

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.

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 regard 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. The Old Durham Conservation Area is located 1 mile from the Durham Peninsula across the eastern side of the River Wear where it loops around The Racecourse and Maiden Castle southwards down towards Shincliffe Village.

The conservation area boundary in the north skirts around the edge of the housing at Sherburn Road, the playing fields associated with Laurel Avenue Primary School and follows the perimeter of the grounds of the College of St Hild and St Bede down to the riverside. It then 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 field lines around Old Durham Farm and the south side of Bent House Lane up to, and around the triangular Bent House Farm site.

Old Durham is unique in the city centre owing to its distinctive, idyllic, rural character comprising of 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 the different landowners.

The built form is low density that sits within scenic open farmland visually contained by surrounding dense woodlands on steeper slopes. The west side of the conservation area comprises of Pelaw Woods, on a steep valley cliff that includes a larger 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 below. 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

An important part of the appraisal process is to provide an understanding as to how the boundary to the conservation area 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:

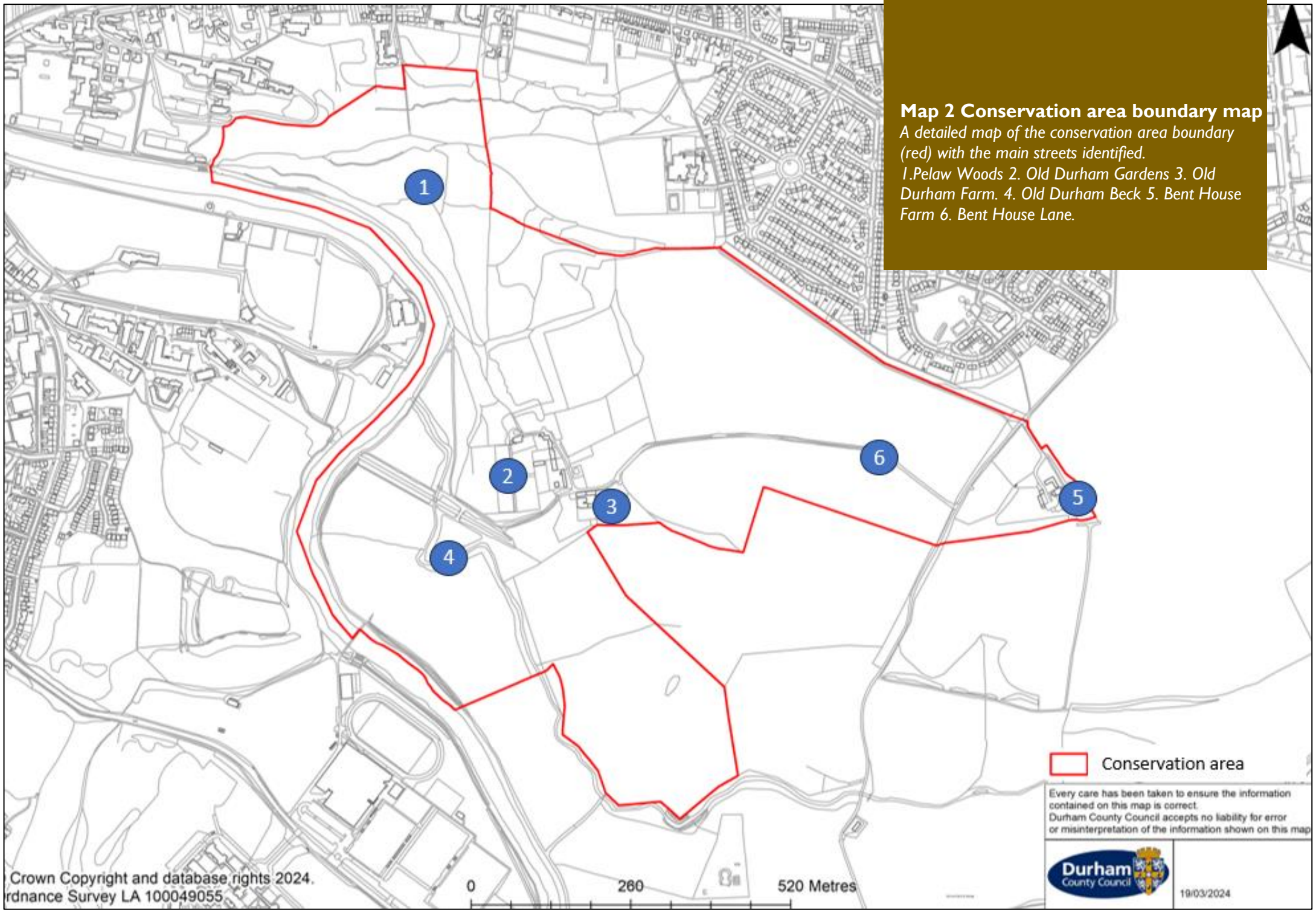
- A separate conservation area for Old Durham is appropriate and meaningful given the uniqueness and distinctiveness of this area compared to the rest of the urban dominated city centre.
- The boundary is generally informed by the Old Durham historic estate and the sub-character area identified within the 2016 appraisal. However, it includes an extension eastward to capture the start of the significant 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 Gilesgate.

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 left and above. Old Durham Gardens is the historic focus of the conservation area that were developed in the 17th century associated with the lost manor house.



Map 2 Conservation area boundary map

A detailed map of the conservation area boundary (red) with the main streets identified.
1. Pelaw Woods 2. Old Durham Gardens 3. Old Durham Farm 4. Old Durham Beck 5. Bent House Farm 6. Bent House Lane.

 Conservation area

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19/03/2024



**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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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.



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, and 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 the tythe barn, 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 as a whole 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 WHS.
- The high value of the topography in terms of the significant 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.



Green and blue infrastructure assets

- The highly significant green infrastructure assets of Pelaw Woods and Old Durham Gardens, the importance of gardens 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, 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 groups of 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 spectacular emerging view 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.



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.



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 that 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 measures 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 main urban core, 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 and 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.

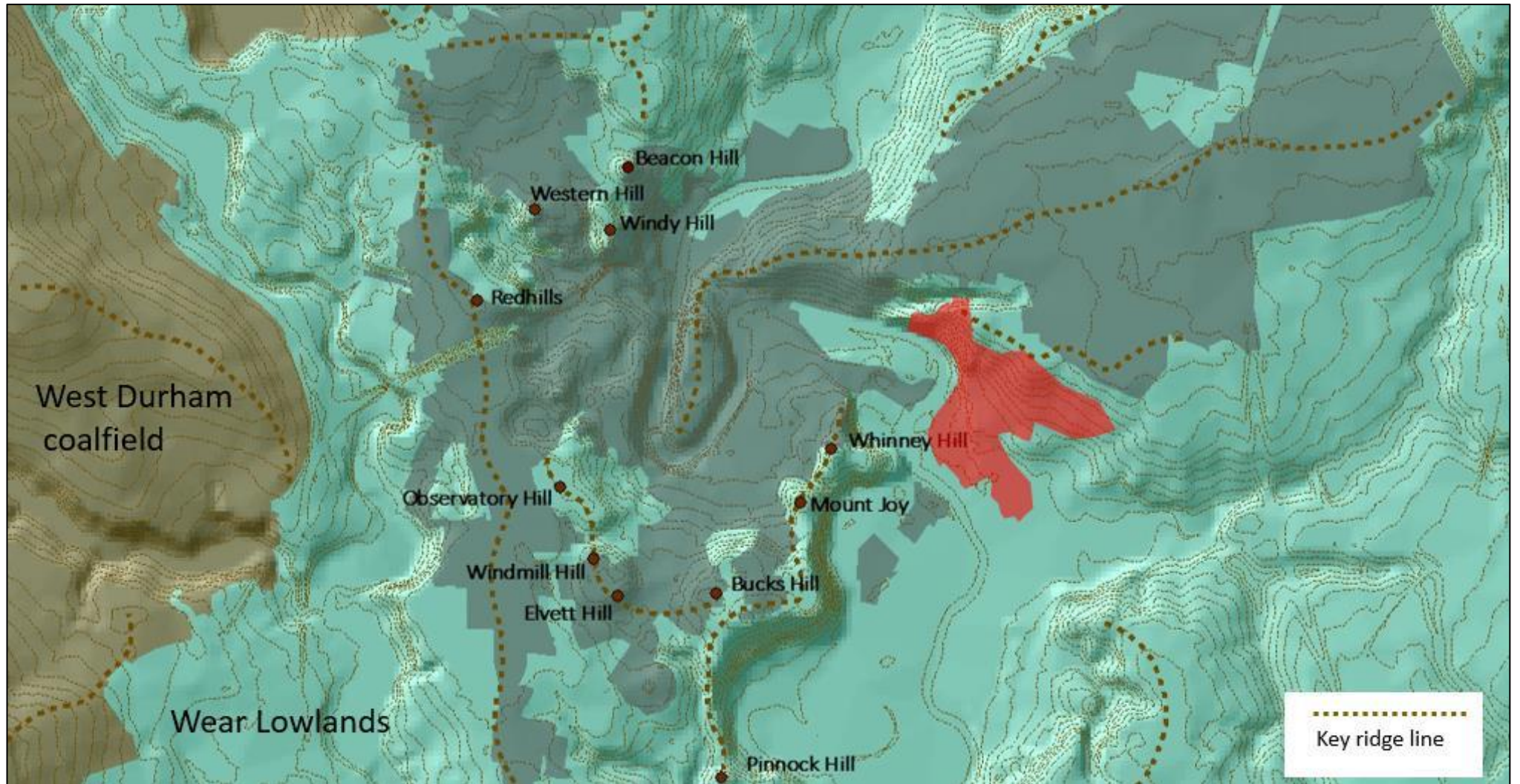
In the north the setting changes to a contrasting dense urban character along the high ridge line of Gilesgate and Sherburn Road Front Street, while in the west the natural open riverside setting transitions to the historic city core.

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 5 above. The wide landscape view from Bent House Lane towards Shincliffe Village. Bottom: the River Wear corridor from Baths 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 6 below. A digital terrain map showing the varied topography 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 that informs a major portion of the inner setting of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site (WHS).

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, and the city spanned out beyond the defensive castle walls where development emerged between, along, and at the edges of key routes.

The city has retained the medieval historic street pattern together with its largely c.1900 expansion, with swathes of green space that in places creates 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 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 of the built environment, the framework of the different approaches along the principle historic streets and other historic routes, and the different visual connections and experiences provided 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 with Old Durham playing an inseparable role in such attributes of significance.

The conservation area provides a unique experience and distinctive approaches into the city centre. They are characterised by tranquillity and a mixture of open rural character and inwards dense woodland, before the vibrancy, hustle, and bustle of the historic city core.

Furthermore, there is also archaeological evidence of Roman occupation at Old Durham, connected with finds on the peninsula. 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 intangible links between Old Durham and the wider historic city centre.

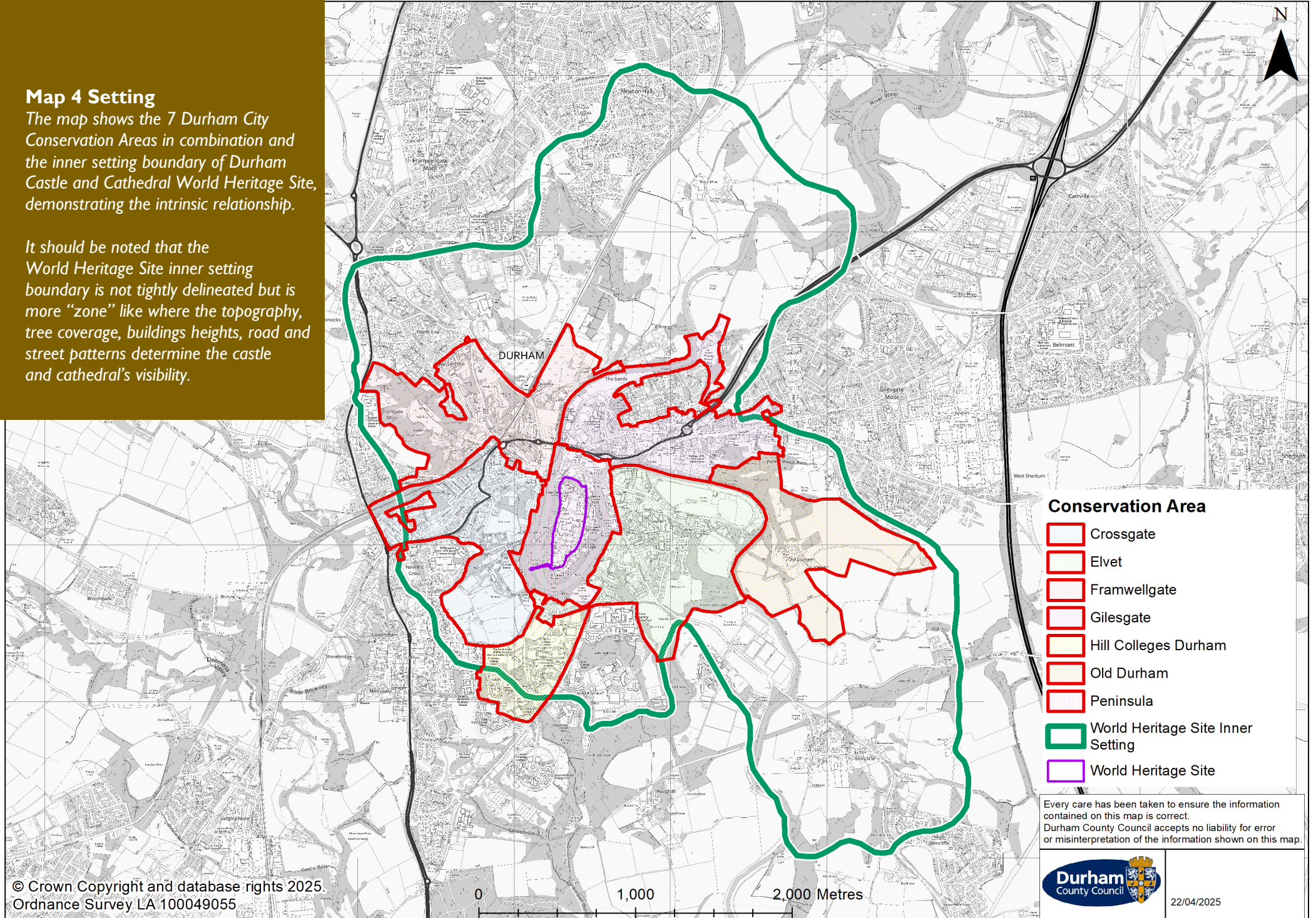
Bent House Lane, Old Durham Farm, and Old Durham Gardens provide splendid sequential views of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site. These are important in capturing and giving an understanding of the relationship between the conservation area and historic city centre. The relatively unspoilt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



Map 4 Setting

The map shows the 7 Durham City Conservation Areas in combination and the inner setting boundary 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.



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, with further archaeological work recording two circular buildings. 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 Keping and Chester-le-Street beyond.

A manor house is known to have existed at Old Durham, 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 Keping 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 Keping.

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, with an inventory made in 1592 giving 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 III inherited the estate and married John Tempest, M.P. for Durham in 1629.

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. 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 his 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, but Old Durham farmhouse probably dates from the 17th century with the farm buildings built in the 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, which 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 Wood 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 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 10 below. A conjectural sketch of the gardens in the mid-18th century © Martin Roberts, used with permission.

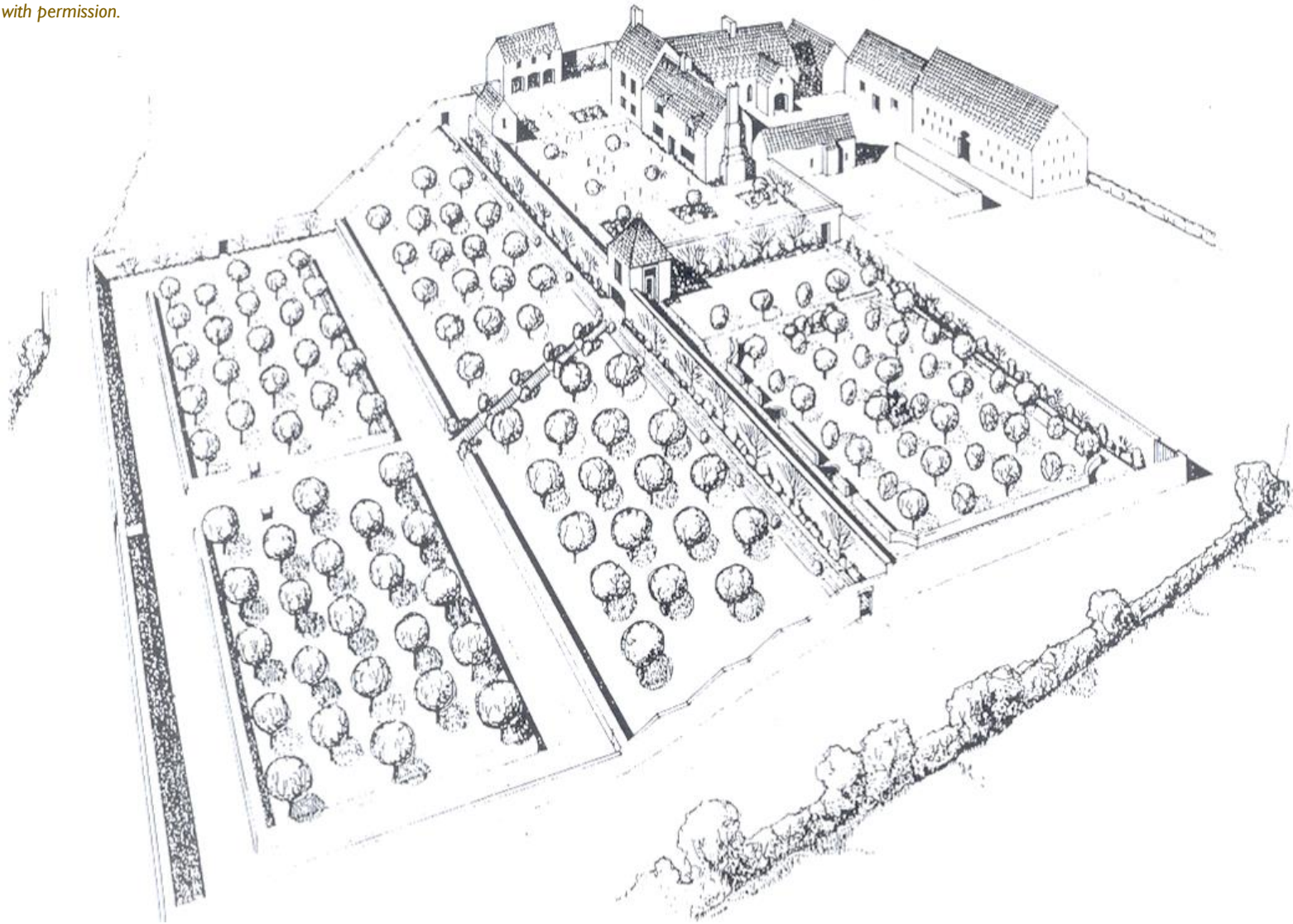
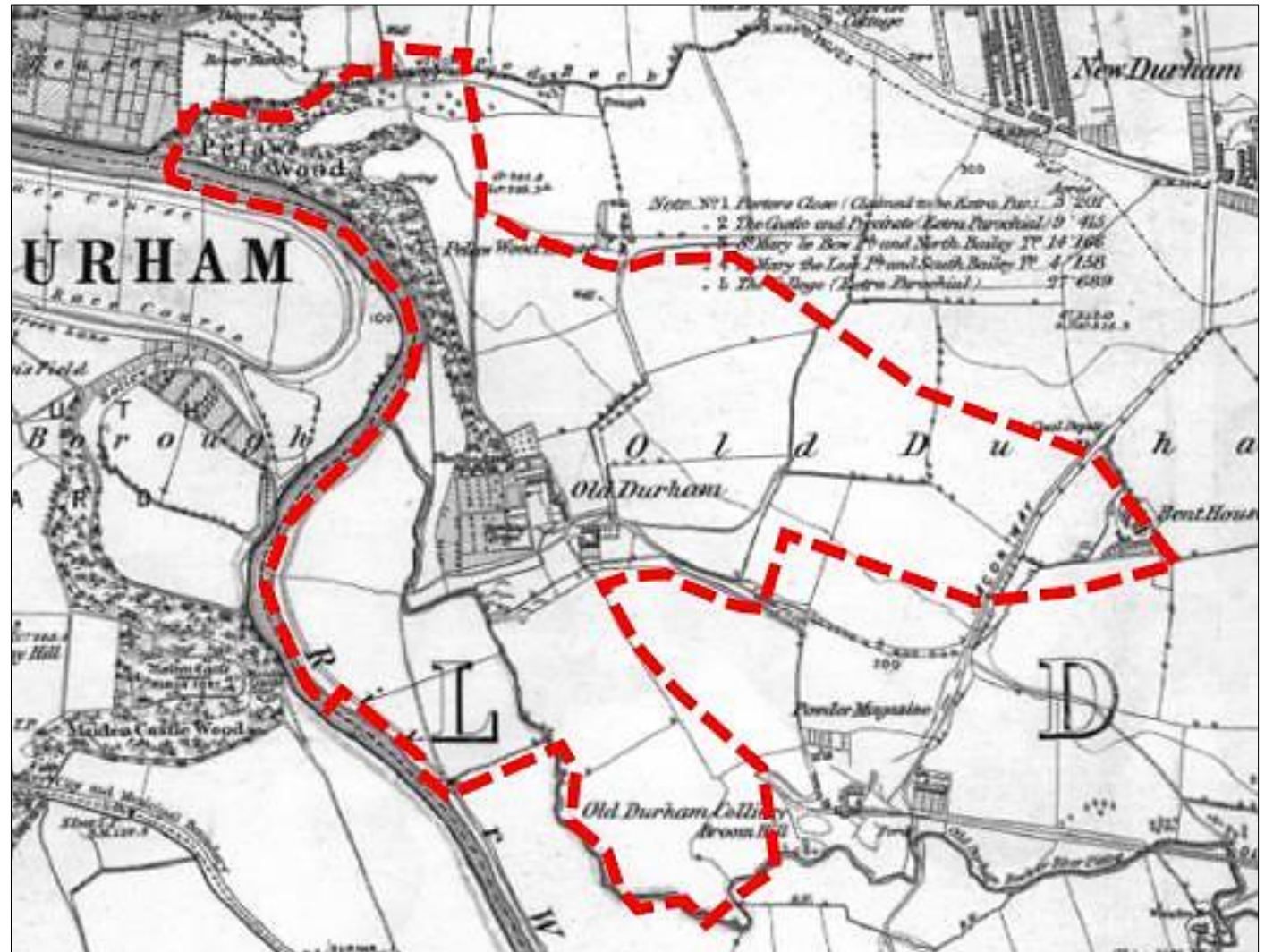
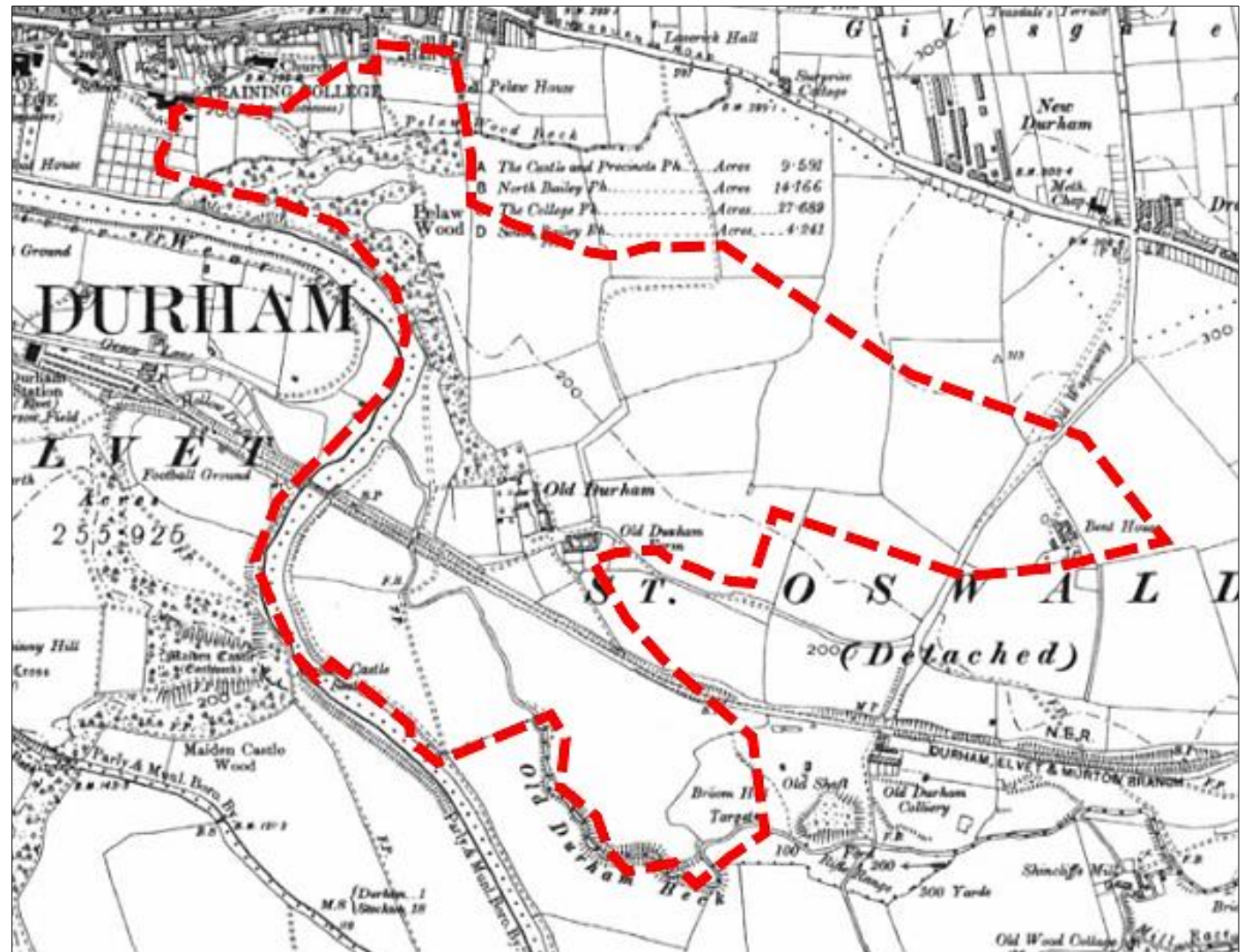


Fig 11 Right. A sequence of historic ordnance survey map extracts.

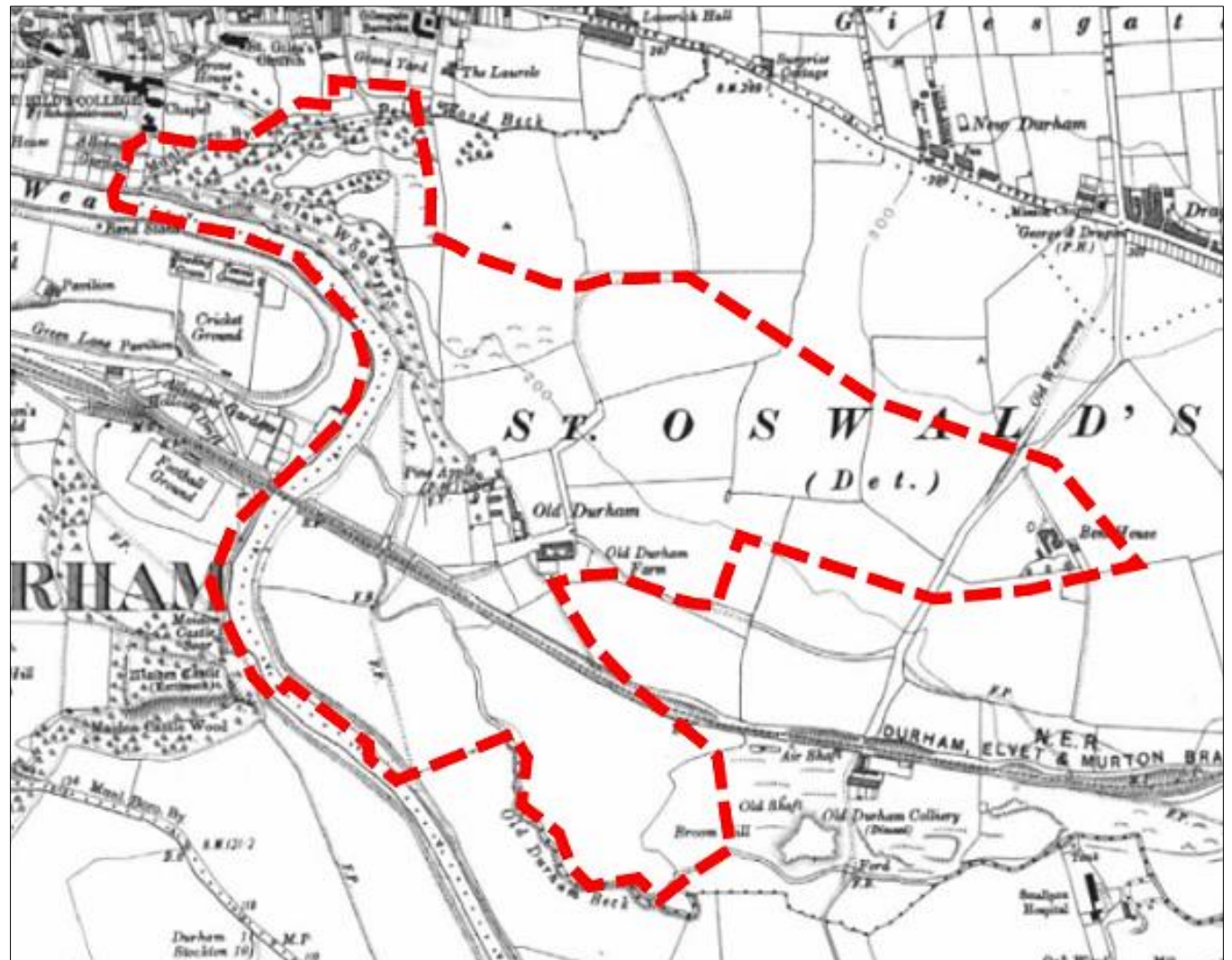
OS map c.1856 the detailed 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of c.1856 shows coal mining activity in the south with the route of Bent House Lane a wagon way leading to Old Durham Colliery with a second wagon way travelling eastwards to Sherburn House Station. Old Durham Colliery is recorded as opening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



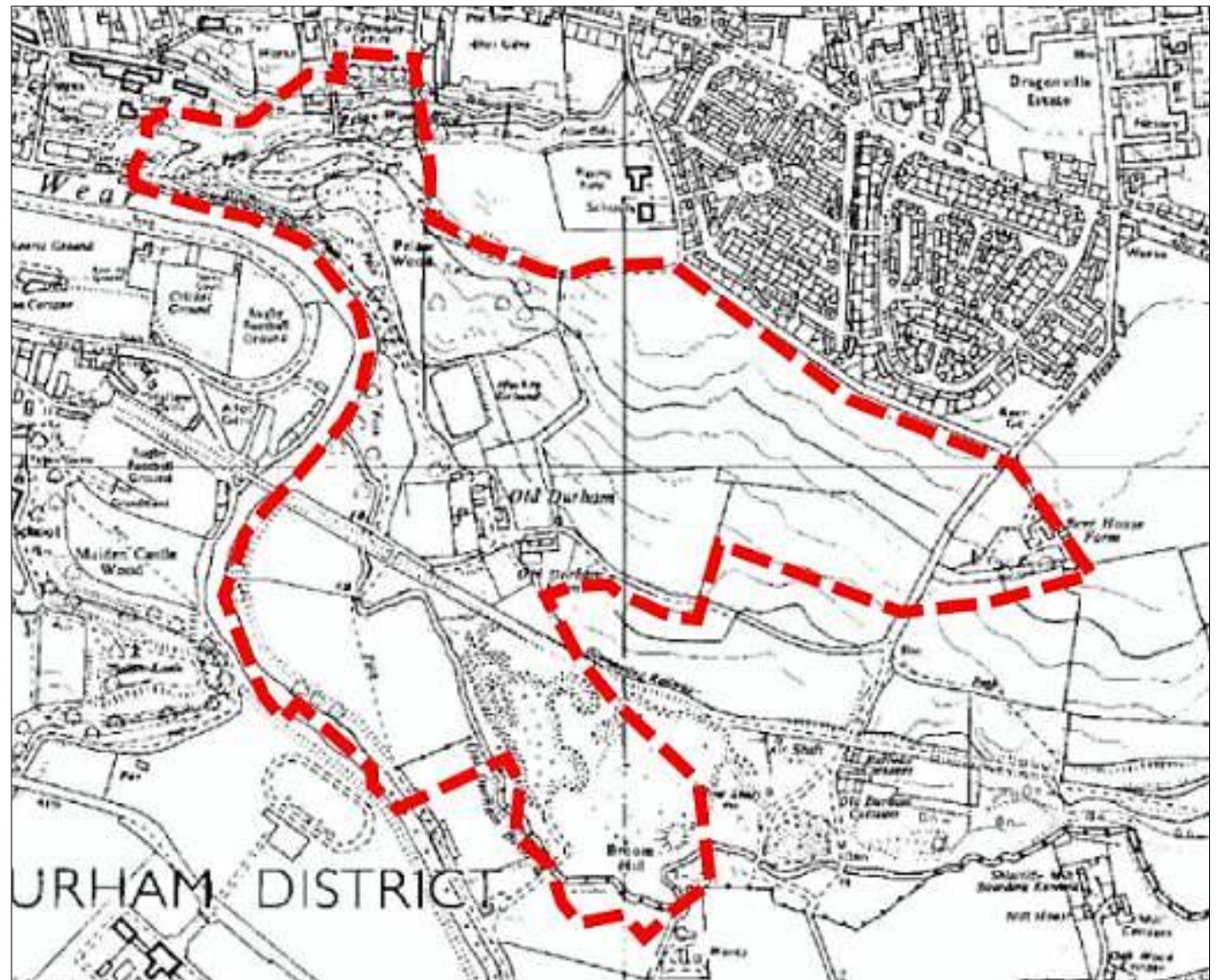
OS map c.1896 the 2nd edition OS map of 1896 records one significant change with Durham Elvet and Murton Branch Railway Line cutting through the southern part of the area. The line connects Elvet Station at the end of Green Lane in the west with Sherburn House Station. Despite industrial development 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 of 1923 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 county lane is named Bent House Lane, and in the 1960s the railway has been dismantled and a hockey ground is shown on the south edge of Pelaw Woods.



OS map c.1970-79- the 1970s edition OS 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.



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 that create its historic identity and distinctiveness making an invaluable positive contribution to the conservation area.



Fig 12 above. The grade II listed Tythe Barn, a sensitively converted former threshing barn dating from the late 17th or early 18th century.

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, or landscapes 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 13 below. The grade II listed Gazebo seen from within the upper walled garden. It dates from the late 17th or early 18th century and was fully restored in the 1990s.



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/>

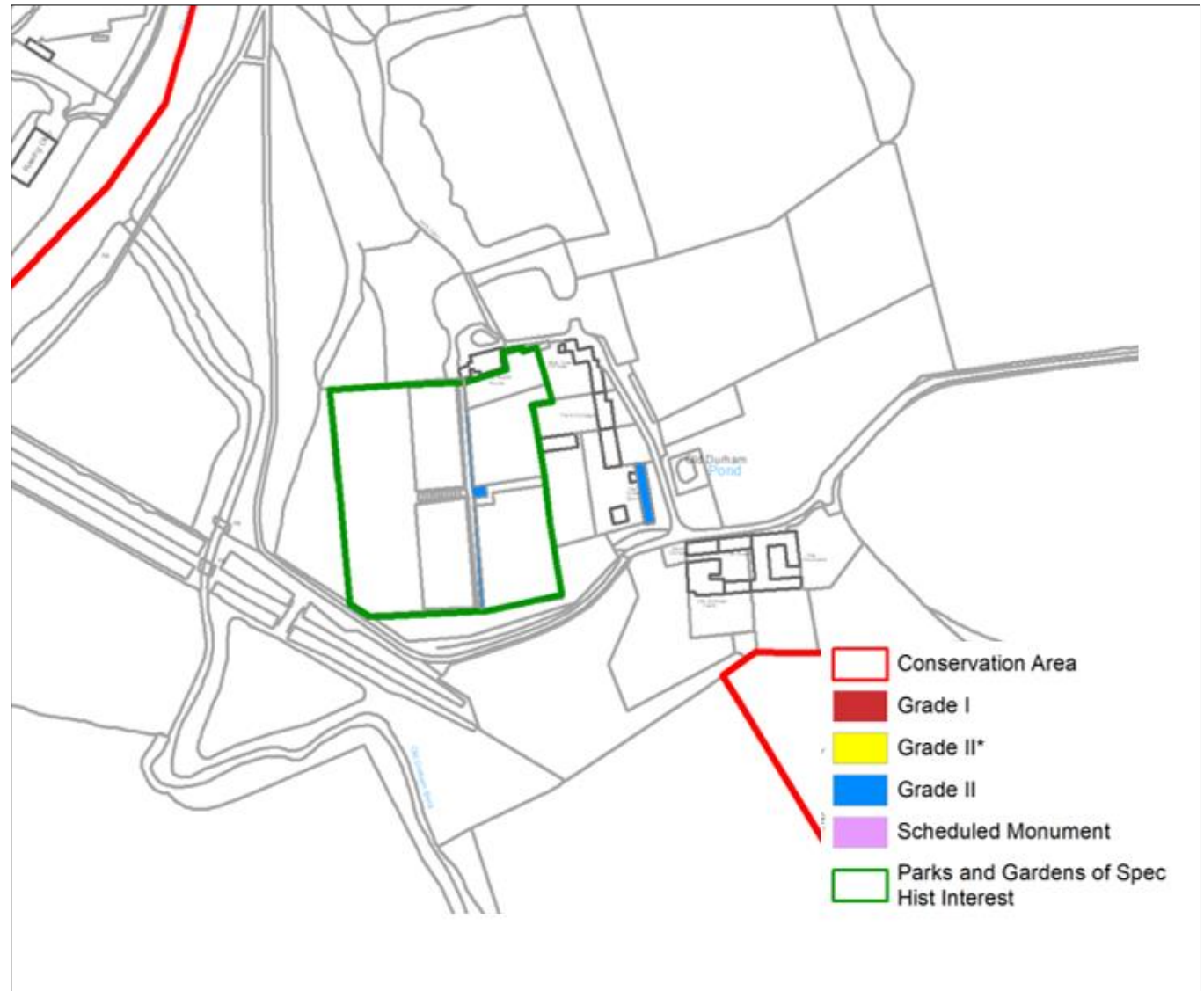
As well as the listed buildings Old Durham Gardens is a designated heritage asset being included on Historic England's "Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest," that currently identifies over 1,600 sites of such particular significance.

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.

The register can be searched using the following link:

[Registered Parks & Gardens | Historic England](#)



Map 6 Non-designated heritage assets and positive contributors

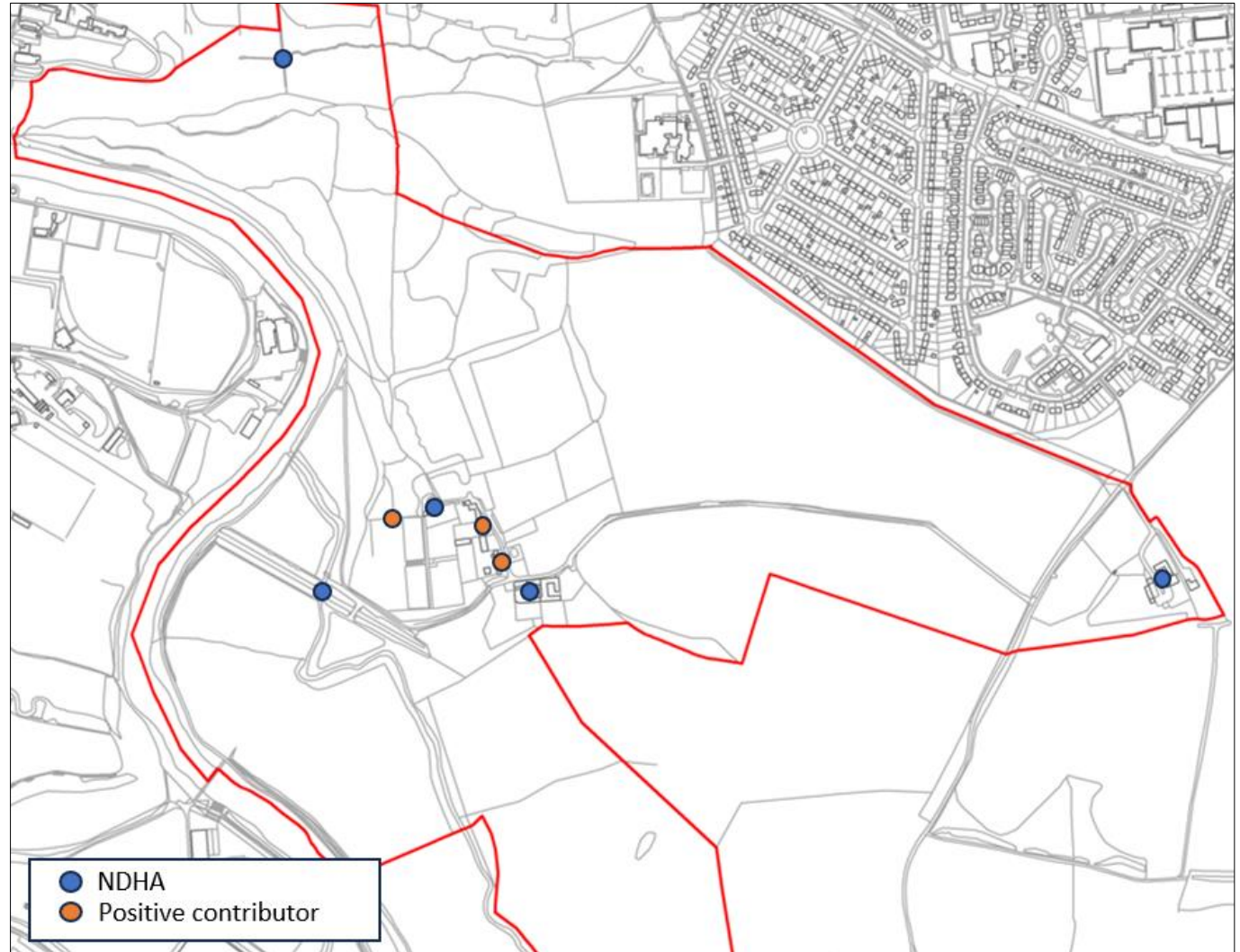
The map identifies the NDHAs identified within the conservation area, and the buildings that contribute positively.

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: The former Pineapple Inn, Old Durham Farmhouse and associate agricultural buildings, Bent House Farm group, remains of railway infrastructure, "Silver Link" footbridge Pelaw Woods

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

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



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.

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

field boundaries, scrub and vegetation alongside the carriageways, footpaths and tracks, the tree belt that screens the housing of the Sherburn Road estate, and areas of woodland spread across the area. Further is the broad historic farmland that 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 feature being 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 with dense areas of ancient woodland, areas of open scrubland and wildflower meadows. It comprises of 12.8 hectares containing a variety of natural habitats.



A valuable part of the conservation area's landscape character is the blue infrastructure corridor of the River Wear, which forms the full extent of Old Durham's western boundary and includes the rivers tributaries of Old Durham Beck and Pelaw Woods Beck. Other water features include adjacent ponds that contribute positively, adding natural variety.

Fig 14 below. A selection of images of green assets including the lower orchard garden and mature woodland behind, the treed avenue to the riverside footpath, vegetation and open filed bounding the footway



Fig 15 below. A selection of images of some of the green infrastructure assets within the conservation area, 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.

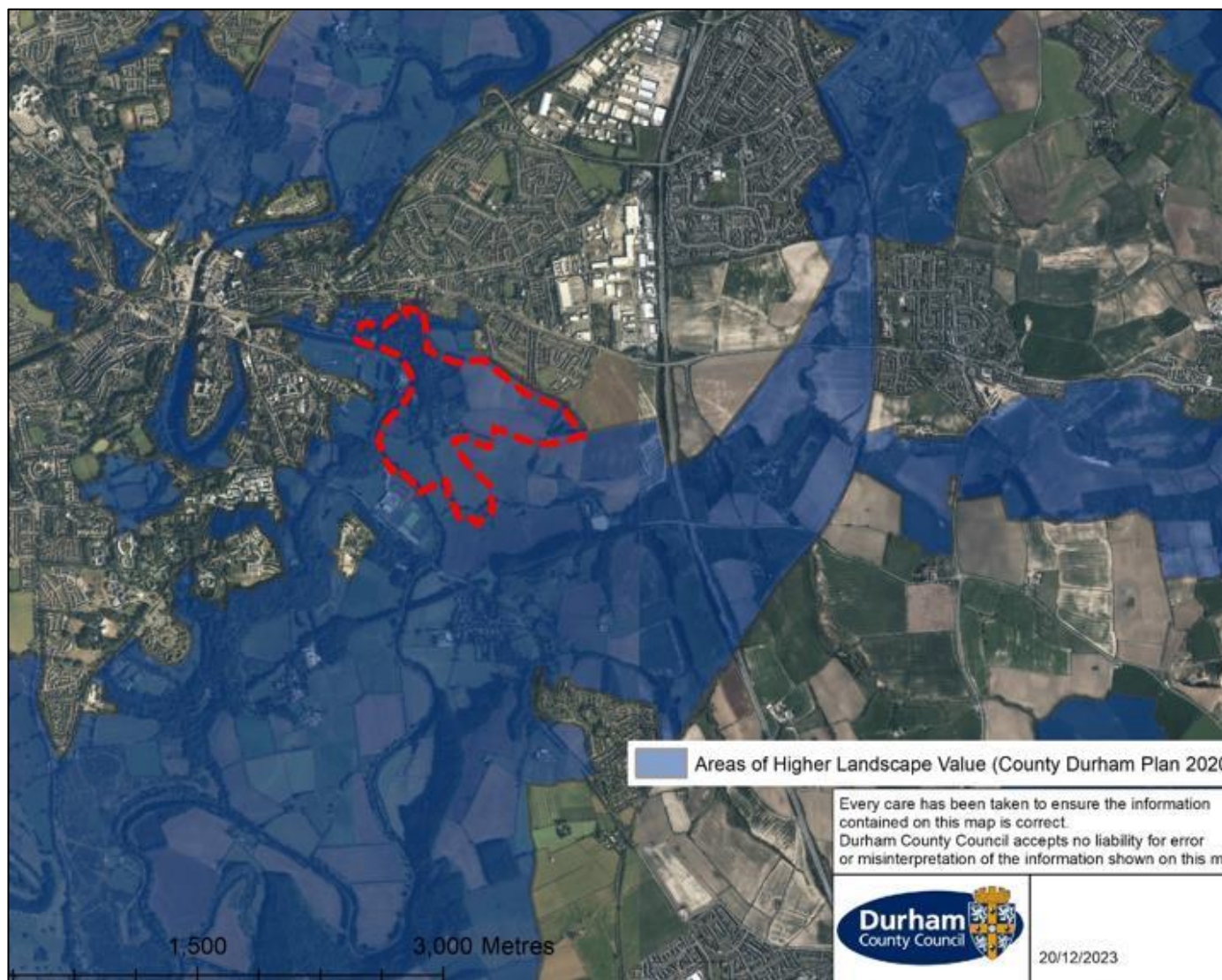


Map 7 Area of higher landscape value

An aerial map showing the designated area of high 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 the conservation area falls within this designation testifying to its intrinsic rural character and 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 local character and distinctiveness.



2.8 Landmarks, views and vistas

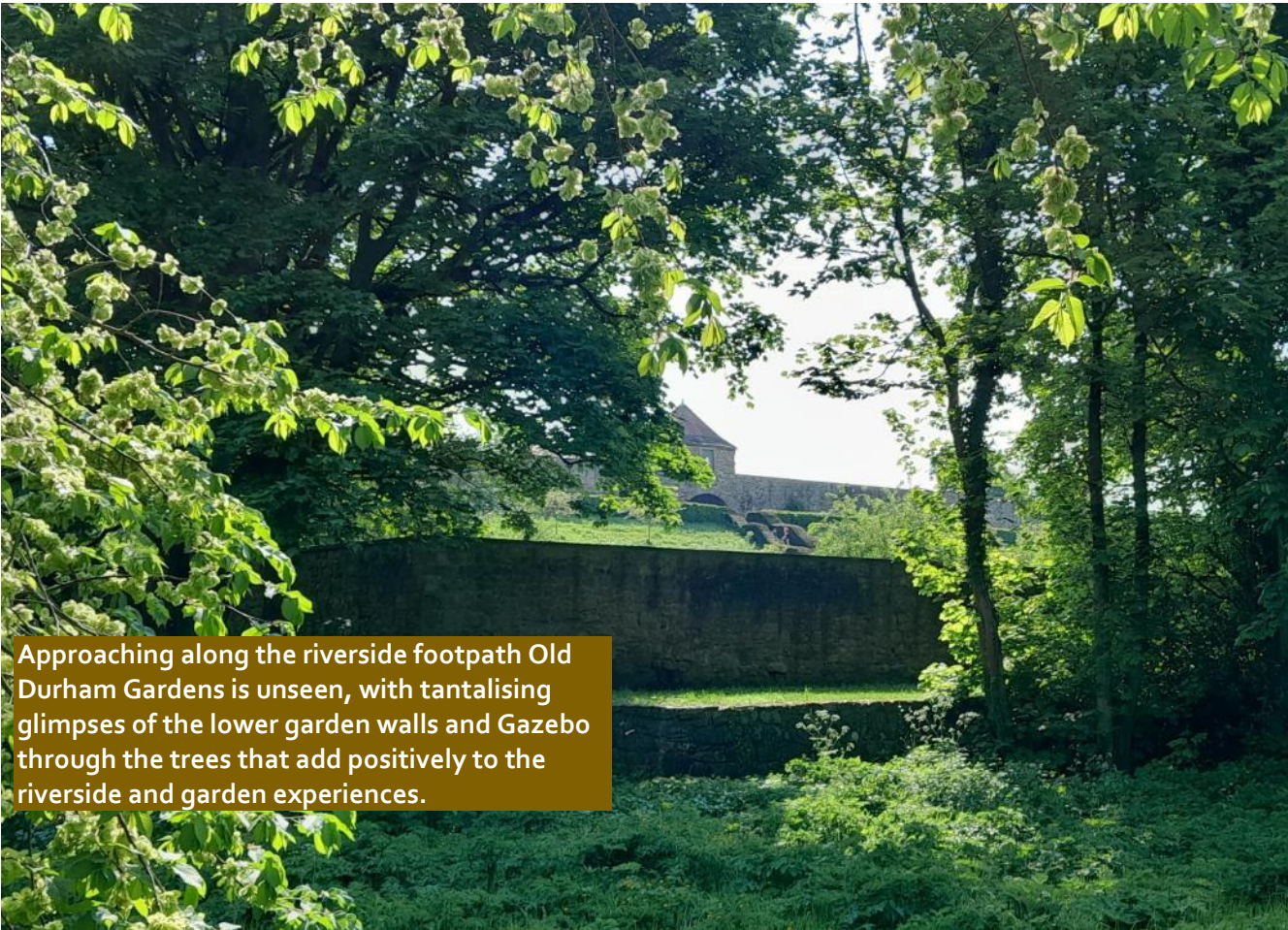
Durham City is renowned for its view, where the topography, historic development, layout, built and natural environments combine to generate a high number of important and evolving views¹ that contribute significantly to its special character and how this is experienced. Views can be sequential, static, or dynamic¹, they may be short or long range, glimpses between or above buildings, or panoramas.

The higher ground in the north at Old Durham provides significant kinetic views of Durham Castle and Cathedral WHS. When approaching Old Durham from Sherburn Road Front Street along Bent House Lane, at first Durham WHS is not visible, then passing Bent House Farm there are glimpses of the cathedral through the trees before it fully reveals itself as an eye catcher in its broad landscape setting.

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 towards Old Elvet and 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.



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 that 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. The city has also 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.

Within the conservation area there are two key night-time views 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.

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 16 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.



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 view north from footpath west side of Old Durham Gardens
5. Short view south from Pelaw Woods to Old Durham Gardens.
6. Panoramic view west from Pelaw Woods.
7. Sequential views westwards along the north bank riverside footpath.

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

The 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 Area.

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 and quieter green lane approach progressing south after the housing, where it continues 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, then drops steeply to the collection of farm buildings, where it is bounded by grazing paddocks. 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 pedestrian 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 distance away.

In contrast to Old Durham's openness, Pelaw Woods is an extensive valley of primary broadleaf woodland with some pockets of scrubland, and open meadow that 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 17 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 18 below. A selection of images showing the different routes found within the conservation area.

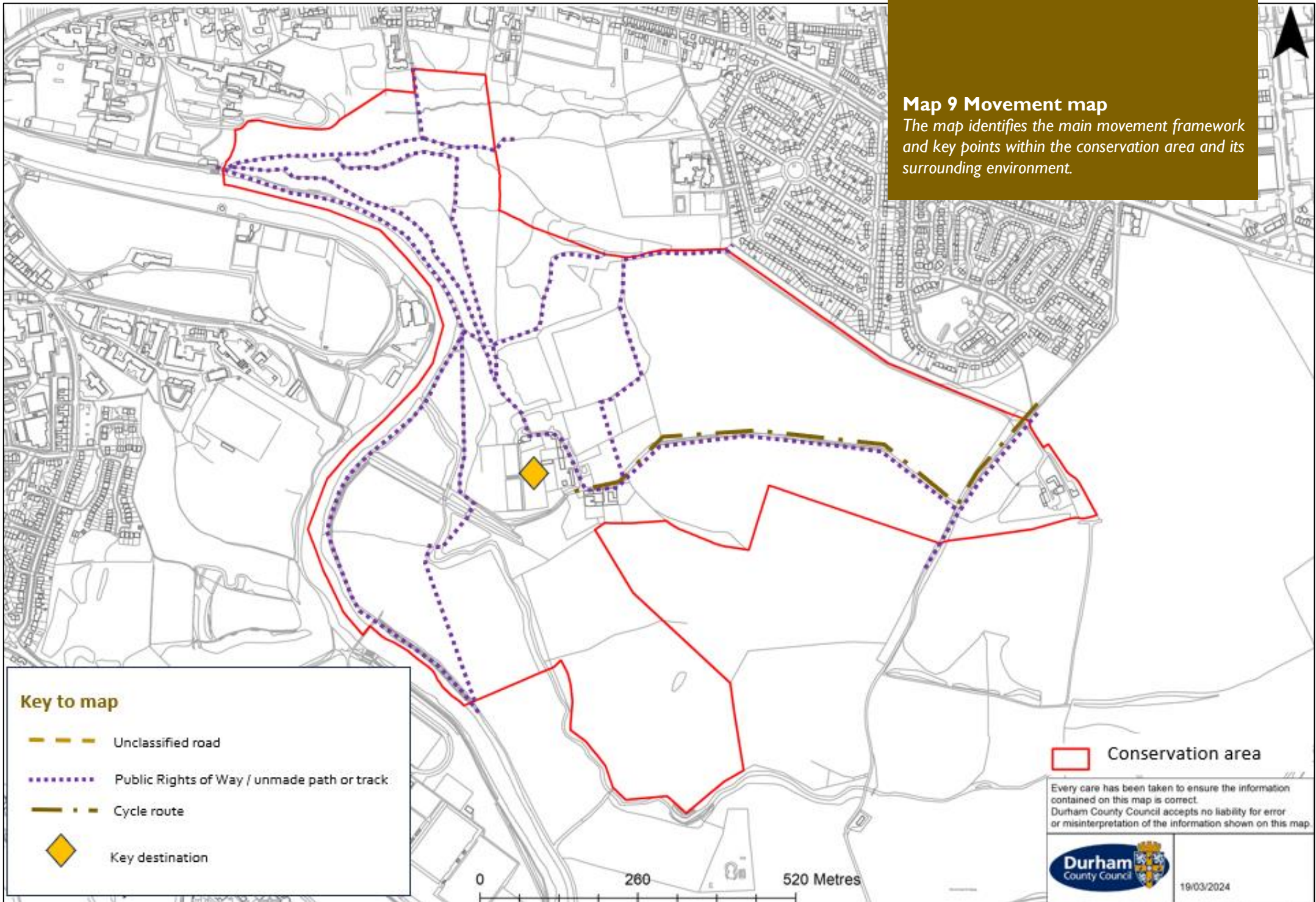


The north end of Bent House Lane passing the housing estate followed by the informal route passed Pineapple House to the woods.

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.



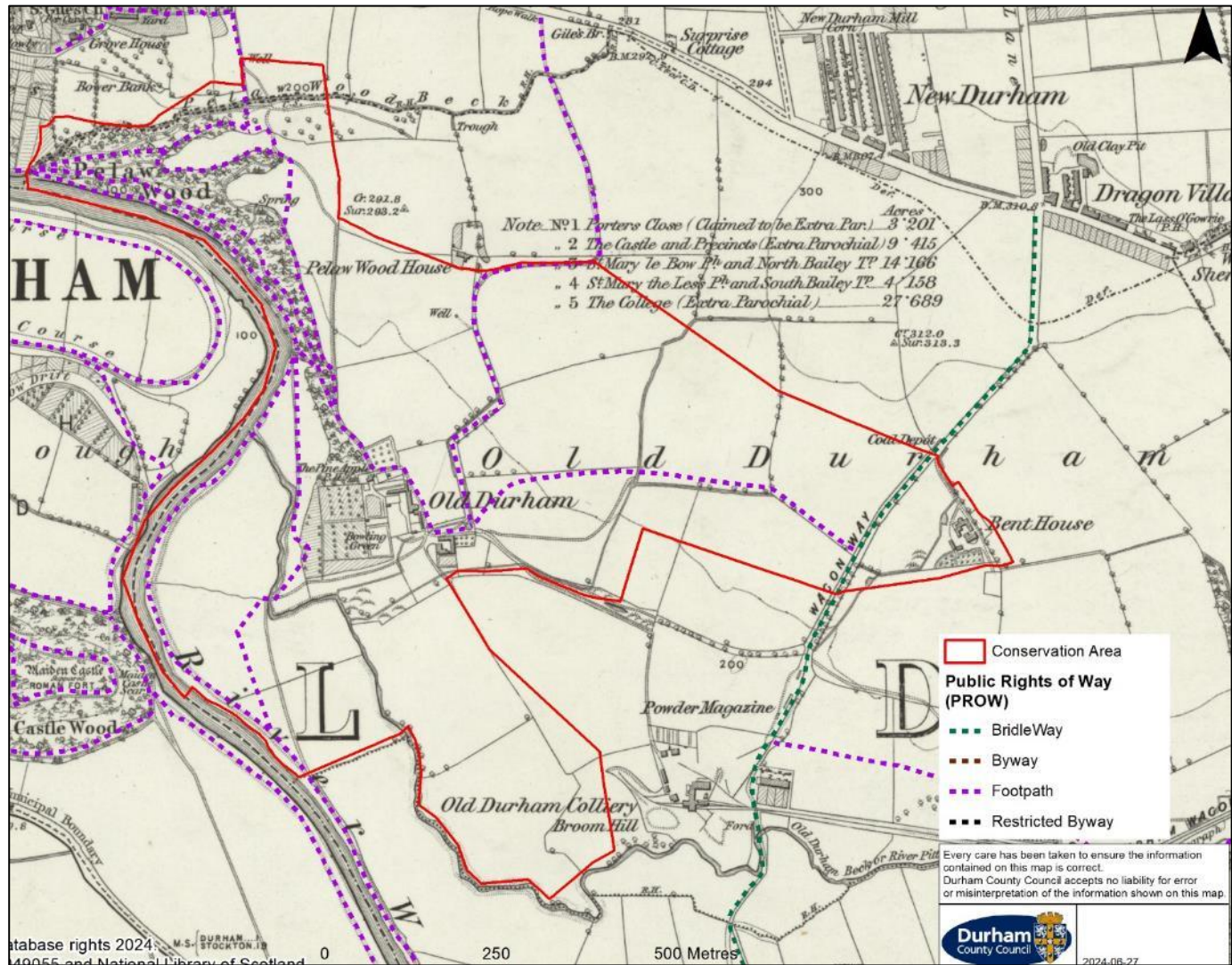
Map 10 Movement map (historic)

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 and 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.

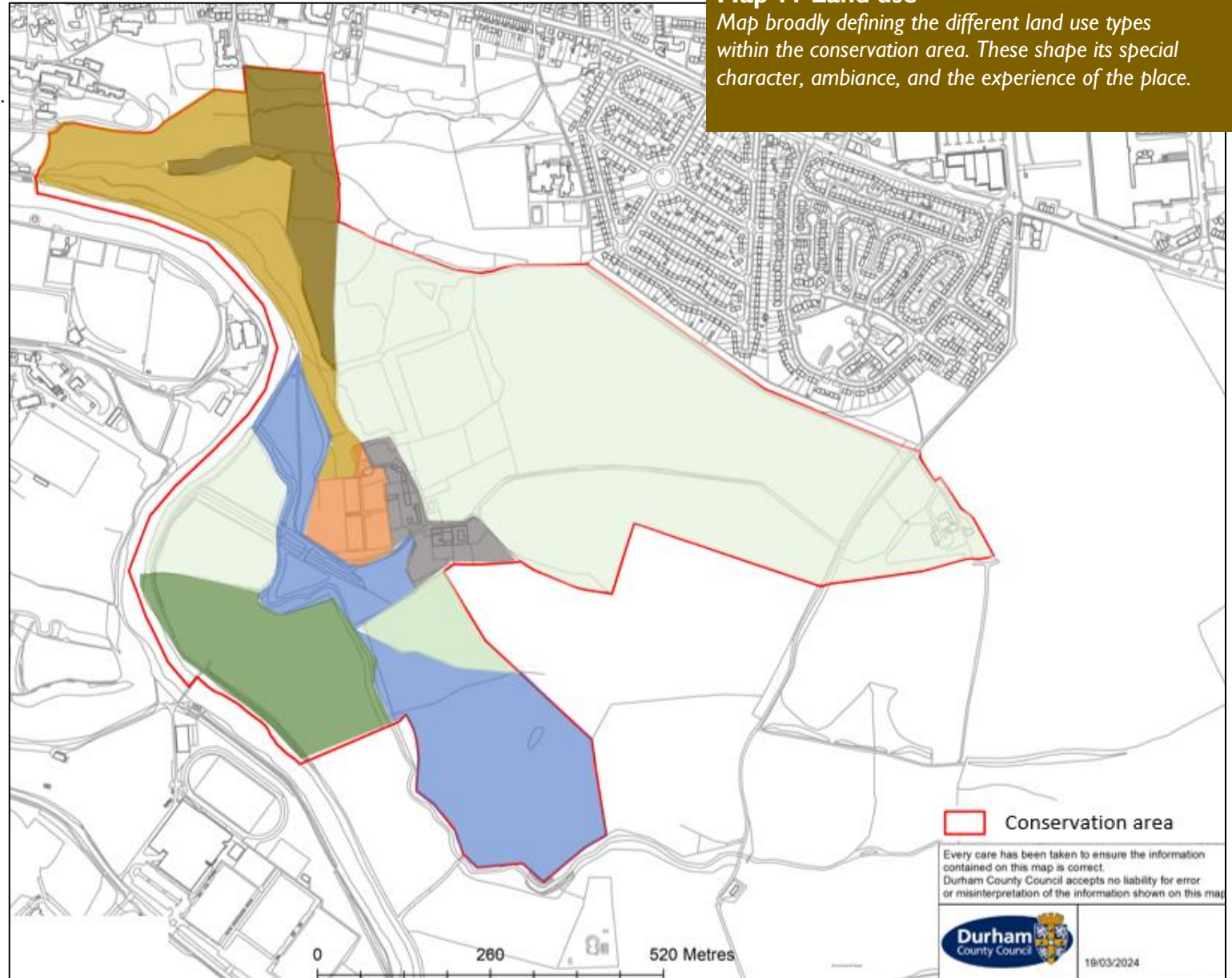


2.10 Land Use

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.

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. While the exact position of the medieval 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 but was demolished between c 1720 and 1787. The buildings and spaces as recognised today date mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries. This set 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, Old Durham Farm, and Old Durham Gardens, in the south 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 has been conserved following residential conservation of the 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. At the north end of this group Pear Tree Cottage provides a west return, beyond this lies 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 is designed to look out to the west towards Durham Cathedral.

At Pelaw Woods there is no pattern or grain, the Silver Link Bridge 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 19 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 20 below. A 3D model demonstrating the general pattern and characteristics of the conservation area, and elements of its setting.

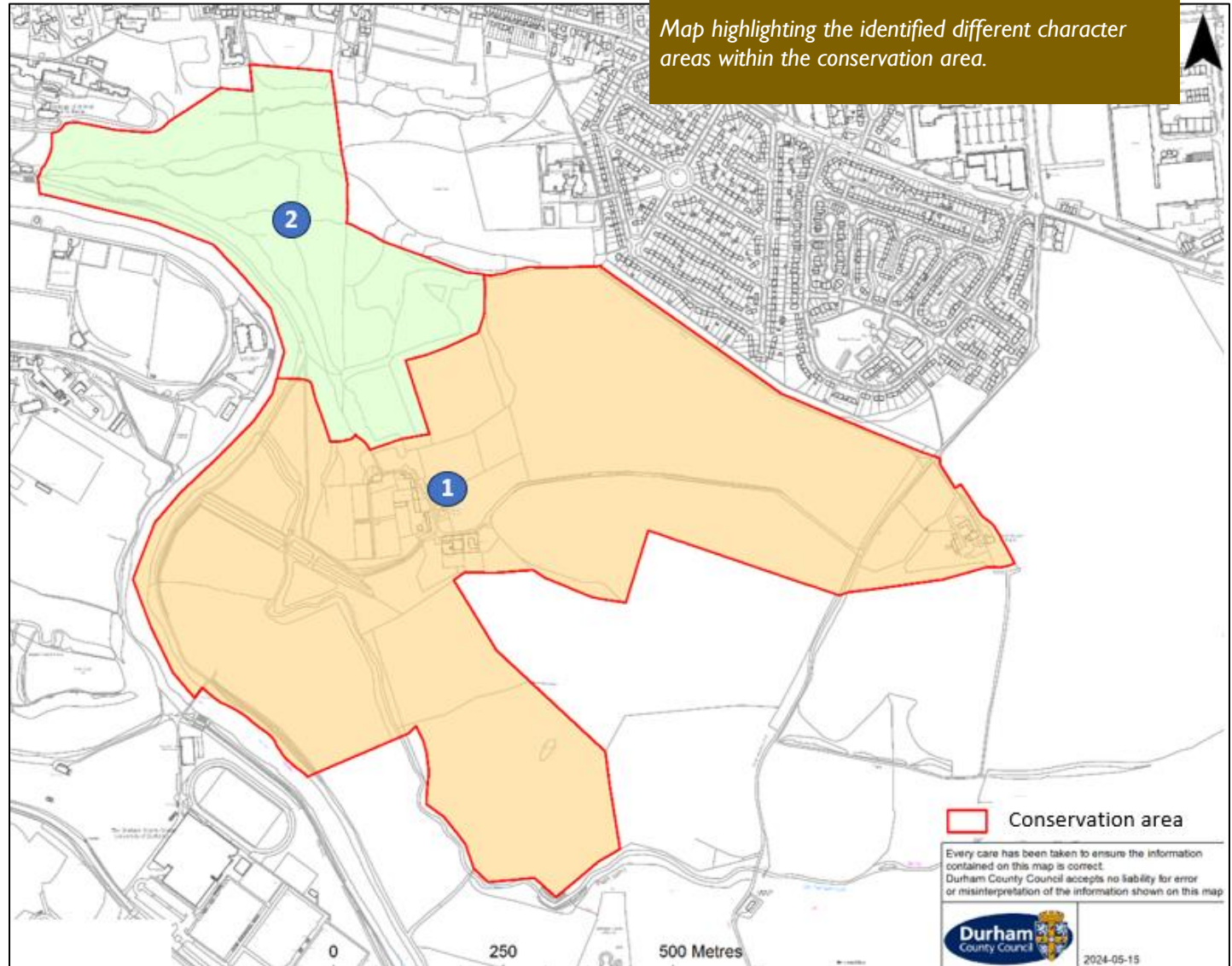


2.12 Character areas

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 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.



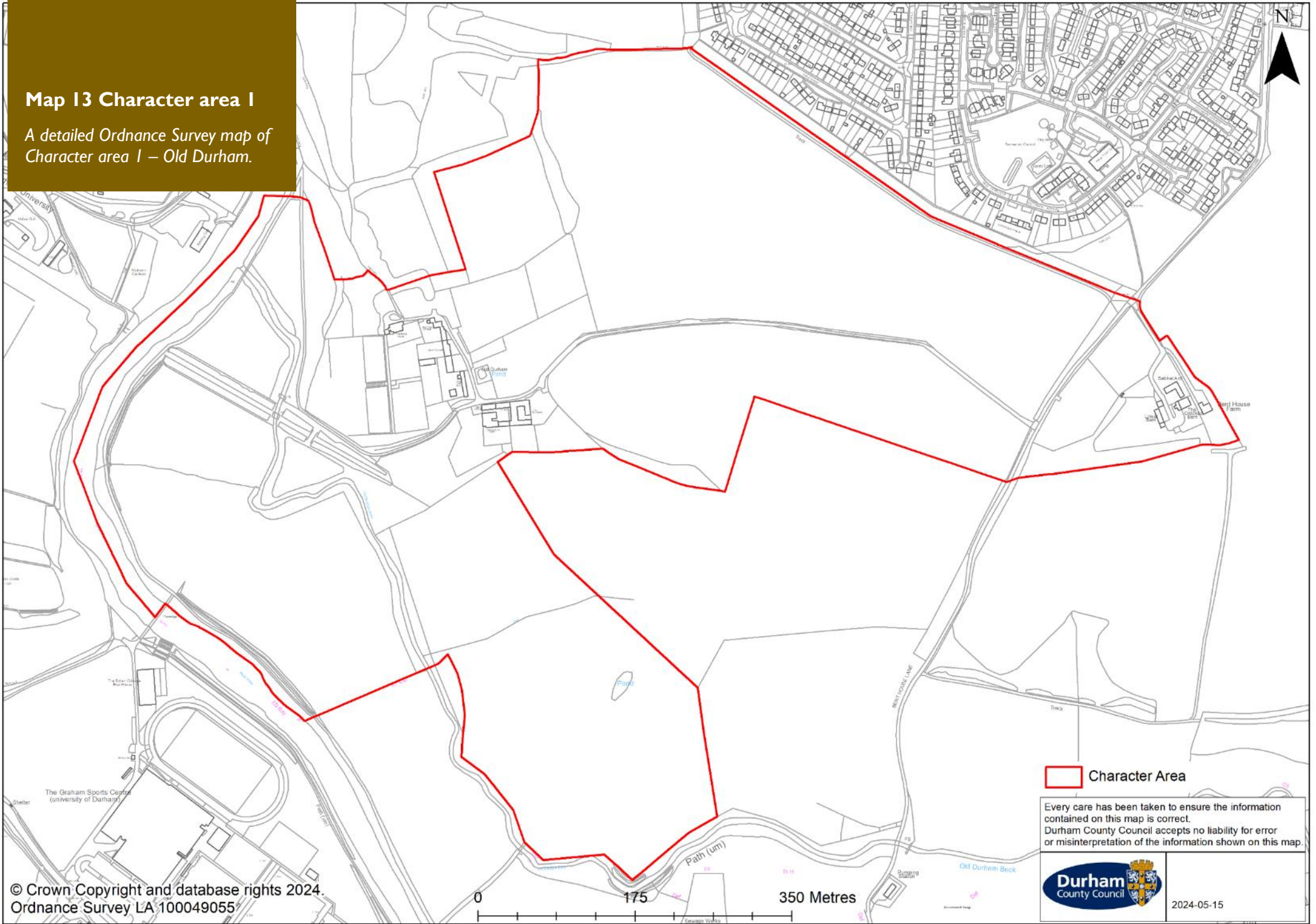
3. Street characterisation


3.1 Character area I (Old Durham)




Map 13 Character area I

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



 Character 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.

 Durham County Council

2024-05-15

3.3.1 Location and summary of special interest

The Old Durham character area comprises the three areas of built development, Bent House Farm, Old Durham Farm, and Old Durham Gardens, 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 also has high visual amenity value as part of the continuity of landscape along the river up to the boundary with Shincliffe Village Conservation Area.

The setting to the area is inherently rural where the topography and openness provides views westwards of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site, and south towards Shincliffe Village. In the north the setting is dense urban resulting 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.

The housing, once completed, will have a significant visual effect on the north part of the lane but its value as part of the setting of the conservation area as a green lane entrance should be maintained to some degree.

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 dating back to the Roman period through to the medieval manor house and establishment of the gardens and farm buildings of the late 17th / early 18th century.
- Historic interest stemming from the estate ownership by the 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 WHS, including from the north approach and the designed axial view from the gardens.

Fig 21 below. Old Durham Farm, Tythe Barn, and Farm Cottage.



3.3.2 Layout, streets, and spaces

Approaching the area from the north there is no hint of the rural character. 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 entrance point.

The carriageway travels along a relatively straight path bounded by housing. After the 1950s bungalows, there is a positive change to a less formal country lane that provides a suitable 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 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 very positive.

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



Fig 22 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 comfortably 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 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, the Tithe 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 large open paddock incorporating a pond, which provide a very appropriate setting.

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 23 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.



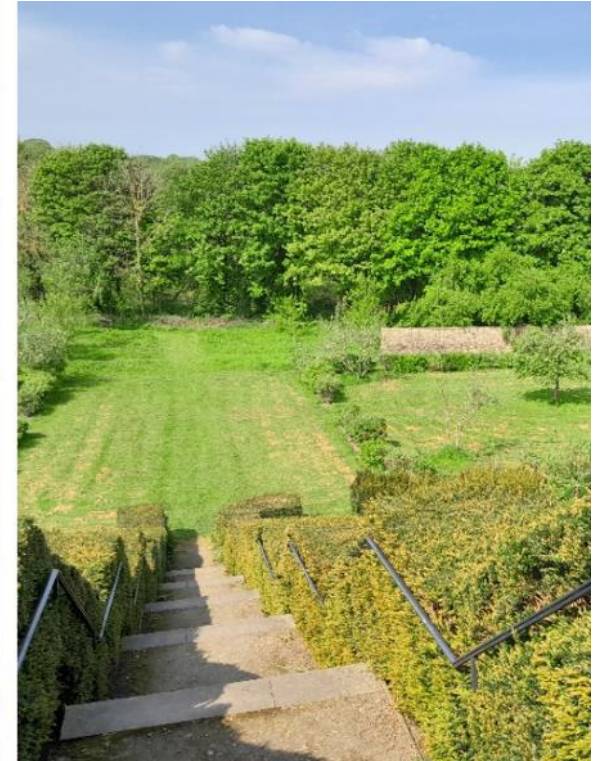
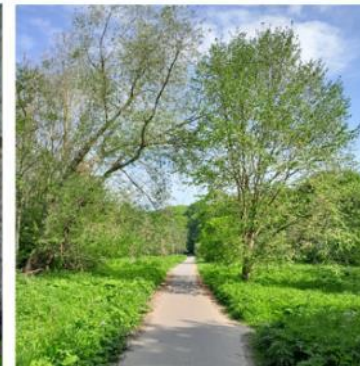
Fig 24 above. The narrow informal lane leading to Pelaw Woods and below the route along the former railway line.

Old Durham Gardens stands proudly as the historic landmark within the area and is a hidden gem. 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 sense of surprise arriving at the gardens, and when walking north where the area is open to the riverside.

Fig 25 below. *The upper walled garden and gazebo, the view from the upper terrace into the lower garden, view along the terraced walk and riverside path approach.*



A significant feature of the area is that it only has one carriageway and is therefore very much a pedestrian focussed area. 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 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 characteristic of the place.

The area is dominated by a historic estate landscape and composition of green elements that informs its special character, and achieves high visual 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 the free standing trees, small groups and lines of trees, hedgerows and scrub around the carriageway and fields, and the water features of the beck and field ponds that add some natural diversity to the area. Outside the conservation area boundary there is broad tree canopy cover providing a wooded backdrop visually containing the area.

Old Durham Gardens is the most significance green space with the conservation area .The restored upper garden retains the 17th century layout found in the 1990s archaeological excavation but includes a planting scheme typical of the 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 sloping terrace is planted in the manner of the late 17th century, reflecting a number of similar terrace gardens established at this time in the city and its environs, while the restoration of the lower garden involved re-planting of an orchard, faithful to evidence of the late 18th century and 19th century. 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.

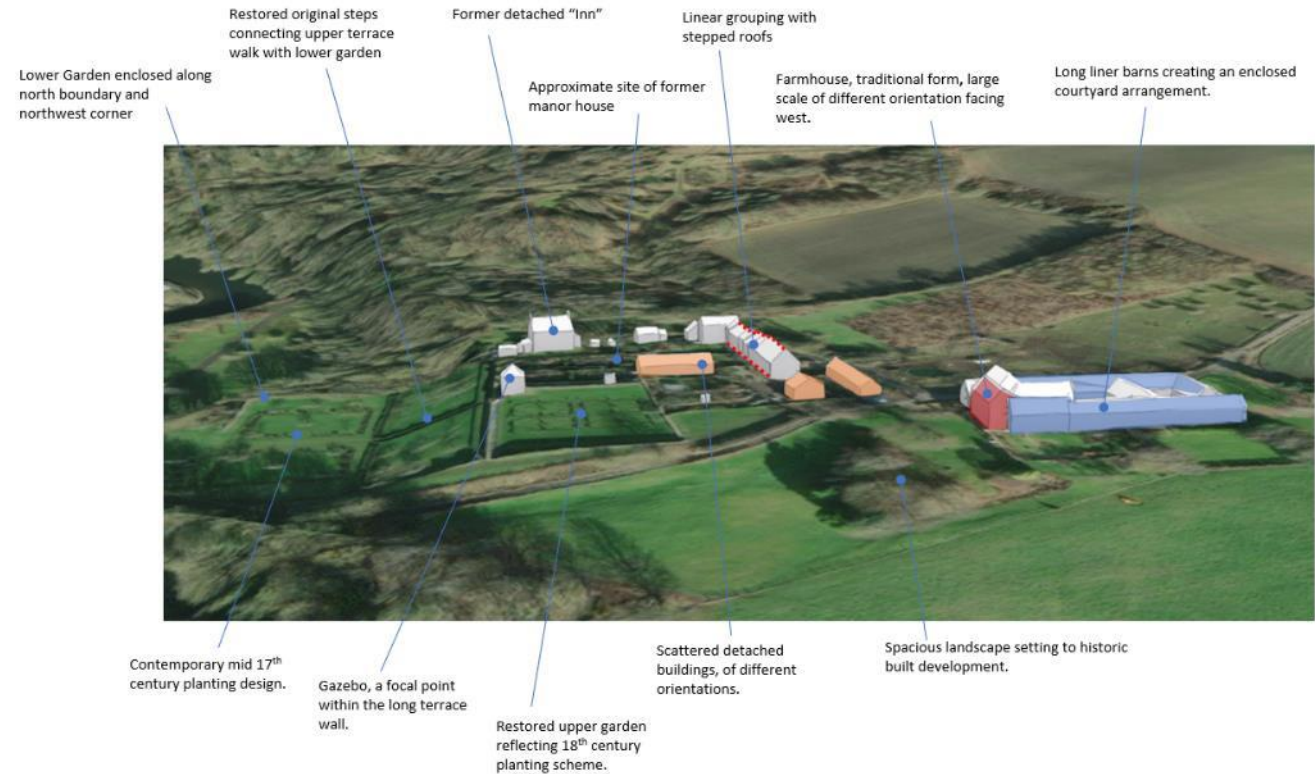


Fig 26 above. The high quality view from the riverside path across the lower garden to the upper terrace with the gazebo and garden walls prominent.

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

- Low building density 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 space 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 27 below. Modelling showing the key characteristics of the area.



3.3.3 Architectural style, form and detailing

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

The historic farm buildings within the area have almost exclusively been converted to residential use, which has been carried out in a sympathetic manner 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. These buildings are characterised by simple functional forms, the barns having fewer openings, built from a limited palette of locally available materials, many are of a solid robust character. There are some examples of large doors common for threshing barns, which provide a focal point to the building. The farmhouses and cottages display 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, while the main farmhouse is a later red brick Victorian building with distinguishable features such as strong gables, decorative wall dormers, and sash windows.

The tithe 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 and is distinctive from the other historic agricultural buildings in its surroundings. It comprises of two storeys and six bays built from handmade brick with stone dressing and a roof of concrete tiles. It includes 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 of simple square plan with a pyramidal roof incorporating doors within the east and south faces. It has a west facing multi-paned timber sash window giving 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 fully 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, with the 19th century brickwork in the south wall implying 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 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.

From the lower garden there are glimpses of a white house to the north, which is the Old Pineapple Inn, which incorporates 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.

Built Form Palette



Despite the limited number of buildings, the palette of materials still makes a valuable contribution to 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 characterised the area.

The area is characterised by the use of traditional buff stone and red brick. Some brickwork has been painted over and one building has smooth render. Roof covering materials are a mixture of Welsh slate and traditional 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 with no obvious use of insensitive uPVC found.

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 limited 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 limited 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.

Architectural Detailing Palette



Door & Window Palette



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

- The high quality of the buildings with all making a positive contribution to the area's character.
- 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 historic buildings are identified as being negative and detracting from its special architectural and historic interest, character, and visual appearance. The character area therefore has a very high level of authenticity and intactness.

Fig 28 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 and congestion along the Front Street. But this increases 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, then 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 pedestrian experience is significantly enhanced by splendid, lesser known kinetic views of Durham Cathedral, beginning near Bent House Farm at a gap in the trees and continuing 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 slightly marred at the upper entrance to the gardens where the lane culminates at a car parking area and there is parking provision in front of the buildings adjacent in the north, that clutters views when in full use. The pedestrian route 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.

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. Following the river where it meets Old Durham Beck is Kingfisher Bridge that opened in 2007 and bridged a gap at a historic river crossing point to complete the river walking experience.

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 29 below. The approach to Old Durham Farm along Bent House Farm with kinetic views of the World Heritage Site, the lower gardens, and Kingfisher Bridge.



Surface Palette



Palette of Boundary Treatments



Street surfacing is a mixture of grey tarmacadam, gravel, dirt, and grassed paths. The condition is variable with some spots more deteriorated than others, but they are generally appropriate to the rural context and do not detract from the area's character or visual 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 encourage people to stop to enjoy the views, but their condition could be improved. There is limited visitor and parking signage, which does not detract. There is however no meaningful interpretation that would enhance the visitor experience of the gardens and wayfinding is likely to 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.

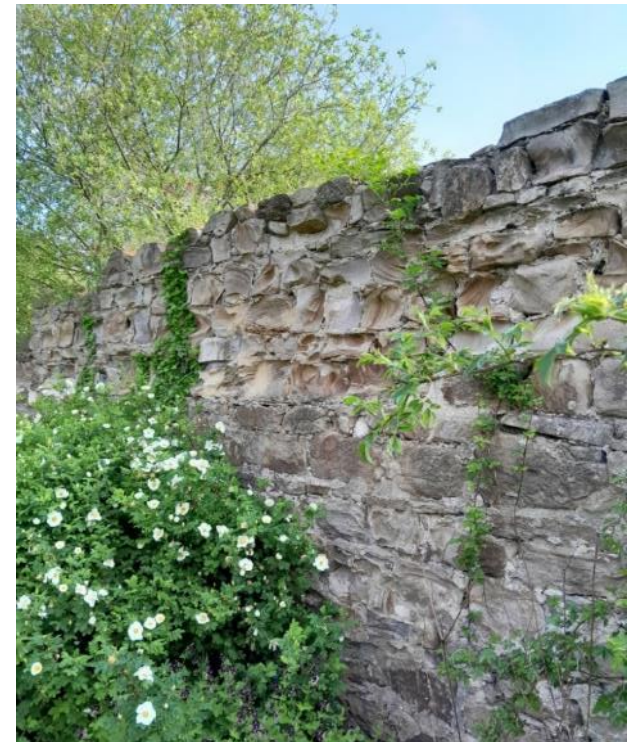
Boundary treatments are important contributors delineating historic plots and fields, enclosing routes, and reinforcing the rural character. The predominant type is rural style timber fencing and field gates, with examples timber post and wire fencing. The birds-mouth type timber fencing along the south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

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

The walls at Old Durham Gardens are historically of most significance. They are a mixture of stone and brick, the older being handmade. While significant historic sections survive and have been restored, some parts have been rebuilt. Different phases of construction are legible adding interest, with the terrace wall having "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 appear to be leaning and deteriorated. Some parts have organic growth through the fabric, poor smeared re-pointing, and cavernous stones visible.

Fig 30 below and right. 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 any significant built development, and the main route formed out of the old wagon way and lane following field boundaries, combine to create a sequence of fine “unknown” views of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site that fewer people tend to experience and enjoy, compared to other better known views within the historic city core; but it is equally as significant.

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

While the view out from the upper gardens via the Gazebo is not regularly experienced by the general public, 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.

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.

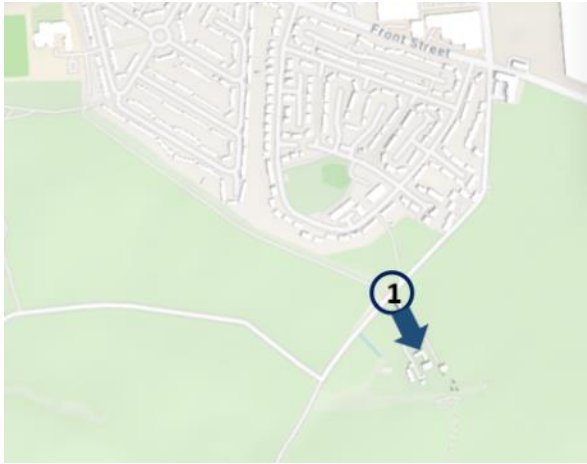
View 5 – Short views east from the footway towards Old Durham Gardens.

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

Fig 31 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



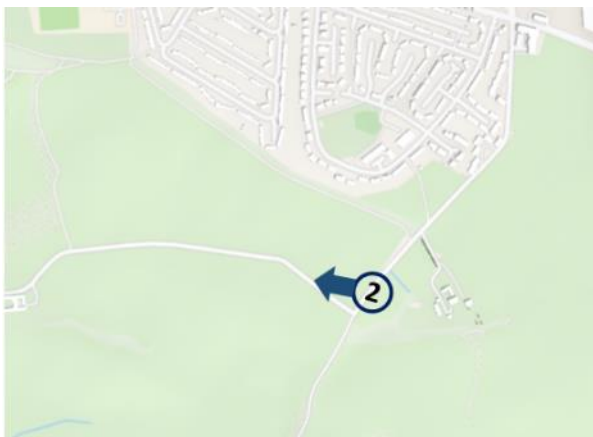
Image



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 where they are viewed 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 WHS 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 their 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 axial view from inside the gazebo of the cathedral is significance.

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.

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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 urban settlement.
- The rural ambiance that is generally undisturbed despite former agricultural buildings being converted to residential use.
- The areas 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 32 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.
- 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 miss-matched 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.

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 well maintained but the lower gardens would benefit from some soft maintenance works.

Street furniture

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

- The timber benches on the terraced walk are in a deteriorated condition.
- Area lacks meaningful wayfinding to the gardens and interpretation. However, any signage proposals in the future must not create adverse clutter and be sympathetic in style.

Threats

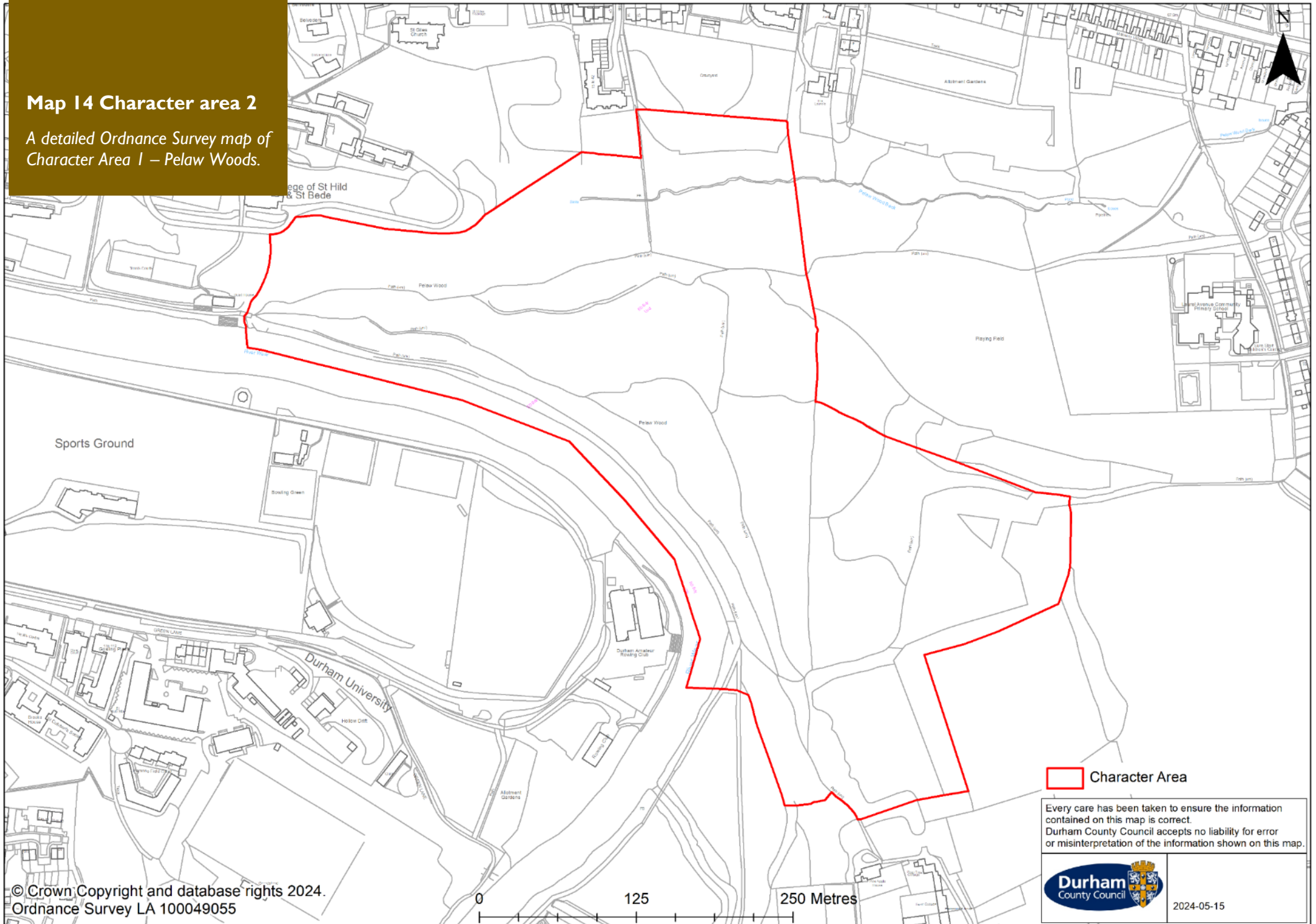
- On going decline of the historic fabric of the garden walls.
- Potential for unsympathetic alterations to the unlisted historic buildings.
- Trees reducing the extent and quality of views without targeted maintenance works in addition to regular grass cutting.
- Local Authority disposing of the site ending the management agreement with the friends group.
- Reduction or abandonment of regular garden maintenance works.
- Reduction and loss of volunteers.


3.1 Character area 2 (Pelaw Woods)



Map I4 Character area 2

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



 Character 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.

3.3.1 Location & 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 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 bank. The area is characterised by a range of local 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?

- Important 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 of the woodland, groups of trees and individual trees
- 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, locale wildlife site, part of the Area of Higher Landscape Value and Green Belt.



Fig 33 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.

It is a distinctive place where the density of the tree canopy creates physical and visual enclosure, giving rise to an intimate enclosed character and 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. This combined with the trees along the riverbank, creates an intimacy of scale and sense of enclosure. The woods contribute to the ring of ridges that contain the urban core of the city providing a green background of high scenic quality.

There are a number of informal footpaths within the area of no apparent pattern. Footpaths 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 where paths lead off in different directions encouraging exploration. Some of these paths are historic routes correlating with paths recoded 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 34 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 Victorian Falls Bridge in Zimbabwe.

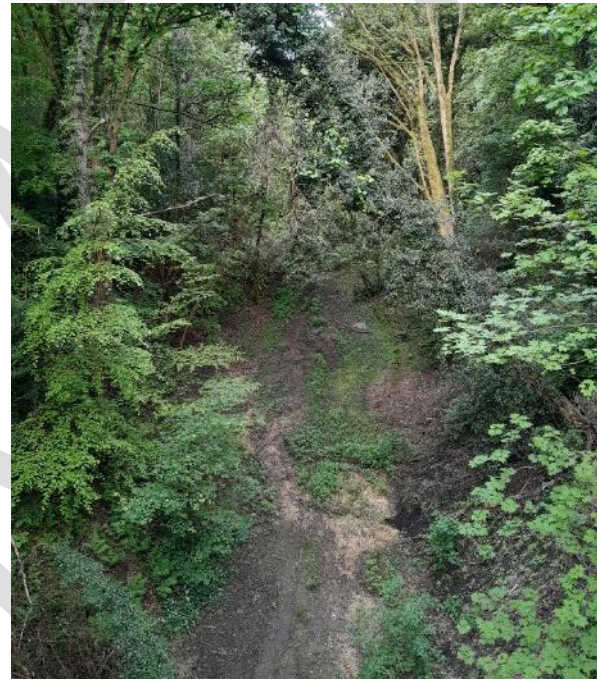


Fig 35 above. Silver Link Bridge spanning the steep sided gully that cuts a path through the woodland, the gully seen from the bridge and Pelaw Woods Beck.

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. The route continues steeply down Silver Link Bridge over the steep sided gully, that is followed by informal dirt tracks that snake over and around the hilly topography, with some 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 feeling of remoteness. The varying character of existing routes and informal paths provides interesting walks with changes from open to a more enclosed character. The steep terrain in places can limit access for all.

Depending on the specific location there is a mixture of open exposed areas with views out, sheltered spots, and areas of dense woodland providing changing natural experiences. 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.

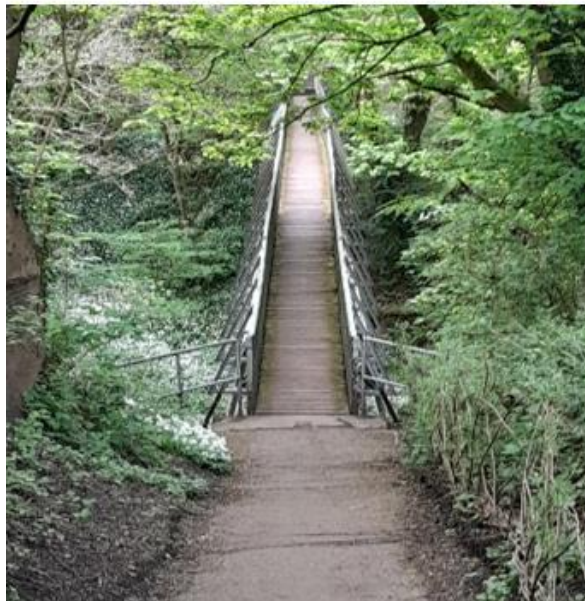
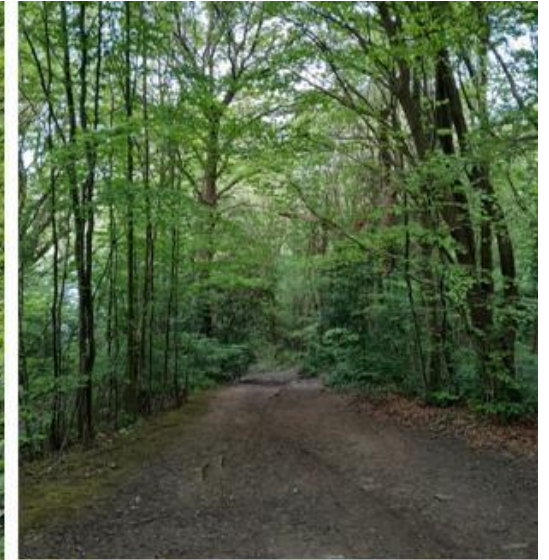
Emerging through the enclosed dense woodland this path provides surprise due to the distinct sudden openness and splendid view across the river and Elvet area to Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site.

There are no lighting units 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 enhancing the pedestrian experience. Emerging out at the riverside, this can be a busier place with some noise from sporting and leisure activities.



Fig 36 above. Steps down a steep gradient and open contrasting open meadow set amongst the woodland.

Fig 37 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. While this, in the main, restricts outwards views there are two notable open hilly vantage points that provide fine emerging view out across the river, and the historic city core towards Durham Cathedral seen majestically rising into the skyline and dominating over the townscape. For new and unfamiliar visitors, the woodlands offer surprise views of notable quality adding to the appreciation of the sequential woodland views experienced. People who do not know the woods can easily miss views available within it and when found, and if found they offer a sudden surprising open view that adds to the experience and appreciation of the view.

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 38 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.

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

Green Spaces

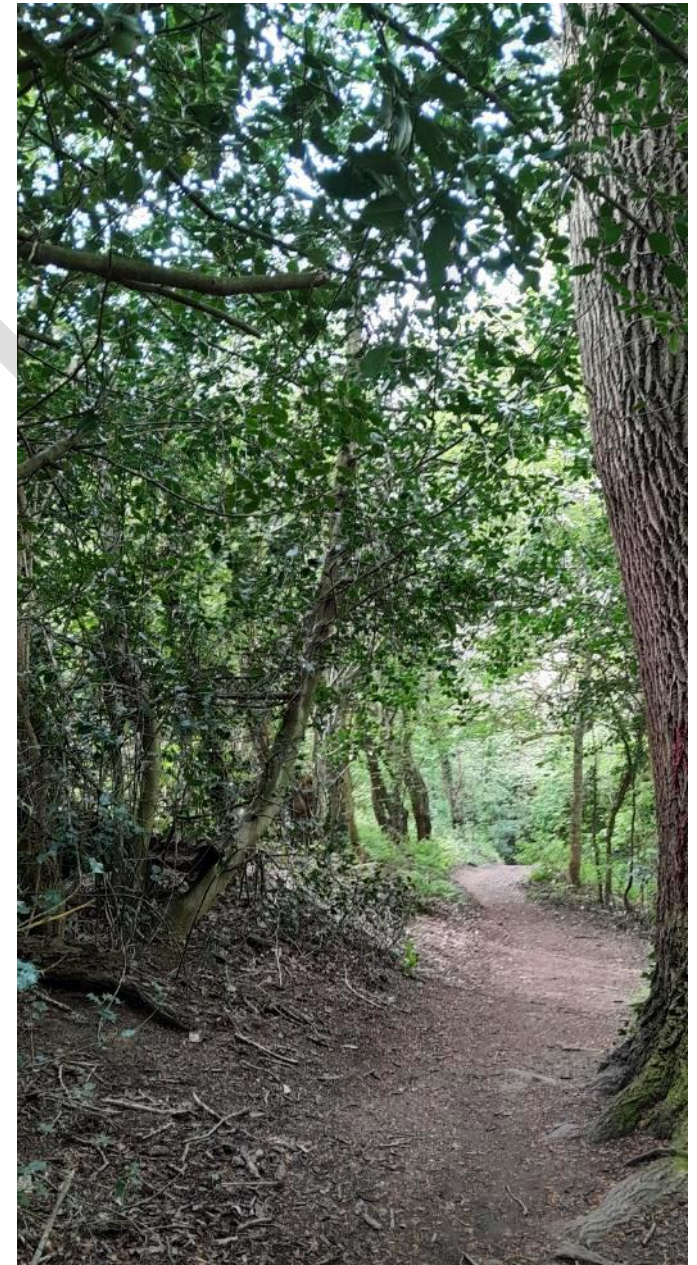
- The area has an unmanaged wilderness quality that is fundamental to its character.
- The overgrown tree canopy filters/reduces the quality of views of the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site in the summer months.

Street furniture

- Very limited items of street furniture.
- The lack of lighting is appropriate to the area's character.

Threats

- Ash "dieback" disease, further erosion of the riverbanks and climate change, potentially affecting distribution and type of woodland species present.
- Resources and pressure 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.



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



4.1 Condition of Place

The methodology for assessing the condition of place is set out in the strategic context document. A summary of the findings of the condition of place surveys and resulting opportunities for deliverable actions are set out within the individual character area section within this appraisal.

The Old Durham Conservation Area scores “Fair” – summarized as, **“the condition of the area is good, but there has been the loss of some historic features of architectural detailing such as changes to windows and doors. Features of and within the public realm may require improvement or repair, but the overall area is clearly forming a positive contribution to the conservation area.”**



4.2 S.W.O.T analysis

Strengths

- Isolated location, idyllic, with its own sense of place.
- Integral to the setting of Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site and the setting of other Durham City Conservation Areas.
- High historic interest, evidential value, architectural and aesthetic value, and archaeological potential.
- Largely undeveloped since its first detailed recording in the mid-19th century.
- Historic buildings of agricultural character that overall display high level of intactness.
- Unique historic gardens and pleasure grounds accessible to the public as historically intended.
- Provides a series of significant views of Durham WHS.
- 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.

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.
- Very limited street furniture provision that does not encourage people to stop and enjoy the place.
- Seats on the terraced walk are not in the best condition.
- Limited interpretation to the gardens.
- Area is poorly signposted.

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 partnership working to deliver greater benefits including funding options and increased frequency of events etc.
- Providing improved site interpretation potentially portable, to reduce the visual impact or through new technologies.
- Encourage wider range of volunteers to help actively manage and promote the gardens.

Threats

- Further decay and 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 Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site, if not actively managed regularly.
- Continued deterioration of paths.
- Ongoing threats from vandalism given seclusion of the area and past issues.
- Local Authority disposing of the site ending the management agreement with the friends group.
- Reduction or abandonment of regular garden maintenance works.
- Reduction in volunteer numbers.

Summary

The 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 (WHS), preserves or enhances where possible their special architectural and historic interest, character, and visual appearance.

The adopted County Durham Plan and City of Durham Neighbourhood Plan contain specific heritage policies to achieve the above, that 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, by providing more specific guidance to the 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.

The CAMP for Durham City is divided into 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 that identifies 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 that presents a series of management recommendations, aims and actions focused upon the overarching themes identified in the strategic context document.

The strategy has been drawn-up in response to the issues, problems, threats and potential opportunities identified during the review of the existing 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.

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 a very unique and distinctive place with the restored 17th century pleasure gardens at its historic heart, which is owned by DCC and jointly managed by 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 is 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

Work in collaboration with relevant DCC departments and the trustees of the "Friend of Old Durham Gardens" by establishing a formal working group to create maintenance agreements as a proactive rather than reactive response to the garden's conservation and general upkeep.

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 so that the gardens can continue to be enjoyed by the general public for this and future generations.

There is currently no formal agreement to the partnership and management regime, and establishing a working group to put in place the formalities of a partnership with clear agreed targets would ensure the gardens are conserved, maintained, developed, and promoted as best possible.

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.