

# Stanley Strategic Place Plan Engagement Findings

We have gathered your feedback from events, the survey, from schools and community groups and local organisations and employers and cross reference it with data and information we have about the town. We will then develop a draft vision for the town to share with you in the next phase.

## What you told us

We engaged with 1,172 people across a range of demographics:

- 296 survey responses representing residents of Stanley, wider County Durham, visitors and businesses
- 473 people during 6 drop-in or on-street engagement
- 432 young people engaged. 394 who responded to the Durham Youth Council engagement and 38 during our on-street drop-in sessions.
- 9 key stakeholders engaged during 6 interviews or mini-focus groups

The key findings are based on themed areas of heritage and regeneration, transport, safety and security, housing, education, skills and opportunities, community spirit, and health and wellbeing. These summarise what you told us about the town.

## Heritage and regeneration

### Strengths

- Stanley's mining heritage and identity remain a source of local pride, with many residents strongly valuing the historic character of the town.
- Strong nostalgia for "old Stanley" and the historic high street. There is a shared cultural memory that fosters place-based identity.

### Challenges

- Derelict and boarded-up buildings on Front Street contribute to perceptions of decline and neglect.
- Vacant units and poorly maintained properties create an unattractive town centre and discourage visitors.

### Opportunities

- Heritage-led regeneration and cultural storytelling (mining history, Brass Festival, community archives) could be used to rebrand and revitalise the town.
- Empty retail units could be repurposed as community spaces, social enterprises, cultural spaces, or flexible multi-use venues.

## Transport

### Strengths

- Good road connectivity to nearby hubs (e.g., Chester-le-Street, Consett, Durham, and Newcastle upon Tyne) supports commuting and access.

- Free short-stay parking on Front Street is valued by visitors and residents.

## Challenges

- Bus services are infrequent, unreliable, and do not reach peripheral villages effectively, especially during evenings and weekends.
- Footpaths and pavements are perceived as uneven or poorly maintained in places, presenting issues for older people and limited mobility.
- Lack of safe cycling routes limits active travel.

## Opportunities

- Improved bus coordination, routes, and scheduling could help reconnect Stanley with surrounding settlements.
- Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure would support local movement and accessibility.

## Safety and security

### Strengths

- Residents highlight strong personal networks and that “everyone knows each other,” which contributes to a feeling of safety in neighbourhoods.

### Challenges

- Persistent anti-social behaviour, often including groups of young people, vandalism, drug-related activity, and intimidation on Front Street, especially after dark.
- Lack of visible policing and enforcement reduces public confidence in safety.
- Poor lighting in certain areas leads to avoidance of some routes at night.

### Opportunities

- More youth-focused activities, places to go in the evening, and supported programmes could prevent anti-social behaviour.
- Increased visibility of neighbourhood wardens or police presence could deter problematic behaviour.

## Housing

### Strengths

- Housing remains relatively affordable for families and first-time buyers.
- Residential areas benefit from proximity to parks, fields, and the surrounding countryside.

### Challenges

- Poor-quality private rentals and absentee landlords contribute to neglected streets and inconsistent upkeep.
- Long-term vacant properties and abandoned units reduce neighbourhood attractiveness.
- Concerns about unmanaged HMOs and transient occupancy patterns impacting stability and safety.

## Opportunities

- Bringing vacant properties back into use, including above-shop units on Front Street, could help meet housing needs and increase the town-centre population.
- Improving housing standards and holding landlords accountable could strengthen community stability and quality of life.

## Education, skills and work opportunities

### Strengths

- Positive school community and experiences of pastoral support and inclusion.
- Existing local facilities (e.g. schools, library, Karbon Homes Skills Hub) offer a foundation for delivering skills programmes.

### Challenges

- Lack of high-quality local jobs leads many residents to commute elsewhere or remain underemployed.
- Limited opportunities for young people to gain vocational or technical experience locally.
- Childcare and transport barriers limit access to employment and training.

### Opportunities

- Strong demand for apprenticeships, technical training, and workplace-linked learning opportunities.
- Utilising empty units to provide space for business incubation, micro-enterprise support, and social enterprise development.

## Community spirit

### Strengths

- Stanley is seen as friendly, supportive, and “down-to-earth,” with residents who help one another.
- Community-led projects, local charities, and grassroots organisers contribute strongly to social cohesion.
- Residents express strong emotional attachment to Stanley and hope for its improvement.

### Challenges

- Many feel the sense of community has been eroded by anti-social behaviour, dereliction, and economic decline.
- Social media negativity and pessimism reduce community cohesion.

### Opportunities

- More community spaces and activities and local initiatives could help foster inter-generational interaction and improve cohesion.
- Better communication and awareness-raising of local groups, events, and activities would support citizen involvement.

## Health and wellbeing

### Strengths

- Access to green spaces, fields, and walking routes supports physical and mental health.
- Voluntary social-support initiatives and informal networks provide peer-based support.
- The Louisa Centre had a lot of positive feedback and is seen as a real asset to Stanley.

### Challenges

- Limited access to healthcare services locally, so residents feel they must travel for many treatments and appointments.
- Cost and affordability are barriers to leisure and wellbeing activities.
- Lack of mental health, addiction, and social isolation support services.

### Opportunities

- Community-based physical and mental health programmes, that are low-cost or free.
- Awareness and offline promotion of existing groups and services could be improved.