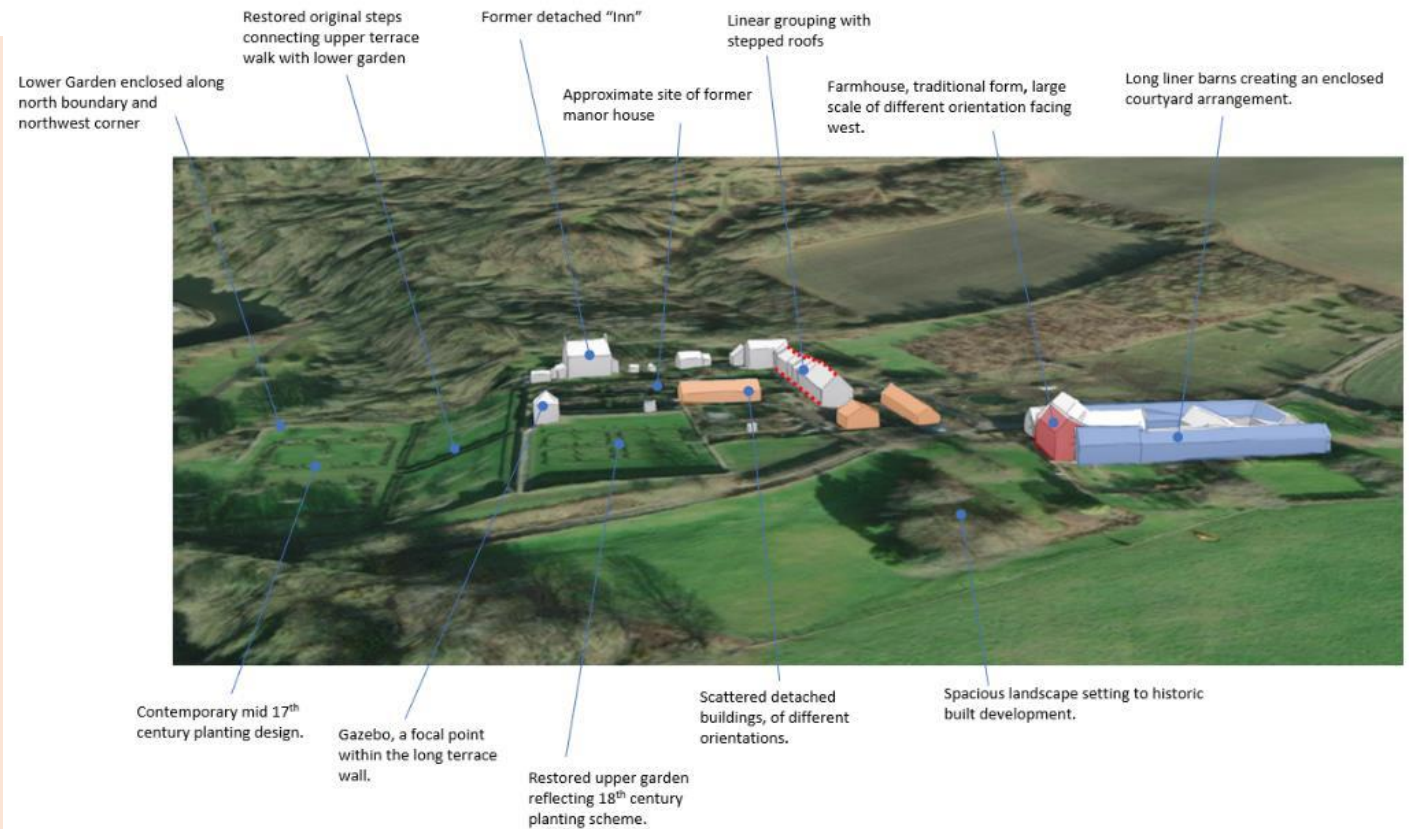


Fig 28 above. The high quality view from the riverside path across the lower garden to the upper terrace with the gazebo and garden walls prominent.

Layout, streets, and spaces - positive characteristics and identity that contribute to the area's special interest.

- Low density of built development creating a dominance and focus of open countryside that is its main character.
- The open situation and rural context distinctive from the main historic core of Durham City.
- Dispersed farmsteads and groupings of historic buildings with their history and landscape settings the linking thread.
- The intrinsic relationship between the building locations and surrounding spaces that is fundamental to the area's character.
- The layout and arrangement of the area being changed very little over the centuries shaping the distinctive historic rural character.
- The open field system with hedge lined field boundaries contributing significantly to the character of the landscape.
- The designed axial alignment between the gardens and Durham Cathedral.

Fig 29 below. Modelling showing the key characteristics of the area.



3.3.3 Architectural style, form, and detailing

Built development within the conservation area is rich and varied but also unified by simple traditional forms, strong agricultural character, with aesthetic interest crafted by different historic uses that are still legible.

The historic farm buildings have almost exclusively been converted to residential use, which has been carried out sympathetically conserving their original agricultural character and appearance.

They are typical traditional farm buildings of one and two stories and of different types and uses, such as farmhouses, byres, threshing barn, cottages, and outbuildings. They are characterised by simple functional forms, have fewer openings, and are constructed from a limited palette of locally available materials, and in the main are of a solid robust character. The farmhouses and cottages have a more domestic character, and this combination adds positively to the character of the place.

At Bent House Farm the converted buildings are a mixture of stone and brick, with their different agricultural functions still recognisable. The main farmhouse is a later red brick Victorian building with distinguishable features such as strong gables, decorative wall dormers, and sliding sash windows.

The grade II listed barn is a notable and significant building, being a 17th century threshing barn adding to the record of life in Durham in the post-medieval period. It is distinctive from the other historic agricultural buildings in the vicinity comprising two storeys and six bays built from handmade brick with stone dressing and a roof of clay pantiles. It has large buttresses, brick eaves course, ventilation slits, and segmented brick arch boarded door.

The focal point of Old Durham Gardens is the gazebo of an early 17th century date remodelled c.1720-30 and restored in the late 20th century. It comprises a simple square plan with a pyramidal roof incorporating timber doors within the east and south faces. It has a west facing multi-paned timber sash window that gives a Cathedral view, below which is a gated basement arch. It is built from stone with a red pantile roof covering. It is a unique building not only within Old Durham but the wider city centre.

The upper garden is enclosed by walls of different phases. The north and east walls are of stone but those to the east and south have stone bases surmounted by brick. The more substantial stone walls are probably of 17th century date. The 19th century brickwork in the south wall implies that there may have been railings here originally to allow sight of the fine views towards Shincliffe from within the garden.

The terraced walk is accessed by a moulded Tudor arched opening that is an important feature as a late 20th century reconstruction of the original.

The restored lower garden walls are stepped as they descend the slope before levelling off, and one section displays interesting square recesses which may have been for beehives. These are important features giving an insight in the historic garden use.

At the north west corner of the lower garden is a significant feature in the form of a stone 'jetty.' This provides clear evidence that the river and/or beck once lapped right up against the garden and demonstrating the changing movement of the river over centuries across its flood plain.

From the lower garden there are glimpses of the white house to the north, which is the Old Pineapple Inn, incorporating part of an earlier garden house sketched in the 18th century.

At the intersection of the footpath with Old Durham Beck there are the brick remains of the old Durham Elvet and Murton Branch Railway line, which travelled east west between Elvet Station in the west and Sherburn House Station in the east. This was a new line of 1893, and the remnants are an important part of the industrial heritage of the city and wider county.

The photomontage images on the following pages are presented for efficiency to give an overview of the theme, future designs should be based upon the good examples.

Built Form Palette



Despite the limited number of buildings, the palette of materials still makes a valuable contribution to the local distinctiveness and sense of place. There is consistency in terms of a limited palette of traditional materials, but the variation in type, texture, weathering rates, colour, and tone, add aesthetic interest that contributes positively. Materials are also important in creating a sense of history and are intrinsic in the rural building type that characterises the area.

Traditional buff stone and red brick are predominant. Some brickwork has been painted over and one building has smooth render. Of note is a rare example of 17th century diaper pattern brickwork on west face of Old Durham Cottage, the only know example of this date in the county.

Roof covering materials are traditional Welsh slate or red pantiles. Significantly, some sections of Old Durham Garden walls are a mixture of fabric that is important in signifying different phases of construction. Traditional timber is the dominant window and door material.

Given the rural character and different functions of the historic buildings they are characterised by simplicity and are less embellished as a collection compared to other parts of the city. Nonetheless there are some positive elements of architectural detailing that add interest and variation.



Doors are all traditional timber painted in different styles with a prevalence of vertically boarded doors, and some limited domestically styled timber panelled doors.

Windows are again varied ranging from simple plain casements to traditional timber painted vertical sliding sashes with different glazing patterns. There is some limit use of insensitive uPVC windows.

Overall, the area sustains a very high level of historic and traditional material and character intactness and authenticity contributing positively to its special interest, character, and appearance.

Architectural Detailing Palette



Door & Window Palette



Architectural form, style, and detailing - positive contributors to the area's special interest and character.

- The high architectural quality of the building recognised by either listed, NDHAs or positive contributors.
- The overriding character expressed by the vernacular qualities of the buildings influenced by a simple traditional material palette.
- The architecture of the area being modest with simplicity of detailing that testifies to the building ages and historic uses.
- The architectural variety and preserved agricultural character overall despite many residential conversions.
- The retention of traditional timber joinery, and mixture of window and door styles, that positively contributes to the individual building and overall character.

Negative elements

Within the character area no buildings, sites or obvious alterations to the historic buildings are identified as being negative and detracting from its special architectural and historic interest, character, and appearance. The conservation area therefore has a very high level of authenticity and intactness.

Fig 30 below. An important element that contributes to the plan form and architecture is the alignment and axial view towards the Cathedral from inside the gazebo. Image © Martin Roberts, used with permission.



3.3.4 Ambiance and pedestrian experience

The north entrance is often dominated by traffic, congestion, and noise, along the Front Street. But this heightens the appreciation and experience of the rural character once within the character area.

Along Bent House Lane, traffic and noise quickly disappears initially giving way to a quieter semi-residential feel, followed by a notable shift to a tranquil rural lane. This character is reinforced by gaps in the trees providing views out across the wider floodplain valley farmland and backdrop of woods beyond Houghall.

The recent housing development has a major impact by urbanising the former open rural landscape on the east side of the lane. But its positive contribution of providing a "green lane" historic approach is maintained.

There are very positive qualities of the sequential movement towards Old Durham, coming westward down Benthouse Lane, with its spectacular views of the Cathedral. These begin near Bent House Farm at a gap in the trees and continue all the way down to Old Durham Farm and Old Durham Gardens.

Traffic along this main route is very infrequent and is therefore not a detractor. The absence of formalised footways, road markings, lighting columns and street furniture along the entire length of the lane is very positive reflecting the rural character of the area.

The experience is however marred at the upper entrance to the gardens where the lane culminates at a car parking area. Further, there is parking provision in front of the buildings adjacent in the north, that clutters views when in full use. At the bottom of the lane, closer in to the farm group the northern side is robbed of its green verge. The boundary is edged in barbed wire bordering the public footpath, which is visually offensive.

The pedestrian route here splits north up into Pelaw Woods and south down to the lower gardens and riverside, where the quiet rural ambiance remains strong.

The lower garden is open to the public at all times and is easily accessible from the footway and neighbouring cycle path. It is a popular retreat with people taking advantage of the peaceful environment. While the upper terrace is also accessible it is not wheelchair friendly due to the change in level at the doorway onto the south bank.

There is a critical break in the public footpath approaching Old Durham from the south-west. The path originally crossed the River Wear by Maiden Castle bridge, then passed over Old Durham Beck by a small metal bridge. This direct link has been lost meaning walkers must go on a considerable diversion to reach the gardens. Re-establishing this route would be very positive.

Adjacent in the west the footway heads north merging into the riverside path that has a distinctive woodland quality that contrasts positively with the openness of the farmland.

The tranquil ambiance and isolated character along with the retreat of the historic pleasure gardens is distinct from any other place within the city centre. It is also a popular place for walkers, dog-walkers, cyclists, and joggers.

Fig 31 below. The approach to Old Durham Farm along Bent House Lane with fine sequential views of the Cathedral, and Kingfisher Bridge.



Surface Palette



Palette of Boundary Treatments



Street surfacing is a mixture of tarmacadam, gravel, dirt, and grassed paths. The condition is variable with some spots more deteriorated than others. Generally, though they are appropriate to the rural context and do not detract from the area's character or appearance. Some paths would benefit from re-surfacing in keeping with the materials and character of the historic landscape.

There is a general absence of street furniture apart from a limited amount of timber seating provided at the gardens. These are positive encouraging people to stop to and enjoy the views. There is limited visitor and parking signage, which does not detract visually.

There is however no meaningful interpretation and a lack of off-site public footpath signage. Such provision would enhance the visitor experience of the gardens and wayfinding, which can presently be difficult for people who do not know the place. Any future signage must not create adverse clutter nor detract from the charm of discovering the gardens for yourself.

Boundary treatments are important contributors delineating historic plots and fields, enclosing routes, and reinforcing the rural character. The predominant type is rural style timber fencing and field gates, with examples timber post and wire fencing. The birds-mouth type timber fencing along the south side of the lower garden appears out of keeping and visually too strong.

In the longer term a visually thinner solution such as a post-and-wire fence or metal estate style railings, set closer to the wall, should be explored.

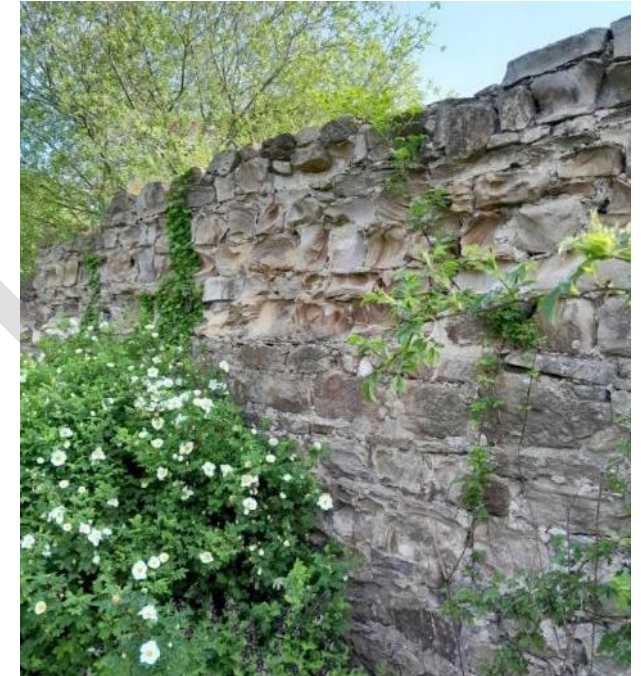
There are many examples of historic stone and brick boundary walls, while hedgerow boundaries are important natural boundary features.

The walls at Old Durham Gardens are historically the most significant. They are a mixture of stone and brick, the older being handmade, with different phases of construction legible adding interest. The long terrace wall has notable "putlog" holes for scaffolding beams either side of a change in the stonework.

The north and south garden walls down the slope and the northeast corner are much reduced with coping stones and courses of masonry lost, while the north walls are leaning and deteriorated. Some parts have organic growth through the fabric, poor smeared re-pointing, and cavernous stones visible.



Fig 32 below. A selection of images showing different parts of the stone garden walls and the various condition issues.



3.3.5 Visual Experiences

The uniqueness of the character area comprising of a steep side of the river valley sloping down to the flat floodplain, the openness and absence of significant built intrusion in the landscape, and the route of the lane combine to create a sequence of fine “unknown” views of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site. Fewer people tend to experience and enjoy these views, compared to other better known views within the historic city core; but they are equally as significant.

There are important close quarter views of the historic farm buildings that convey the area’s special historic interest, rural character and identity, and fine unfolding kinetic views of Old Durham Gardens approaching from different directions.

While the view out from the upper gardens via the Gazebo is not within the general public realm, and has been reduced by tree cover, it is still significant. This represents a designed view of the 17th century as the gardens western alignment served to present an axial view of the Cathedral to best effect. It is regularly and continually experienced from April to September when the gardens are open.

Walking through the area, general views are important in giving an appreciation and understanding of both the areas separation, and relationship with historic core by way of glimpses of its buildings in the background. This includes the traditional of first viewing the Cathedral and its impact within the wider landscape around the city.

The key views identified within this character area are:

View 1 – Short view southeast into Bent House Farm.

View 2 & 3 – Sequential long distance views westwardly along Bent House Lane approach to Old Durham Farm.

View 4 – Short views looking into the upper garden through the gate.

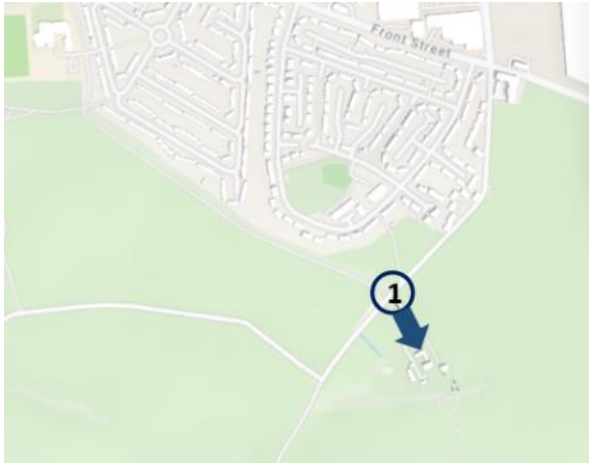
View 5 – Short views east from the footway towards Old Durham Gardens.

Locations and details of these views are provided on the following pages.

Fig 33 right. *The splendid view of Durham Cathedral from Bent house Lane, the Cathedral seen rising majestically into the skyline set within its broad scenic landscape setting. Image, © Will Roberts, used with permission.*



Key Views
Location



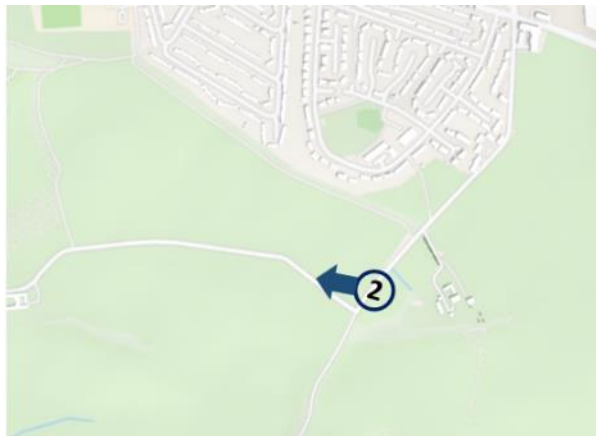
Image



Description

View southeast from the access point off Bent House Lane.

The farm buildings are generally hidden from view being set back from the lane, becoming visible looking along the tree lined driveway seen as a characterful historic farm group in a scenic and spacious green setting.



View west along Bent House Lane.

Bent House Lane provides a sequence of spectacular views of Durham Castle and Cathedral beginning at the higher ground in the north and continuing down the track to Old Durham Gardens. The Cathedral is seen dominating over the fragmented built form of the historic city centre, but more predominantly in its broad landscape setting. It is a view enjoyed by few people but is equally as important as other well-known views.

Key Views
Location



Image



Description

View west along Bent House Lane.

The end part of the sequence of views along the lane where the Cathedral is seen above the rooftops of the farm buildings and the tree canopy.



View west into the upper garden through the gate.

The splendid short inwards view of the restored upper garden showing the 17th century layout with typical 18th century planting of small pyramid-shaped yew trees and planted beds in a formal grid pattern in the foreground of the gazebo and enclosing garden walls.

Added to the above the intended view from inside the garden and gazebo of the Cathedral which is significant.

Key Views
Location



Image



Description

Views east and northwards from the footpaths around the lower garden.

The “classic” Old Durham Garden view, the spacious and peaceful lower garden orchard seen in the foreground of the terrace slope, long terrace wall and gazebo, with the former inn to the left hand side.

Image below © Will Roberts, used with permission.



Key Nighttime View

The approach to Old Durham Farm along Bent House Lane, demonstrating the visual dominance and experience of the illuminated Cathedral at nighttime



Ambiance, pedestrian experience, and public realm - positive contributors to the areas special interest and character.

- Positive sense of separation, isolation, and remoteness from the denser built-up historic core of the city.
- The rural ambiance that is generally undisturbed despite former agricultural buildings being converted to residential use.
- The area's tranquillity and openness that set it apart from the hustle and bustle experienced within the city centre.
- The peaceful retreat of the historic gardens, a significant historic experience, and the element of surprise reaching the gardens from the riverside.
- The different routes that visually emphasise the natural landscape, giving views out, through and into different parts of the area that are of high character.
- The community and social function of the gardens including hosting events.
- The fact that parking and traffic is not a characteristic of the place enhances the rural character and experience.



Fig 34 above. Old Durham Gardens hosts events such as Music in the Gardens adding to its community interest and allowing people to enjoy the gardens creating a very different atmosphere.

3.3.6 Appraisal summary – condition, negatives, issues, threats, and problems that affect the character and appearance of the area.

Built form

- The buildings generally appear to be in a good physical condition and maintained.
- The north and south sections of the garden walls are deteriorated with different defects.
- All of the buildings appear to be in active use that is positive.
- The lower garden is open to the public at all times, but the upper terrace is not accessible for wheelchair uses.
- No buildings have been identified as being at risk, and no sites as detracting.
- The buildings overall have a very high level of intactness with traditional materials and features prevailing.

Urban spaces

- The absence of formalised footways is positive given the areas rural character.

- Some mismatched and degradation of the surfacing around Old Durham Farm and the entrance to the garden is slightly detracting.
- There can be visual clutter caused by parked vehicles at the entrance to the garden, but this is difficult to avoid as there is no other parking provision.
- The public footpath boundary of barbed wire is visually offensive, with the birds-mouth fencing to the side of the terrace out of keeping.

Green spaces

- Trees to the west lower garden were traditionally coppiced allowing Cathedral views. Recent management has been limited in comparison, reducing the view quality.
- The upper gardens are very well maintained but the lower gardens would benefit from some soft maintenance works at the time of writing.

Street furniture

- There is a very limited amount of street furniture in the area that is positive to the rural character.

- There is an absence of meaningful off-site wayfinding to the gardens and interpretation.
- Loss of the direct pedestrian connection from Maiden Castle sports centre is a negative.

Threats

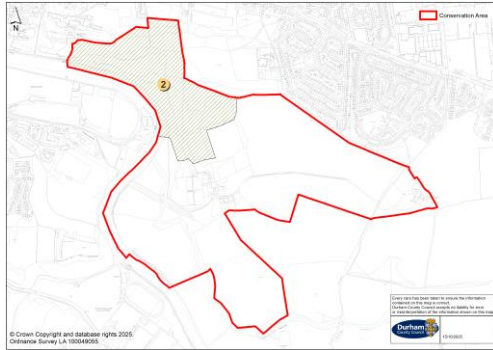
- The ongoing decline of the historic fabric of the garden walls.
- Potential for loss of fabric, and unsympathetic alterations to unlisted historic buildings.
- Trees reducing the extent and quality of Cathedral views from the gardens and main approach without targeted maintenance works in addition to regular grass cutting.
- Local Authority disposing of the site ending the management agreement with the Friends of Old Durham Gardens.
- Reduction or abandonment of regular garden maintenance works.
- Reduction and loss of volunteers, making volunteer-only works vulnerable.

3.1 Character area 2 (Pelaw Woods)

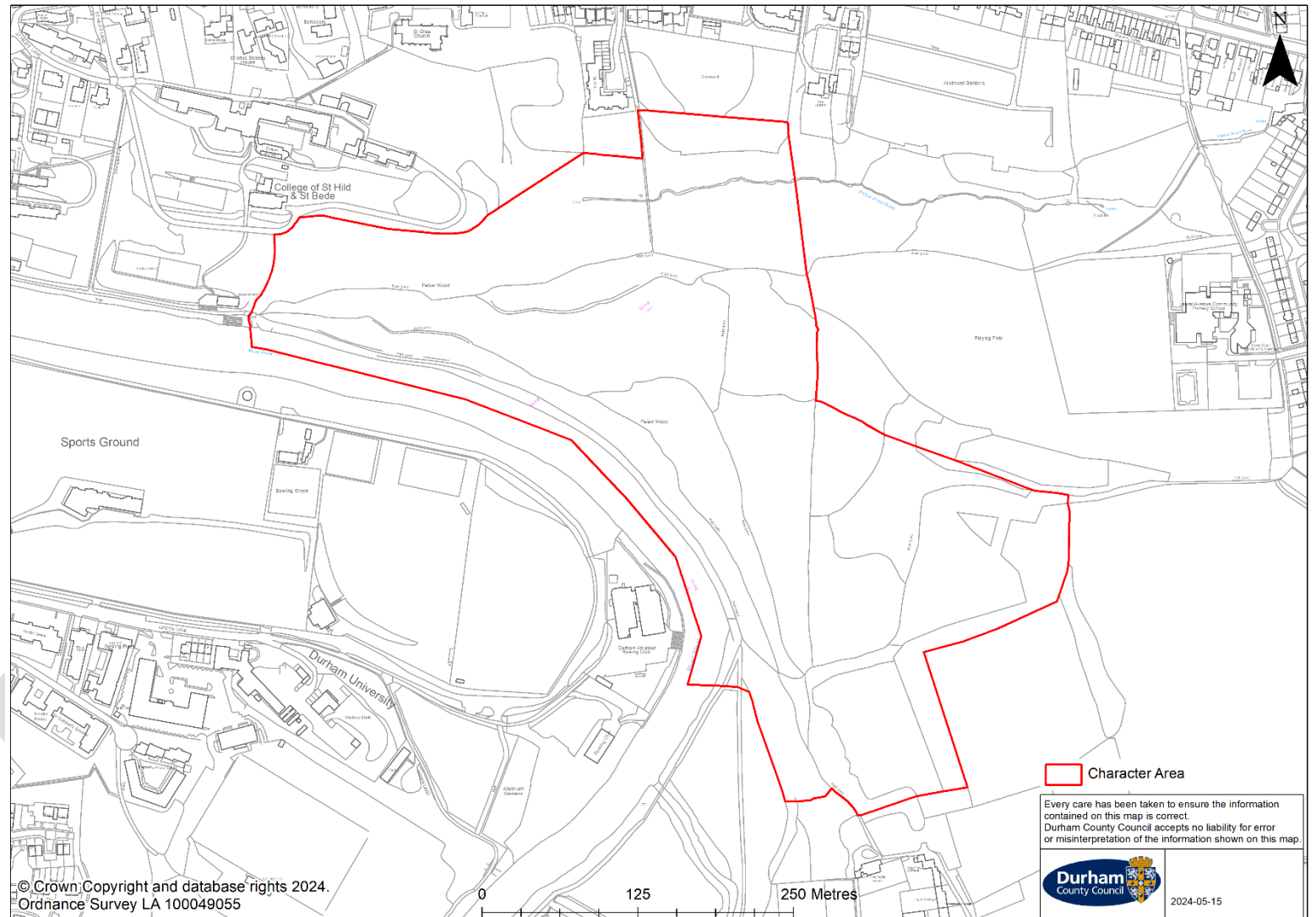


Map I4 Character area 2

A detailed Ordnance Survey map of
Character Area 1 – Pelaw Woods.



Above, Character Area 2 in the
context of the wider conservation
area for reference.



3.3.1 Location and summary of special interest

The character area relates exclusively to Pelaw Woods that occupies the northern part of Old Durham Conservation Area. It is an extensive area of historic woodland of approximately 12.8 hectares.

In the north, the woods rise steeply up to the ridge line of Gilesgate and Sherburn Road Front Street, proving a wooded backdrop to important buildings such as St Giles Church and Vane Tempest Hall. In the west it bounds the grounds of the former College of St Hild and St Bede, where the dense woodland merges seamlessly into the college parkland. South and westwards the woods drop down to the riverside at the loop of the river around the rowing club on the opposite riverbank.

The area is characterised by a range of landscape types including ancient woodland, secondary woodland and pastures, meadows, and old field enclosures.

The character area has a mixed urban setting, informed by the housing in the north dating from the 18th to the 20th centuries, and a varied landscape setting of the River Wear corridor and open farmland. The woods are important in forming part of the very high urban tree canopy cover which cloaks the historic urban core of the city and contributes significantly to its character and quality of views.

What gives the area its special historic and architectural interest and character?

- Importance as an ancient topographical feature.
- Historic interest as part of the Old Durham Estate once owned by the Londonderry, Vane Tempest, and Heath families.
- An integral part of the local and wider landscape, intrinsic to the character and appearance of the conservation area and city centre.
- Significant green space that penetrates into the urban core of the city, with high scenic value stemming from the dense mature tree cover.
- Distinctive and varied topography rising steeply northwards from the riverside up to the ridge of Gilesgate.
- High ecological, wildlife, and natural aesthetic qualities.
- Includes the water course of Pelaw Beck cutting through a unique steep sided valley.
- Provides significant views of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site.

- Has important local community recreational, leisure and social value.
- Additional designations as a local nature reserve, local wildlife site, part of the Area of Higher Landscape Value and Green Belt.



Fig 35 above. A typical gap view out from the woodland towards Maiden Castle and beyond.

3.3.2 Layout, streets, and spaces

Pelaw Wood is a significant broad green space in an urban fringe location forming part of the main river valley in the north, and east of the historic core of the city. Unlike the open arable land at Old Durham, it comprises dense woodland of hilly character with smaller pockets of open pasture, and a steep-sided gully containing Pelaw Wood Beck.

Within the woods is Old Durham meadow notable for its ecological potential and aesthetic function serving as a prelude to the gardens when approaching from the city through the woods.

An important feature is the northern end of the meadow as the site of "Strawberry Landing" the disembarking jetty for visitors to the gardens coming in boats from the city centre.

It is a distinctive place where the density of the tree canopy creates physical and visual enclosure, and an intimate inwards character enhancing the sense of separation from the busy city centre.

There are some notable gaps in the tree cover that provide relief allowing sunlight in and views out, the upper ridge lines giving a river outlook. From lower riverside level the woodland informs the immediate backdrop and further sense of enclosure to the riverside.

The woods have further significance by contributing to the ring of ridges that contain and separate the urban core of the city, providing a green background of high scenic quality to wider views.

There are many informal footpaths within the area of no apparent pattern. They lead into the woods from different locations including off the main formalised paths from Gilesgate in the north, the riverside in the west and south, and from Old Durham in the east.

Once in the woods it is common to find junctions and steps where paths lead off in different directions encouraging exploration enhancing the experience of the place. Some of these paths are historic routes correlating with paths recorded in detail on the c.1856-65 Ordnance Survey map. They tend to be narrow steep routes highly enclosed by greenery some perched on the very edge of high ridge lines.



Fig 36 below. A selection of images showing different spaces within the character area dominated by dense mature tree cover with a scattering of open areas and hilly terrain.



The only built feature of Pelaw Woods is Silver Link Bridge that crosses a steep gully at high level near to the St Giles Close entrance to the woods from the north. This is a steel footbridge built in 1938 by the Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Company, and somewhat modelled on one of their other commissions, the Victoria Falls Bridge in Zimbabwe. The bridge is an important local structure that contributes positively to the conservation area.

Wildlife significantly contributes to the character of woods and influences the overall quality and experience of the environment. The woods support a rich and diverse wildlife with a myriad of birds, an abundance of wild flowers (a recent survey over 80 different species were identified), with squirrels and rabbits regularly seen that act as dynamic and living components of the landscape.

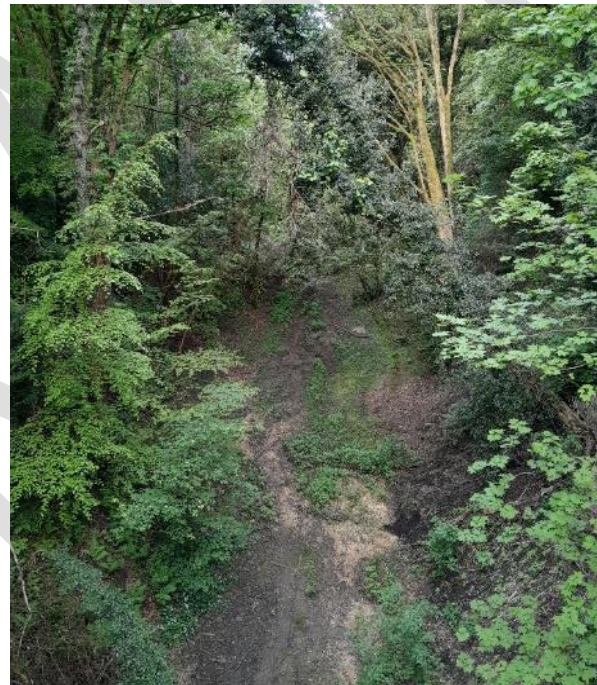


Fig 37 above. Silver Link Bridge spanning the steep sided gully that cuts a path through the woodland, the gully seen from the bridge and Pelaw Woods Beck.

3.3.3 Architectural style, form, and detailing

Not applicable.

3.3.4 Ambiance and pedestrian experience

Pelaw Wood offers a peaceful retreat from the noise, hustle, and bustle of the busy city centre environment just a short walk away. The main entry point from Gilesgate is easy to miss but provides an important route that contrasts with the busy formalised main street. The access from Gilesgate Village is a busy and noisy environment owing to the heavy traffic along the main entry/exit to the city centre, which is often congested and has high pedestrian footfall.

The noise quickly passes heading south into the modern housing estate of St Giles Close where the route changes to an informal green lane with St Giles graveyard on the east side and the rest of the lane enclosed by dense woodland and vegetation. The route continues steeply down to Silver Link Bridge over the steep sided gully, that is followed by informal dirt tracks that snake over the hilly topography, some routes with steps.

The woods are used by walkers, dog-walkers, and cyclists but generally, activity levels are low, and other users are infrequently seen, giving a strong positive feeling of remoteness and natural isolation.

There is a mixture of open exposed areas with views out, sheltered spots, and areas of dense woodland providing changing natural experiences. The steep terrain in places does however limit access for all.

On the outer side of the woods there is a new footpath, created following a substantial landslip between the river and college, where it spans the open ridge line. Emerging through the dense woodland this path provides surprise due to the distinct sudden openness and splendid view across the river and Elvet area to Durham Castle and Cathedral.

There is lighting beyond the entrance points, and very limited street furniture, which is appropriate to the character of the area. There are some sections of timber fencing, bespoke railings and a seat providing a stopping point on an open hill spot to provide enjoyment of Cathedral views that contributes positively. Emerging out at the riverside, this can be a busier place with some noise from sporting and leisure activities.

A key part of its character is its quiet natural ambiance and feeling of isolation, however there are some issues that detract from this experience. This includes vandalism, the increasing use of the paths by motorbikes and quadbikes. They can disturb the peace and tranquility of the woods, conflicts with walkers, and cause physical damage to paths.

Careful tree management is needed where the self-seeded canopy now obscures notable views. Ash die-back has affected the woods, and old trees have fallen or been felled. While fallen trees can provide very useful habitats for the wild life, too much can prevent access.



Fig 38 above. Steps down a steep gradient and contrasting open meadow set amongst the dense woodland.

Fig 39 below. A selection of images showing different paths and routes through the woods. The track south past the large modern apartment block dropping steeply to the bridge, the newly create open pathway on the upper hill side, and typical tracks and steps enclosed the abundance of greenery.



3.3.5 Visual Experiences

Pelaw Woods is a naturally self-contained area, comprising dense mature woodland over the steeply rising landform of the river valley. In the main this restricts outwards views but for new and unfamiliar visitors, the woodlands offer surprising views of notable quality that add to the woodland experience. For example, there are two notable open hilly vantage points that provide emerging views out across the river to the historic city core with Durham Cathedral seen majestically rising into the skyline and dominating over the townscape.

The key views identified within this character area are:

View 1 – View west from approximately mid-point within the woods at the seating area.

View 2 – View west from the new upper ridge footpath between the river and college.

View 3 – Sequential west views along the riverside frontage.

Locations and details of these views are provided on the following pages.

Fig 40 below. The fine “hidden” view of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site in its landscape setting seen approaching the northern edge of the woods through Sherburn Road housing estate.



Key Views
Location



Image



Description

View westwards from the footpath along the upper ridge at approximately mid-point within the woods.

The gap in the tree cover provides a spectacular revealing view of Durham Cathedral with a viewing seat encouraging people to stop and appreciate it. One of the "hidden" gem city views.



A similar view to location No 1 but the Cathedral is seen from a lower ridge on the hillside that draws the river and racecourse into the view. The experience is heightened due to the dense greenery provide enclosure with no views out approaching the hillside footpath.

Key Views
Location



Image



Description

View west from the riverside footpath along the south boundary of the woods.

A spectacular well-known and visited view of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site in its riverside context, the Cathedral seen towering over the domestically scaled buildings of Old Elvet.

DRAFT

Key nighttime View
Location 1



3.3.6 Appraisal summary – condition, negatives, issues, threats, and problems that affect the character and appearance of the area.

Built form

- There are no buildings within this character area.

Urban Spaces

- There are no hardscaped urban spaces within this character area.
- The informal surfacing of the footways/tracks within the woods are appropriate to the area's character, but condition is variable.
- Some places are very steep with steps that have no handrails and there is no disabled access due to the geography.

Green Spaces

- The area has an unmanaged wilderness quality that is fundamental to its character.
- The overgrown tree canopy filters/reduces the quality of views of the Durham Castle and Cathedral in the summer months.

- Slow degradation of Old Durham Meadow with a need to sensitively restore it.
- Litter and rubbish in the woods and ravine with prevention and clearing a consistent issue.

Street furniture

- Very limited items of street furniture.
- The lack of lighting is appropriate to the area's character and wider landscape contribution to the darker river corridor.

Threats

- Ash "dieback" disease, further erosion of the riverbanks and climate change, potentially affecting distribution and type of woodland species present.
- Resources and pressure issues for management and replanting of the woodland by "Friends of Pelaw Wood" group and the landowner DCC.
- Ongoing accessibility difficulties but these are likely impossible to resolve.
- Speeding motor bikes and quad bikes are known to frequent the area that pose a risk to people and the environment.

- Negative effects from vandalism that can include destructive fires.
- The reliance on the volunteers from "The Friends of Pelaw Woods" with a reduction and loss of volunteers making maintenance works vulnerable.

4. Condition of place and analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats



4.1 Condition of Place

The methodology was originally produced as part of the review of the former Durham City Conservation Area which informed the production of the character appraisals in 2016. It used a survey form that follows Historic England best practice guidance and adapted from the Oxford Toolkit. The condition survey aimed to record and rank the condition of each street at the time of the survey with the scoring criteria based on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk methodology for conservation areas. The categories for scoring are:

- **Optimal** – the condition of the area is in very good condition and retains the vast majority of historic fabric and architectural detailing. Public realm is in good condition and there are no major issues identified in any of the categories.
- **Fair** - the condition of the area is good, but there have been the loss of some historic features of architectural detailing such as changes to windows and doors. Public realm may require improvement or repair, but the overall area is clearly forms a positive contribution.

- **Poor** – the condition of the area is clearly deteriorated. There may be fewer remnants of historic fabric or architectural detailing that remain. Public realm may be very poor and require significant improvement.
- **Very bad** – the condition of the area is so deteriorated that it is not possible to discern its contribution to historic or architectural interest of the conservation area. There may be few to no historic buildings remaining or the substantial loss of historic fabric or architectural detailing. The public realm may be substandard and potentially pose a risk to users.

The tabulated summary shows the condition scoring.

Street Name	Overall Street Score
BENT HOUSE FARM	Optimal
OLD DURHAM FARM	Optimal
OLD DURHAM (other buildings)	Optimal
OLD DURHAM GARDENS	Fair
PELAW WOODS	Fair



4.2 S.W.O.T analysis

Strengths

- Isolated location, idyllic, with its own sense of place.
- Integral to the setting of Durham WHS and the other city conservation areas.
- High historic interest, evidential value, architectural and aesthetic value, and archaeological potential.
- Largely undeveloped since detailed recording in the mid-19th century.
- Historic buildings of agricultural character with high level of intactness.
- Unique historic gardens accessible to the public as historically intended.
- Provides a series of significant views of Durham World Heritage Site.
- Unique position, topography, and high scenic rural landscape quality.
- Area of high wildlife, leisure, recreational community, and social value.
- Status; listed buildings, park and garden of special interest, area of high landscape value, green belt, tree preservation order, local nature reserve, non-designated heritage assets.
- The Durham County Council – Friends of Old Durham Gardens management agreement.
- The Friends of Pelaw Woods.

Weaknesses

- Deterioration of historic fabric mainly sections of garden walls.
- Some limited but noticeable loss of traditional materials for inferior modern alternatives.
- Accessibility issues in part due to steepness of terrain, with some paths deteriorated.
- Loss of direct pedestrian connection from Maiden Castle.
- Limited interpretation to the gardens.
- Area is poorly signposted off-site.
- Negative effects from anti-social behaviour.
- Litter problems in the woods and ravine.

Opportunities

- Sympathetic restoration and repair works to the deteriorated sections of garden walls.
- Accessibility improvements to the gardens.
- Path renewal works.
- Cycle of active tree management to improve views, subject to applicable planning consents.
- Wayfinding improvements commensurate with rural location and character.
- Growing the existing partnership working at the Gardens and Woods, to deliver greater benefits including works discussions, consultations, funding options and increased frequency of events etc.
- Providing improved site interpretation potentially portable, to reduce the visual impact or through new technologies.
- Encourage and pursue a wider range of volunteers, and more support, to help actively manage and promote the gardens and woods through the friends’ groups.
- Explore ways to address vandalism and anti-social behaviour issues.

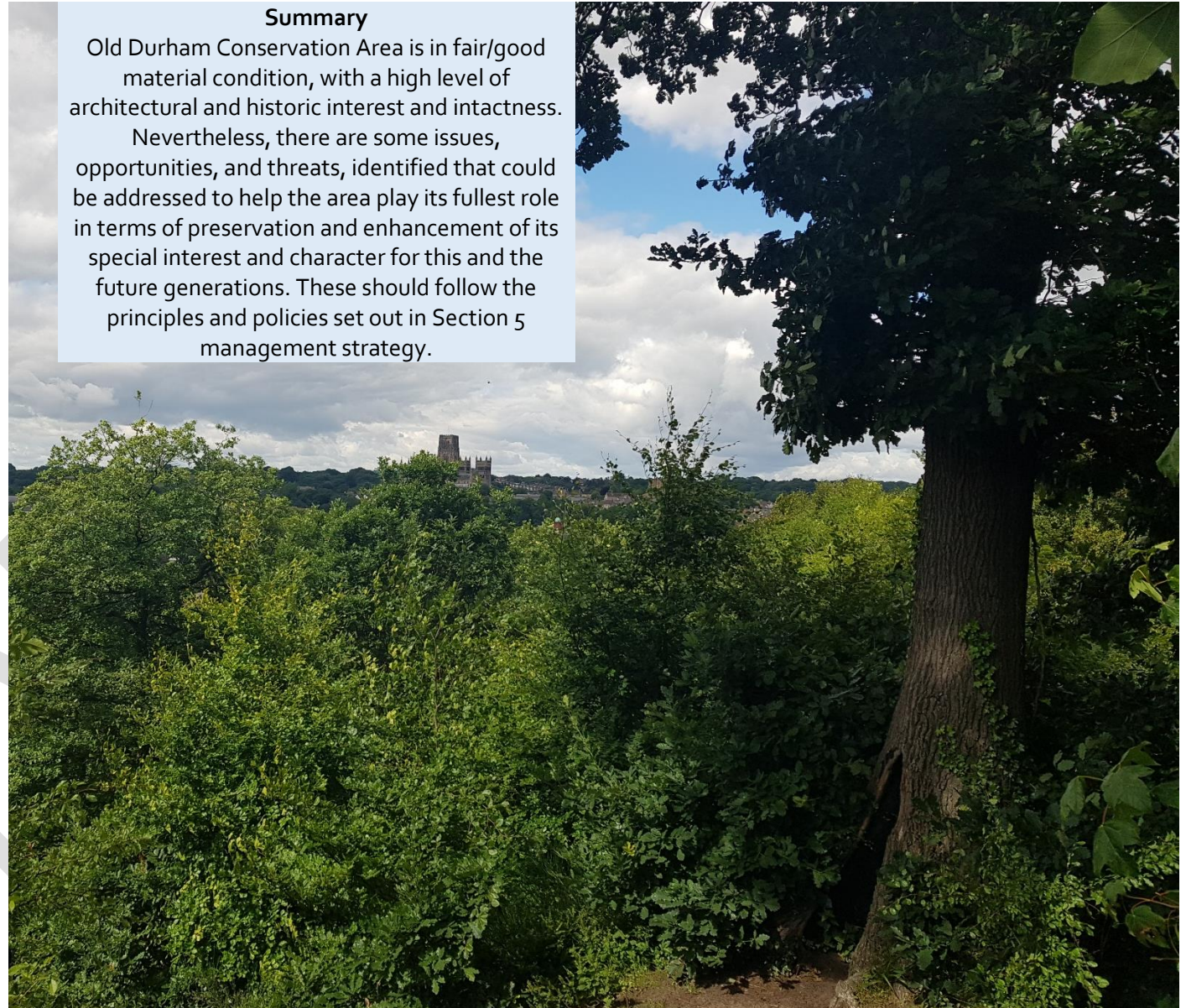
Threats

- Continued deterioration of garden walls.
- Potential for insensitive incremental changes and unsympathetic alterations to unlisted historic buildings.
- Potential for unmanaged tree cover to reduce views and the connection between the area and the historic core of the city by way of Castle and Cathedral views, if not actively managed regularly.
- Removal of the hedges damaging the green and verdant entrances and character of different routes
- Continued deterioration of footpaths.
- Ongoing threats from vandalism given seclusion of the area and past issues.
- Local Authority disposing of the gardens site ending the management agreement with the friends group.
- Reduction or abandonment of regular maintenance works
- Reduction in volunteer numbers.

Summary

Old Durham Conservation Area is in fair/good material condition, with a high level of architectural and historic interest and intactness.

Nevertheless, there are some issues, opportunities, and threats, identified that could be addressed to help the area play its fullest role in terms of preservation and enhancement of its special interest and character for this and the future generations. These should follow the principles and policies set out in Section 5 management strategy.



5. Management strategy



5.1 Introduction

Durham County Council has a framework of local planning policies in place to ensure that new development and change in the conservation areas, or within their settings, and that of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site, preserves or enhances where possible their special architectural and historic interest, character, and appearance.

The adopted County Durham Plan and City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan contain specific heritage policies to achieve the above. These 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), and specifically the aims and actions within the management strategy document, supports the national and local planning policy framework. It does so by providing specific guidance to positive management of the conservation areas and in succession Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site moving forwards.

The CAMP is designed to ensure that proposals for new development and change follow an “*informed conservation*” approach that is based on an understanding of the special interest, character and distinctiveness of the place and its wider context, to help inform appropriate design decisions.

Durham City CAMP is divided into the following 3 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 7 new Durham City Conservation Areas.

Part 2 are the 7 individual conservation area character appraisals. These identify 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. This presents a series of overarching management recommendations, aims and actions focused upon the 9 key themes identified in the strategic context document.

The management strategy has been drawn-up in response to the issues, problems, threats, and potential opportunities identified during the review of the former Durham City Conservation, to address the key challenges identified, and through review of cross-corporate and wider

stakeholder strategies and plans, both in place and emerging. Further, the views of interested parties and the general public have been sought through a detailed public consultation exercise. Full details of the consultation process, and the feedback received, can be found in the Strategic Overview document.

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 Durham City conservation areas, aligned with the national and local planning policy framework and relevant supplementary planning documents (SPD’s).

Old Durham Conservation Area is however a unique and distinctive place with the restored 17th century pleasure gardens at its historic heart. This is owned by DCC and jointly managed with the Friends of Old Durham Gardens community group. While the CAMP Management Strategy seeks to address the overarching issues found across the seven Durham City Conservation Areas, Old Durham Gardens presents a different management challenge with site-specific issues. Therefore, individual management aims and actions for Old Durham Garden are required to reflect this.

5.2 Management aims and actions

Management Aim 1

Seek to ensure that the special historic and architectural interest, character and appearance of Old Durham Gardens is conserved through effective conservation-led management and that opportunities to enhance are maximised.

Action 1.1

Continue to work in collaboration with relevant DCC departments and the trustees of the "Friend of Old Durham Gardens" strengthening the existing relationship. This is to ensure there is a proactive approach to the garden's conservation while maximising opportunities for enhancement.

Old Durham Gardens were purchased by the former City of Durham Council in 1985 along with adjoining woodland and riverside meadow. The initial stimulus for this acquisition had been the derelict condition of the listed gazebo, which stood within abandoned walled gardens, to enable the threatened historic site to be repaired and restored for public amenity. What followed was a phased programme of comprehensive restoration based upon sympathetic repair and rebuilding, archival evidence, and the finding of archaeological excavations. This also presented a rare opportunity for Old Durham Gardens to complement the range of historic parks and gardens in and around the city for public amenity.

The authentic restoration was completed by 1999 as planned.

The ownership of Old Durham Gardens was transferred to the new unitary local planning authority DCC in 2009, with the Friends of Old Durham Gardens established the following year to work with DCC to bring the garden back to their original restored condition and to secure a programme of routine maintenance works, while exploring ways to enhance the gardens and their public enjoyment.

Since the DCC-Friends partnership was established, there have been many successes but there is much more work to do to conserve the significance of the gardens going forwards and to maximise opportunities for enhancement. This is so the gardens can continue to be enjoyed by the general public for this and future generations. Developing and deepening the DCC-Friends relationship is important to achieve the above. It is also vitally important when seeking external funding and grant aid.

Action 1.2

All future works at Old Durham Gardens to comply with the principles, objectives and restoration philosophy as set out in the detailed Old Durham Gardens Conservation Management Plan once agreed and in place.

The Friends of Old Durham Gardens have prepared a detailed Conservation Management Plan for Old Durham Gardens (ODGMP). Once reviewed and agreed this will form a key document setting out the fundamental principles in relation to the long term future conservation, development, and enhancement of the gardens.

The management of historic landscapes can be very challenging and requires careful decision making based on an understanding of significance. There needs to be a co-ordinated approach with clear and specific goals, based on the best information available and involving those who own, use, or have an invested interest in the site in making decisions on its future.

The ODGMP working in collaboration with the Durham City CAMP will help achieve the above, forming a significant tool in driving the entire approach to the site. The two plans identify what currently exists, set out the site's significance, and explain what is detracting, damaging, or threatening the sites significance.

The plans set out a vision for the future of the site and provide detailed management policies that will conserve and enhance the significance of the site and form a foundation for its future management, while at the same time ensuring that change follows relevant national and local planning policies. They can also form a key part supporting any funding application.

Action 1.3

Through collaborative working seek to explore opportunities and funding sources to enable a full consolidation, repair, and restoration strategy for the garden walls.

The most pressing issue identified relates to the condition of the north garden wall that exhibits a significant lean, upper stone courses and coping stones have been lost leaving an unconsolidated and unlevel wall head. Some areas of masonry are significantly eroded and the masonry in general features open joints, inappropriate cementitious pointing, there is some visible mortar smearing over the faces of the stones, and organic growth all contributing to the rate of decay. The wall potentially requires partial rebuilding, consolidation following vegetation removal, stone restoration works and re pointing.

It is important that the condition of the other garden walls and gazebo is regularly monitored with detailed schedules of works prepared by relevant conservation specialists as necessary, that could be fed into an annual repair programme.

Action 1.4

Through collaborative working seek to establish an annual grounds maintenance and planting regime in keeping with the philosophy of the whole gardens’ restoration.

The ongoing general maintenance of the gardens is critical to its conservation, aesthetic quality, and attractiveness for visitors. Such general maintenance operation can include maintaining beds weed free, pruning works, new and replacement planting where necessary, grass cutting and strimming, hedge cutting, litter clearing, and the continued development of the historic planting schemes. It is of the utmost importance that the garden spaces and those in its immediate surrounds are appropriately treated and cared for with opportunities taken to further enhance its character and use.

Action 1.5

Through collaborative working establish a seasonal tree management regime and maximise opportunities to improve important views.

Trees are a fundamental element of Old Durham and the setting of the gardens that contribute greatly to its special character and appearance. However, they do cause issues in terms of reducing the Cathedral view from within and approaching the gardens and can damage the garden walls where they exist in close proximity. An annual inspection system should be set up to ensure appropriate tree management that could include works such as crown lifting and/or reduction to clear pathways, sustaining and improving views, and any necessary tree removal works to preserve built heritage

Action 1.6

Working in collaboration to explore opportunities and funding sources to improve wayfinding, interpretation, and promotion of the heritage asset to better reveal its significance so that a wider audience can enjoy it.

The gardens lack meaningful signage in terms of both wayfinding and interpretation that is vital to deepening people's understanding and positive experience of historic places. The garden's isolated location has a secret charm but is poorly sign posted any new provision must be designed to the lowest number to achieve maximum benefit and be of a quality commensurate with the rural location and approaches. There should be a co-ordinated design approach to both wayfinding signage and interpretation based upon an understanding of the character of the place, and opportunities taken for the development of a co-ordinated project matching available resources.

Old Durham was a venue for community events as far back as the 18th century and this use should be encouraged today with open days, guided walks, talks, and events involving different groups and societies to better reveal significance. But this would need to be balanced against volunteer time and promoted through DCC.

Action 1.7

Working in collaboration to explore opportunities and funding sources to improve accessibility where possible.


The original restoration scheme included the widening of the access into the upper walled garden, which can be reached across level grass ground from the car park and main footway, providing an accessible route, while the lower garden is accessible to the general public at all times. However, access could be problematic for certain people due to the steep banks between the lower and upper gardens, the uneven grassed surfaces and ditch at the west entrance point to the lower garden.

Added to this the long terrace in front of the west wall is not fully accessible owing to the difference in levels between the path accessed through the stone doorway access that steps down onto the lower bank side. Exploring way of improving accessibility without compromising the special interest and character of the gardens will make the heritage asset more inclusive and help to ensure it can be enjoyed by the widest possible number of visitors.

6. Appendix A – NDHAs

Map ID	Photograph	Asset Detail	Description
1		<p>Address: Bent House Farm</p> <p>Asset Type: Buildings, layout, and green space</p>	<p>A collection of converted farm buildings shown on 1st edition OS map c.1856-65, but part of the estate that can be traced back to 1771. The detached farmhouse is a later Victorian addition. The site has a well preserved historic courtyard layout, with the setting of the buildings enhanced by the semi-parkland landscape and tree lined driveway.</p>
2		<p>Address: Old Durham Farm</p> <p>Asset Type: Buildings, layout, and green space</p>	<p>A group of converted farm buildings shown on 1st edition OS map c.1856-65, but part of the estate that can be traced back to 1771. An important courtyard group comprising farmhouse, dairy, and byre, with a later 19th century group of outbuildings on the east side. The farmhouse is altered but its historic form is legible and its character strong, the outbuildings and dairy are intact.</p>

Map ID	Photograph	Asset Detail	Description
3		<p>Address: Remains of railway line</p> <p>Asset Type: Structures</p>	<p>The surviving remnants of Durham Elvet railway line with brick arches over the beck, and the line legible in the landscape. The line opened in the 1830s but connected to Elvet in 1893 as a branch off from Sherburn House, the assets have group value with other surviving remnants of the line in Elvet.</p>
4		<p>Address: Pineapple House</p> <p>Asset Type: Buildings</p>	<p>The former garden house and public house directly associated with Old Durham Gardens. Incorporates the original garden house of the 18th century, that was established as a pub by 1827 to serve the gardens that lost its licence between the wars. Has historic and group value with Old Durham Gardens.</p>

Map ID	Photograph	Asset Detail	Description
5		<p>Address: "Silver Link" bridge, Pelaw Woods</p> <p>Asset Type: Structure</p>	<p>The only built feature in the woods that opened on the 12 April 1938 by the Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Company. It spans the deep gully through the woods and is a 190-200 foot steel footbridge modelled on one of the engineers' other commissions, the Victoria Falls Bridge in Zimbabwe, and there are also notable for Wembley Arch. It is possibly associated with former industrial uses around the site.</p>

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