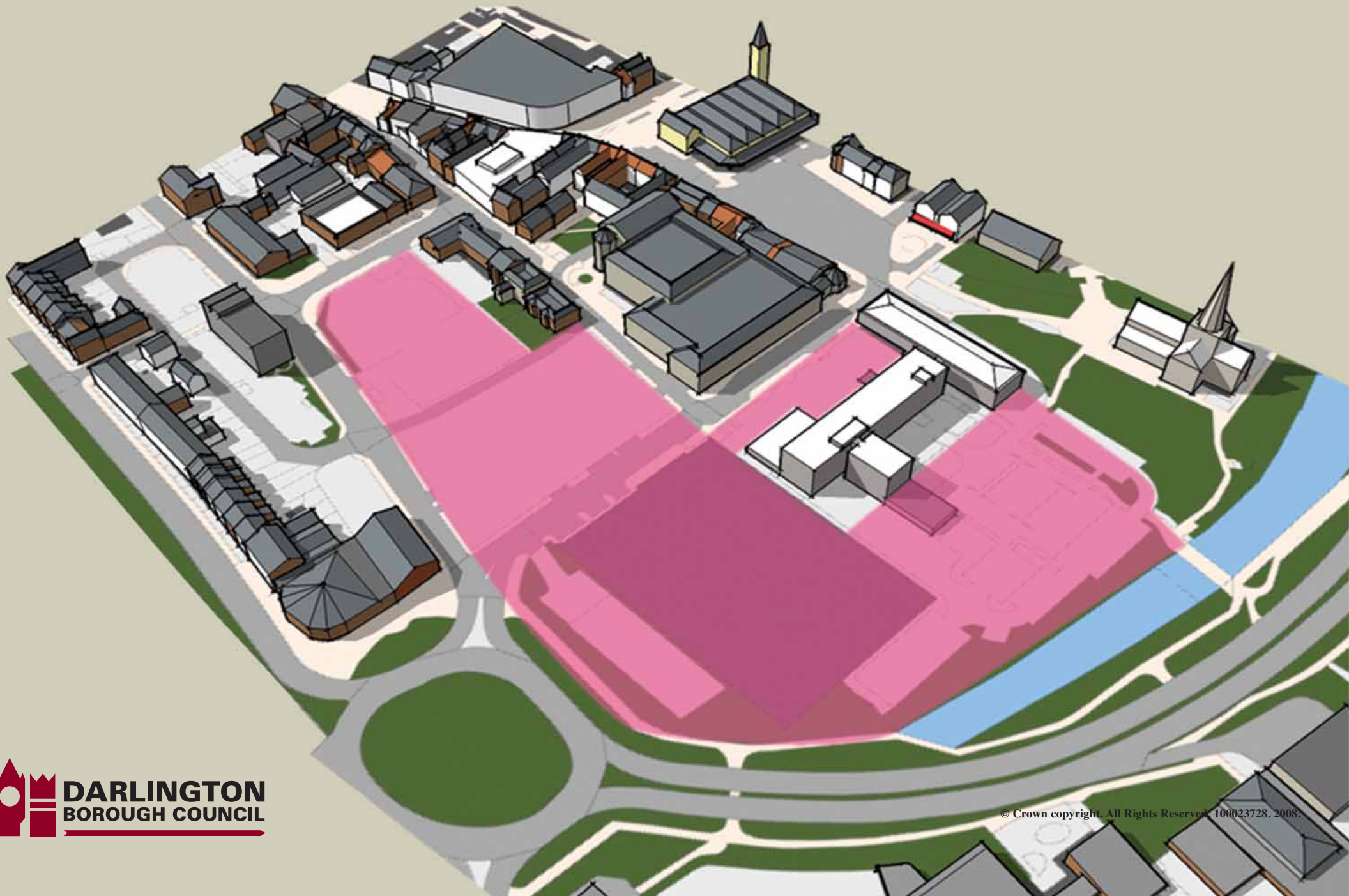


# Feethams Planning & Development Brief



# 1. Background

## 1.1 Introduction

This planning and development brief relates to the area of Darlington known as Feethams. It has been prepared to ensure that the redevelopment of the area is of the highest quality and meets the aspirations of the people of Darlington. The Feethams area is a strategically important part of Darlington and as such affords a great opportunity for developers to contribute to this already vibrant and successful town.

Through identifying the pertinent issues, the Council aims to promote its aspirations for the site, identify opportunities and constraints and provide clear guidance for developers in terms of planning and design. It is intended that this brief will provide certainty to developers that proposals, in accordance with the parameters set out, will be welcomed and encouraged.

## 1.2 Objectives

Early consultation and the formation of a multi-agency Working Group has identified a number of strategic objectives for the Feethams area;

- (a) Provision for uses which raise substantially the level of attractions in the town centre, drawing more people to the town centre.
- (b) Provision for uses which draw people across the town centre, providing footfall past the indoor market and the market square, thereby helping to rebalance the town centre in the context of the major development proposals at Commercial Street to the north.
- (c) Delivery of development which cherishes and respects the key environmental features surrounding the Feethams sites, such as St. Cuthbert's Church, the River Skerne, the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

- (d) Delivery of development that creates good pedestrian and cycling routes from the surrounding area and through the site into the rest of the town centre and which provides good connections with bus routes.
- (e) Attainment of outstanding design quality which creates an impressive 'gateway' to this part of the town centre.
- (f) Provision of replacement public short-stay car parking on-site or nearby.
- (g) Attraction of higher wage employment.

The Feethams sites form part of the 'Town Centre Fringe' of Darlington identified in the 'Taking Forward the Darlington Gateway' (research which has informed Darlington's new Sustainable Community Strategy – One Darlington Perfectly Placed – and is informing the emerging Local Development Framework and Economic Regeneration Strategy. In advance of the provision of a strategy for the wider area and the emerging Local Development Framework, this brief seeks to ensure that the development of the Feethams area meets the requirements and captures the opportunities identified in the Darlington Gateway and allows for potential significant change in the wider area.

## 1.3 Format

The planning and development brief has three broad sections for ease of use. The first identifies the background to the brief and introduces the area, its opportunities and constraints. The second outlines the relevant planning policy context and the third sets out the aspirations for the area and information on the development process. Technical Reports are available separately where reference is made to them.

## 2. The Process of Preparing the Brief

### 2.1 Who Prepared the Brief?

Darlington Borough Council has prepared this brief with the assistance of multi-agency partners and in consultation with the Feethams and Markets Working Group and the wider public.

### 2.2 The Consultation Process

The Planning and Development Brief was prepared as a consultation draft in Spring and early Summer 2008 and was presented for public consultation throughout July and early August 2008. Consultation was undertaken in conjunction of the Council's Talking Together community engagement programme, lead by Connecting with Communities.

A range of methodologies was employed throughout the process to cater for differing needs and encourage the widest participation. Through the use of questionnaires, web based response forms, interactive discussion and debate, display materials, multi-media, three-dimensional modelling, a photography project and consultation events a wide range of people were reached and engaged with.

Targeted consultation was made with hard to reach groups, faith groups, younger people, older people and those with disabilities and sensory impairment.

Opportunities were also made for detailed responses by letter and email as well as the recording of people's opinions as they spoke.

In addition direct approaches were made to the Civic Trust, statutory consultees and local stakeholders and partners.

16,000 full colour leaflets and questionnaires were delivered to homes in the Borough. The consultation was publicised in the Town Crier and the local press. Contact was made directly with 663 members of the public and 407 responses were logged and analysed, substantially more qualitative and detailed comments were received and considered.

The Brief was modified in response to the consultation prior to adoption as Council Policy

A comprehensive report is available as a separate document.

### 2.3 The Current Position

There are no extant planning permissions, either outline or full, applicable to the area at present. A preferred developer has been selected for the western most corner of the area covered by the brief as the headquarters for a successful Darlington based company. There has been significant developer interest in the Feethams area.

### 2.4 The Status of the Brief

This brief will be adopted Council Policy and as such will form the basis of discussions and dialogue with the Council when making development proposals. The brief will also form the framework for the subsequent consideration of development.

# 3. The Site

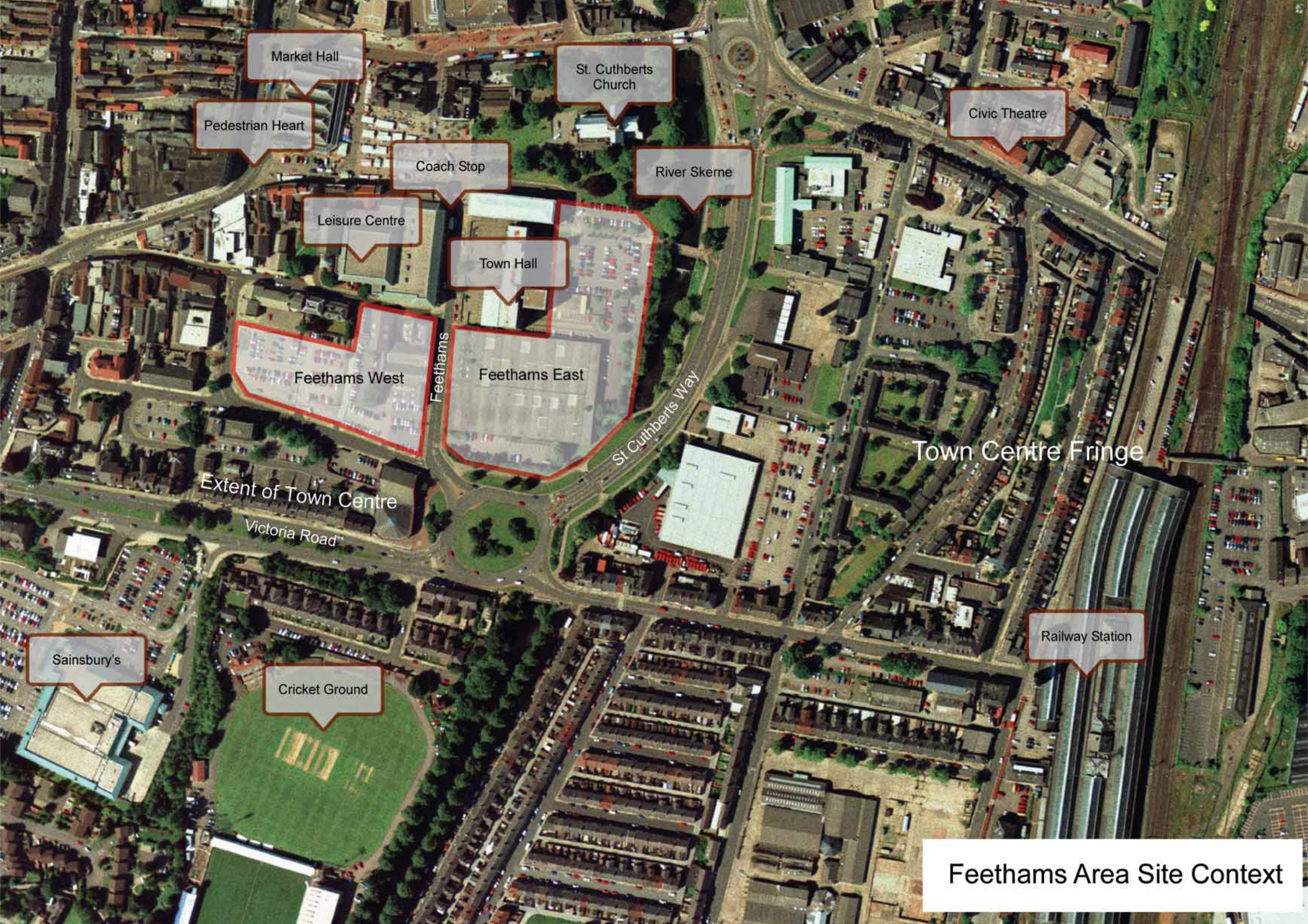
## 3.1 Context and Connectivity

Darlington is located in the North East of England and forms part of the Tees Valley sub-region, but also has strong cultural, social and economic links with neighbouring parts of North Yorkshire and South Durham. The Borough retains its market town character and functions as a sub-regional centre for employment, shopping and culture. It has a distinctive character with a rich heritage based on its industrial history, development of the nation's railways and a legacy of fine Victorian architecture. The town is surrounded by attractive and increasingly accessible countryside.

Darlington benefits from excellent transport links. It is located on the Eastcoast Mainline railway – London and Edinburgh can be reached within 2 1/2 hours and 2 hours, respectively. Good road connections are provided outside the region via the A1(M) and A66. Durham Tees Valley Airport is approximately 8 miles to the east of Darlington Town Centre.

Significant flagship development and investment is taking place in Darlington. A pedestrianisation of the town centre has just been completed, significantly improving the quality of the public realm. The retail offer is being strengthened by a proposed shopping and leisure development at Commercial Street (The Oval) planned to open in 2011. In addition, Central Park, a 30 hectare (75 acre) brownfield site to the east of the East Coast Mainline, will provide 600 new homes, hotel and conference facilities, leisure and offices.

The Feethams area lies within the inner ring road, close to the main shopping area, market square, Town Hall and Dolphin leisure centre and is within walking distance of the main-line railway station. Occupying a significant portion of the southern part of the town centre within the inner ring road, the area straddles Feethams (historically Feethams Lane) which is a key gateway to the town centre and serves as a national coach stop and interchange for onward journeys to Durham Tees Valley airport.



Market Hall

Pedestrian Heart

St. Cuthberts Church

Civic Theatre

Coach Stop

River Skerne

Leisure Centre

Town Hall

Feethams West

Feethams East

Feethams

St Cuthberts Way

Town Centre Fringe

Extent of Town Centre  
Victoria Road

Sainsbury's

Cricket Ground

Railway Station

Feethams Area Site Context

### 3.2 Site Description

The Feethams area (see map) is currently almost completely dominated by surface public car parking. Recent demolition has left some of the area unused and semi-derelict. A scheme is underway to create further car parking on the site of the former bus garage beside the Town Hall. The site area is approximately 2.75 hectares.

To the west of Feethams, a variety of buildings from predominantly the nineteenth and twentieth century loosely define the road network. Demolition and subsequent rebuilding has left a number of untidy backs and surface car parking, giving the area a lack of enclosure and definition. Beaumont Street (merged with the remains of South Arden Street) curves around the western edge and meets Houndgate, itself accessed from Feethams and leading into the main shopping area. The four storey Beaumont House dominates Beaumont Street. For the purposes of this planning and development brief this area is referred to as Feethams West.

The area to the east of Feethams adjoins the River Skerne, the Town Hall and St Cuthberts churchyard and is currently predominantly used as a surface car park. The riverside is informally planted with a small number of trees and has a narrow grassed area abutting a canalised channel. To the south east, the river enters a culvert taking it under the inner ring road to re-emerge on Victoria Embankment. At this south eastern corner the site has direct frontage to the roundabout on the inner ring road. This area to the east of Feethams is referred to as Feethams East.

The built form immediately adjoining the Feethams sties is varied in date and character. The large modern public buildings of the Dolphin Centre and Town Hall to the north contrast with the finer historic grain to the west. To the south, the area is bounded by the engineered curve of the inner ring road and roundabout with some visual connection to the now detached end of the former Feethams Lane heading towards the cricket ground.

Adjoining uses to the area include bars and restaurants, clubs, small offices, retail, hairdressing and beauty, galleries and a small amount of residential property in addition to the main public buildings previously mentioned.

The majority of the land at Feethams is in the ownership of the Council, as shown red on the plan. A full report on ownerships and title is available for potential developers.

### 3.3 Topography

There is a gentle slope across the site from west to east down to the River Skerne. A full topographic survey is available as a separate document.



### 3.4 Site History

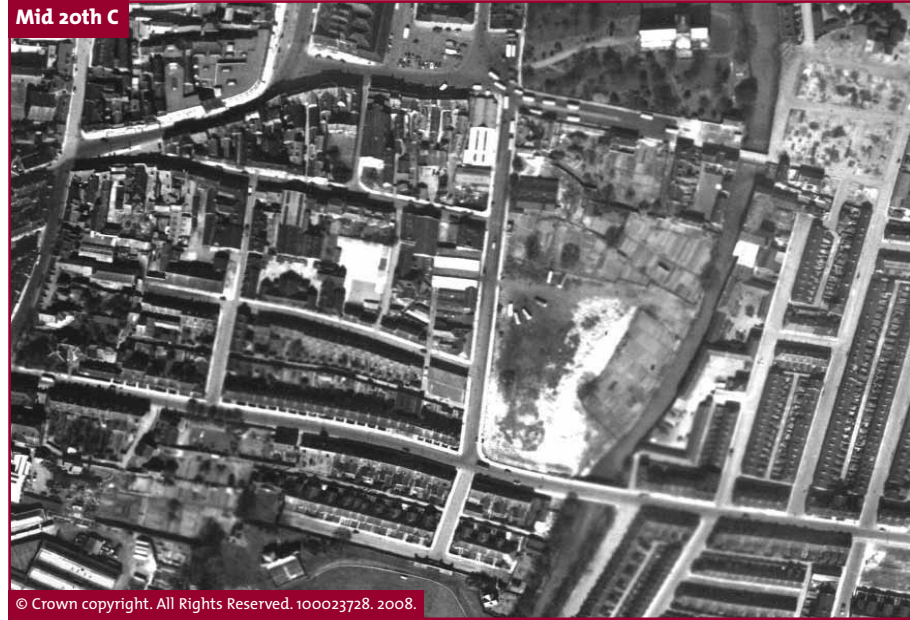
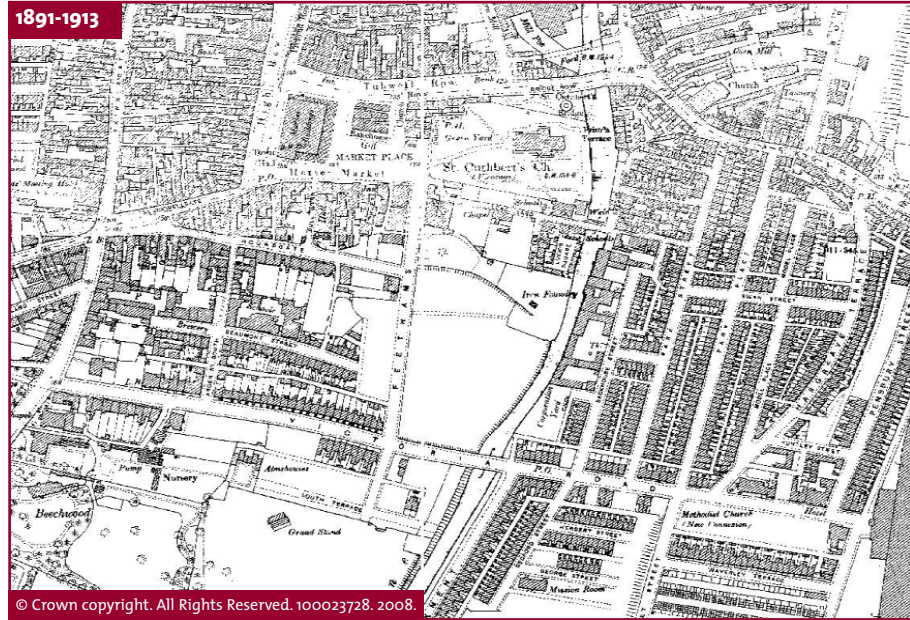
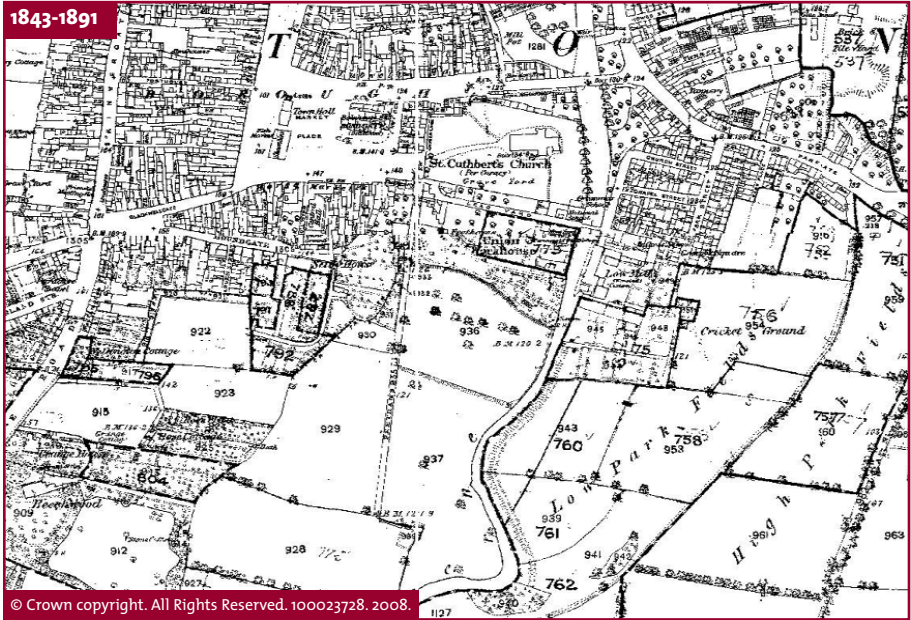
The County map of 1843-1891 shows the Feethams area bisected by the then Feethams Lane and the land being predominantly open space and rural in nature with the River Skerne gently meandering by. Feethams Lane leads directly into the market square, as does Feethams now. Fine-grained development adjoined the market square extending back to Houndgate and terminating before Feethams lane in a garth.

By 1891 further development had taken place; Houndgate joined a more formalised Feethams with some development on the corner. The Beaumont Street schools are shown although the western side of Feethams remains undeveloped. To the east there was an iron foundry by the river as well as some small-scale development adjoining Leadyard Bridge. Two further schools, the foundation stone for which remains, adjoined the churchyard. The River Skerne was beginning to be straightened following on from the construction of Victoria Embankment to the south.

The 1919 County map shows the whole of Feethams developed along the western side, with the east still remaining undeveloped. The open space behind Houndgate was formalised into the schoolyard for the Beaumont Street Schools. The site of the iron foundry was given over to allotment gardens. Beaumont street was developed on both sides with terraces fronting the street.

A later aerial photograph from the mid 20th Century shows the site prior to the construction of the Town Hall and Bus Station. The southeastern part of the area was the town's showground for some years and it is possible to see buses parked on this open land. To the west of Feethams, there are a number of buildings and uses, some that remained until the end of the 20th Century and which have recently been demolished





### **3.5 Heritage and Archaeology**

The Feethams area abuts the Darlington Town Centre Conservation Area and is close to a number of Listed Buildings. The area covered by the brief adjoins 11 and 12 Houndgate (both Grade II) and, to the north, the Church of St Cuthbert (Grade I)

When making proposals, developers should ensure that they preserve and enhance the setting of the Town Centre Conservation Area and preserve the setting of the Listed Buildings.

An archaeological desk based survey has been commissioned – early indications suggest that there may be significant finds as the site was not developed until relatively recently. As recommended in the desk based survey potential developers will be required to commission trial trenches across the site in order to ascertain the extent of any archaeological resource present, prior to the granting of planning permission.

The desk based survey report to assist potential developers is available as a separate document.

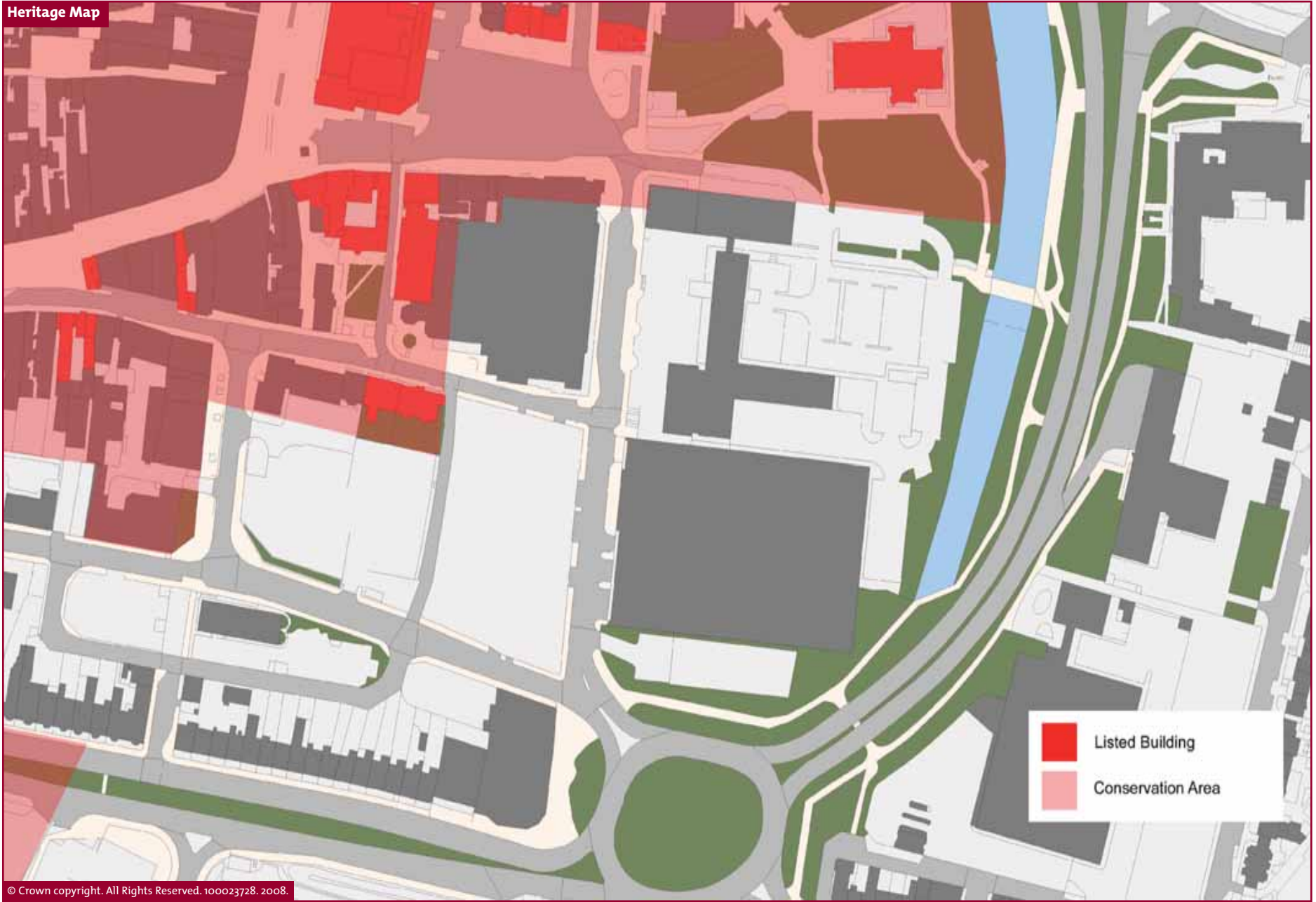
### **3.6 Utilities and Services**

The area benefits from connections to a full range of underground services close to Feethams, however significantly less are to be found to the rear of the Town Hall. A comprehensive composite diagram is available as a separate document. In all new developments, surface water drainage should be separate from foul sewage. The existing infrastructure allows this separation, although SUDS is a preferred option.

### **3.7 Current Proposals**

There are no current planning applications for any part of the area. It is anticipated that the first phase of office development to the far west may be applied for soon.

Heritage Map



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## 3.8 Urban Design Analysis

### 3.8.1 Movement

Feethams acts as a key route into the town centre from the inner ring road for traffic arriving from the south and west. Currently, delivery vehicles and coaches as well as private cars form the bulk of the movement. Many cars entering Feethams from the inner ring road turn into Beaumont Street to gain access to the surface car parking. Improvement of this junction is planned. At the end of Feethams, towards the market square, vehicles are slowed by a chicane. This northern end of Feethams acts as a coach stop creating a significant number of large vehicle movements and, although Feethams remains relatively quiet, crossing can be hazardous.

Very few bicycle movements are observed along the length of Feethams, probably due to alternative provision and the current hazards of the inner ring road. A crossing point for cyclists is proposed on the inner ring road at the Victoria Road roundabout together with a dedicated route along the Feethams river frontage.

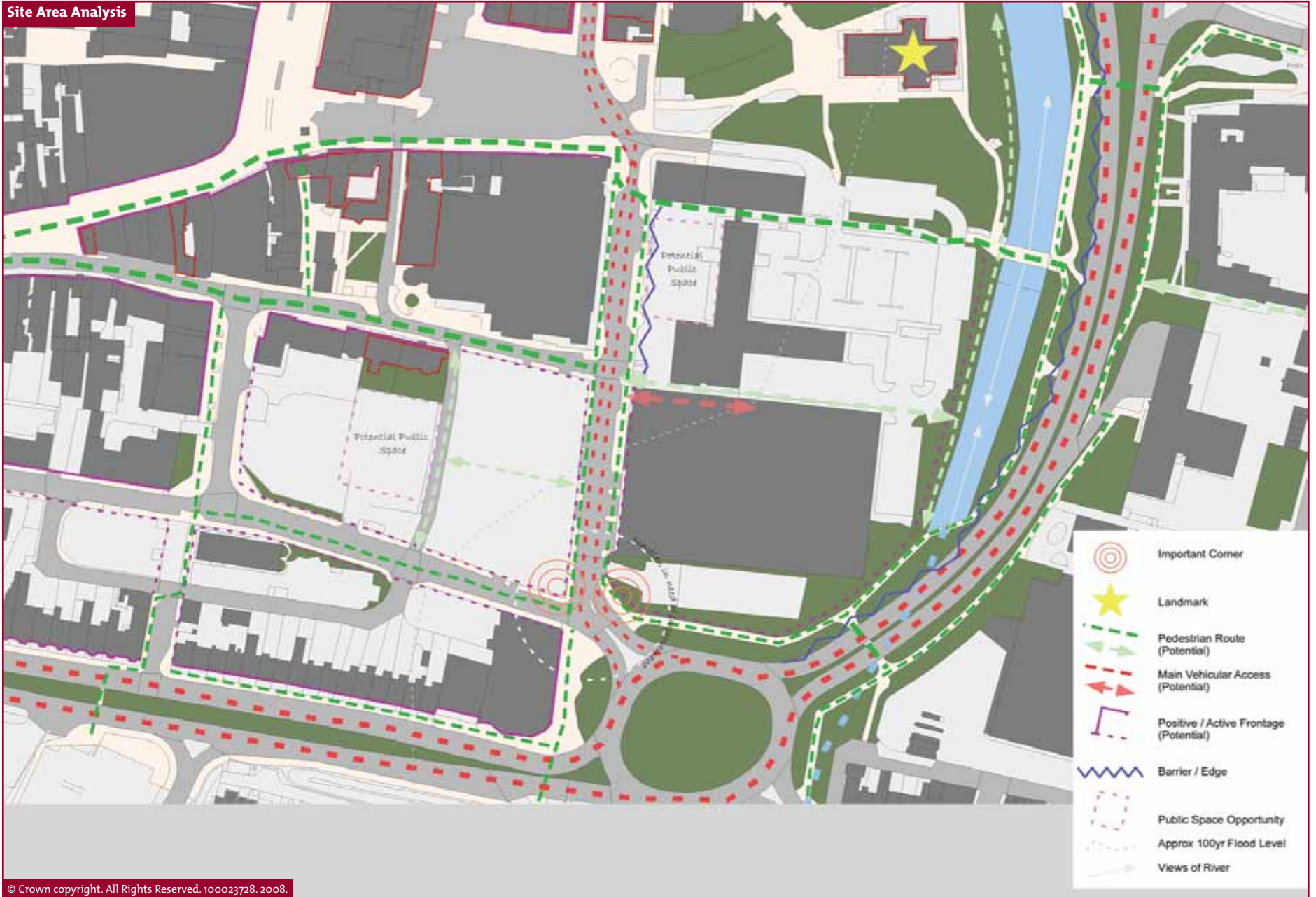
The southern and eastern flanks of the site are flanked by the inner ring road and roundabout making the site very prominent for vehicular traffic and as such can be seen as a 'shop window' for Darlington for through travellers and as such a key gateway to the town centre. Additionally the proximity of the area to the main pedestrian exit from the railway station on the East Coast Mainline further raises the areas gateway status.

The predominant pedestrian movement desire pattern is across the site from east to west and vice versa. Many people pass along the edges of the area in this direction but pedestrian penetration within the area is relatively poor. There are three pedestrian crossing points across the ring road to the east with varying levels of deflection. A significant north south route passes by the western flank of the area predominantly used by pedestrians going between Sainsbury's store and the town centre. Where permeability exists it is well used. For example, the small street or lane that runs from Houndgate to Beaumont Street between the car parks has a higher footfall than its amenity might suggest. Some of the finer grain historic yards close by are not as well used as they could be due to poor active frontages and poor amenity.

The River Skerne acts as an edge and as such restricts movement. Leadyard Bridge is a popular route but the fenced off area at the edge of the Town Hall car park prevents another crossing opportunity being available. Running between the River and the inner ring road a pedestrian and cycle path affords 'around town' pedestrian journeys, connected again via Leadyard Bridge. The chicane outside the Town Hall reduces traffic speed allowing a relatively safe pedestrian crossing point and the retention of this historic desire line and route.

Opportunities exist to improve permeability across the site in all directions. There is also the chance to create a riverside promenade for pedestrians and cyclists, overlooked with active frontages.

Site Area Analysis



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### **3.8.2 Space**

Feethams is a wide street with large buildings and, consequently, lacks human scale. The Feethams area in general suffers from a general lack of positive enclosure and often feels hostile and windswept. The wind is generally funnelled along the street and there are few places to rest or simply be. The surface car parks are typically bounded by the backs of buildings and suffer from significant spatial leakage and an untidy feel.

The forecourt of the Town Hall is removed from the street by a brutal concrete wall and this is further exacerbated by its elevated nature. This forecourt is an opportunity to connect the Town Hall with Darlington town centre and to also improve the waiting and arrival environment for coach and bus travellers.

One of the few areas within the Feethams sites that have remained undeveloped is the former yard of Beaumont Street school and, as such, could be upgraded as a positive public space with respect to the historic palimpsest. To the northwest of Feethams, the historic structure of the town becomes evident with a network of yards providing instructive locally distinctive design precedents.

What little greenspace is available currently in the area is by the river and, in the main, is inaccessible. The area has a generally hard feel to it with occasional relief in the form of trees and the remains of gardens to the properties on Houndgate.

### **3.8.3 Form**

The Feethams area can be characterised as being dominated by buildings of a large footprint and imposing scale with little articulation or detail. Houndgate and the adjoining Town Centre Conservation Area provide a positive contrast to many of the late c20 interventions.

Where buildings do address the street they are built to the pavement edge or have a small area of defensible space in front bounded by railings. Historic buildings around the area are typically two to three storeys in height and have a predominantly small plot size with a high level of extension and adaptation.

St. Cuthbert's Church is a key landmark visible from a number of places within the Feethams area, as is the tower of the railway station to the southeast.

Typically, the topography of the site is expressed in a sympathetic fall in roofline, although, as the changes in level are not great, few buildings use this as a design or access feature.

Forms in general are typically additive creating an organic and haphazard feel to the area as a whole, although, through architectural order, a high degree of uniformity around a theme can be found, particularly on street frontages.

### **3.8.4 Use**

In the streets and town adjoining the site there is a high level of active frontage ranging from own front door offices to boutique retail and bars. This is less in evidence further east across the site where there is a predominance of large public buildings with large areas of blank frontage.

Although in some buildings upper floors are clearly underused, there is still a good vertical mix of uses to be found, or at least a spectrum of activities. The mix of the administrative, civic, leisure and commercial uses is a good starting point for a vibrant mixed-use area, of which there is still some evidence.

Active frontages are an important part of the experience of the area and those parts where this has been compromised or eroded have progressively declined. The vacant mass of Beaumont House with its illegible single point of entry marks a low point in the makeup of the area.

Very little residential use is to be found at present either within or around the Feethams area although this may change with the conversion of properties on Victoria Road and the recent completion of an apartment block.

# 4. Challenges and Opportunities

## 4.1 Habitats, Biodiversity and Trees

### 4.1.1 Ecology and Green Infrastructure

The site is adjacent to the river Skerne that is an important part of Darlington's developing green infrastructure. It provides a central feature for this network of green spaces that together are helping to make the town an attractive place to live, raising significantly the quality of life. The development of this area will be expected to make the most of this aspect, providing opportunities for improved wildlife habitats along the rivers edge and elsewhere, provide for more stimulating, multi sensory outdoor experiences for pedestrians and cyclists and link in with other similar networks as they spread out to the edges of the town and beyond.

### 4.1.2 Habitats

The churchyard of St Cuthberts Church is dominated by mature trees forming an important habitat within the Town Centre. The Feethams area is bounded to the east by the riparian environment of the River Skerne that has been greatly improved along its course in recent years, although the immediate stretch adjoining the site is compromised by a concrete canalisation. Across the site there are a number of smaller potential habitats contributing a wider matrix.

### 4.1.3 Trees

Within the area of the brief there are no Tree Preservation Orders. Adjacent to this area, however, in St Cuthberts churchyard all of the trees, by way of being in the Town Centre Conservation Area are protected. New development will have to take into account the Root Protection Area of this valuable group of trees.

A number of high quality trees ,BS5837 2005 Grade A or B, are in the Feethams area and worthy of relocation with the use of a tree spade, which may be a condition of development. A report is available for developers.

## 4.2 Flood Risk

A comprehensive flood risk assessment for the area has been undertaken. It is recommended that future development achieves greenfield levels of runoff by either SUDS or engineering means.

## 4.3 Ground Conditions

A borehole survey has been commissioned to determine the underlying ground conditions. A technical document is available for information. In summary there are a variety of ground conditions across the site and developers are required to undertake their own investigations.

## 4.4 Contamination

Environmental searches have been produced by the Environmental Health Section of the Council giving information held by the division on past industrial uses, any previous site investigation/remediation works, landfill sites and information on surface water receptors and groundwater vulnerability.

Darlington Borough Council commissioned Scott Wilson and their contractor Solmek to install a limited number of boreholes across the development site to provide information on ground conditions. A small number of soil samples were also taken and analysed for heavy metals, speciated TPH and PAH to provide factual information on soil contamination for potential developers. The Ground Investigation Report by Solmek on Feethams Redevelopment, Darlington dated the April 2008 includes the soil sample results and borehole logs and is attached with the relevant environmental searches in the Appendix.

Potential developers need to be aware that this information is provided as indicative information and contains no information on risk assessment or for example on ground gases, groundwater contamination etc. The approach advocated in CLR11 "Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination" will need to be followed with regard to the development control process and a desk study, risk assessment and full site investigation may be required.

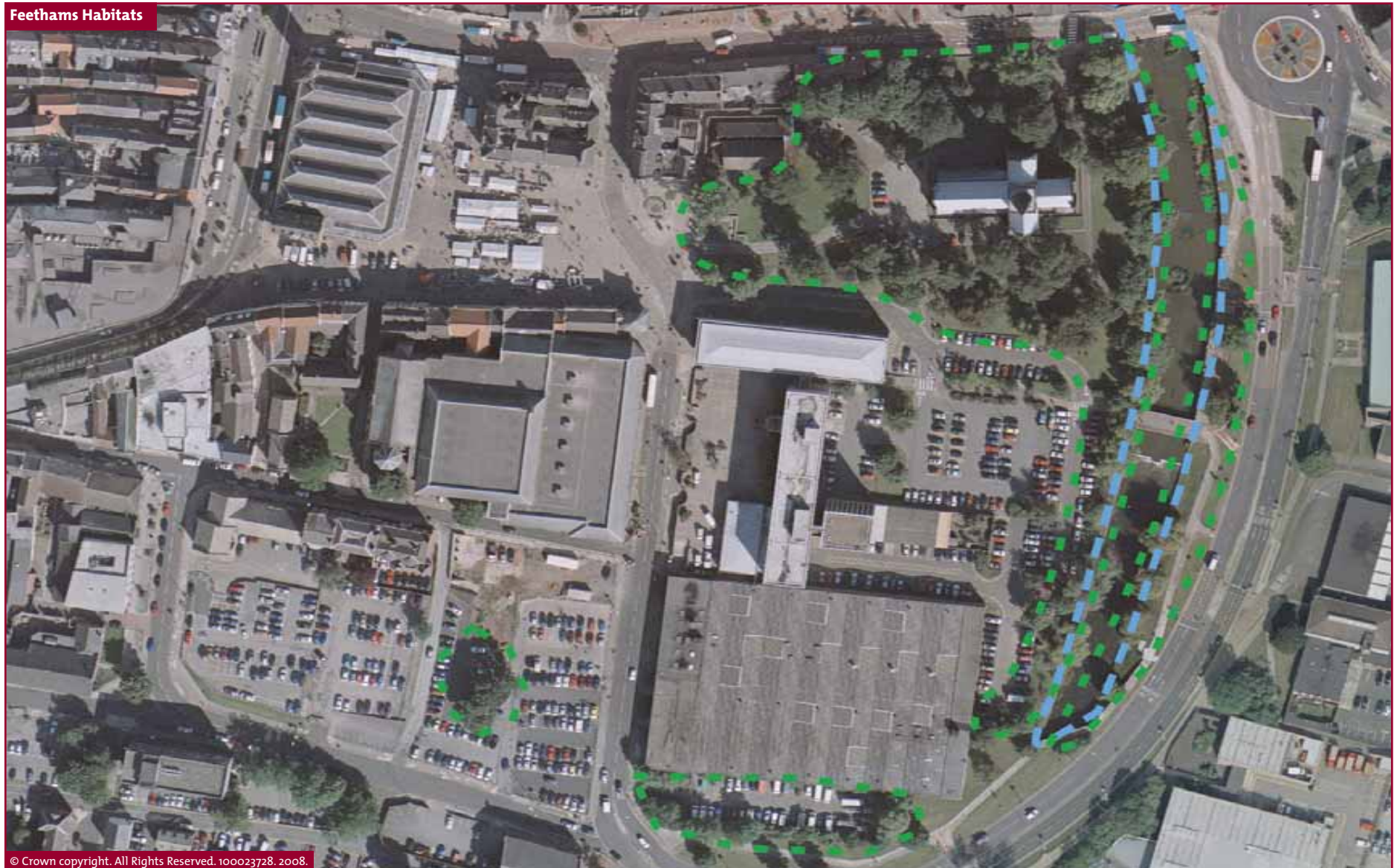
## 4.5 Access

Access must be maintained around the Town Hall, which has a number of entrance and exit points and a variety of servicing requirements. Access to neighbouring properties too, must be maintained. Developments should allow easy access of utilities and services underground and above ground. Houndgate and Feethams are well-used public transport corridors and it is intended for these to be retained as part of the development.



## 4.6 Sensitive Uses

New development may adjoin the Town Hall and its associated offices and services. New development will need to consider any potential security issues.



# 5. Planning Policy

The key feature of these sites in policy terms is their location within a major town centre:

- Darlington is about the 80th largest town centre in Britain and the fourth largest in the North East;
- it is the sub-regional centre for the western Tees Valley and extensive parts of south Durham and north Yorkshire;
- its catchment population for higher-order goods and services is around one-quarter of a million people; for day-to-day purchases and services it is around 100,000.

## 5.1 Relevant National Policy

National planning policies for town centres are set out in PPS6 (Planning Policy Statement 6, 2005).

Under PPS6 the main uses which should be focused within town centres are:

- retail;
- leisure, entertainment and the more intensive sport & recreation uses (eg cinemas, restaurants, bars/pubs, nightclubs, casinos, fitness centres, indoor bowling, bingo halls);
- offices; and,
- arts, culture and tourism (theatres, museums, galleries, concert halls, hotels, conference facilities).
- addition, housing “will be an important element in most mixed-use, multi-storey developments”.

Other national planning policies are relevant on specific issues (flood risk, design, etc).

## 5.2 The Development Plan: Regional Policy

PPS6 policies are echoed at regional level in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG1: Regional Planning Guidance for the North East, 2002) and more closely in its emerging replacement (RSS Submission Draft, 2005 and Further Proposed Changes, 2008):

- In conurbations and main settlements the development of retail, commerce, entertainment, leisure, cultural and religious facilities, recreation, education, health services, business, public services and other high trip-generating uses should be focused within defined urban centres. (Further Proposed Changes Policy 25a)
- Within the Tees Valley city region the majority of new retail and leisure floorspace should be located in the centres of Middlesbrough and Darlington. (Further Proposed Changes Policies 7.3 and 25c)

## 5.4 The Emerging Development Plan

The new-style Local Development Framework (LDF) for Darlington is at an early stage, with consultation on Options for the Core Strategy taking place in October 2008.

## 5.5 Regeneration Strategy and Background

The Council and One NorthEast took the Local Plan policies and proposals forward in a town centre strategy (Adding to Quality: A Development Strategy for Darlington Town Centre, 2001). This stresses the importance of the town centre as a key asset of the Borough, whose proper development is essential to achieving economic competitiveness, as well as to enhancing its social and cultural value to the community. The challenge, it affirms, is:

“To use the opportunities development sites provide to raise substantially the level of attractions in the town centre, whilst at the same time cherishing its environmental quality.”

The strategy provided the grounding for the extensive traffic and environment improvements of the Pedestrian Heart and the Oval retail and leisure development. Its detailed consideration and proposals for the Feethams/Beaumont Street area are encapsulated and refined in this brief.

(For further details of the documents referred to below national level see the ‘Planning Policy’ section on [www.darlington.gov.uk/planning](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/planning))

Area	Policy/Proposal/Strategy (with Ref)
<b>Feethams West</b> (‘Beaumont Street’ site in the Local Plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified as a Central Area Development Site: development permissible for offices or other travel-intensive uses including shopping, leisure and hotels. (EP11.3, S1, R24, TO4)</li> <li>• Development to be in conjunction with the construction of a multi-storey car park (estimated 550 spaces).* (T19)</li> <li>• Site abuts the Town Centre Conservation Area: development must preserve or enhance its character or appearance.</li> </ul>
<b>Feethams East</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No site-specific proposals for the bus depot.</li> <li>• There is a policy that the Council will ‘seek to improve or replace facilities for passenger at the bus/coach station with the co-operation of the operator’. (T32)</li> <li>• A small landscaped area between the bus depot and the ring road is designated as ‘open land’. (E3)</li> <li>• Adjoins inner ring road: the appearance of the Borough from main travel routes such as this is to be ‘maintained and enhanced’. (E16). Also adjoins River Skerne: opportunities will be sought to ‘enhance the appearance, vitality, and recreation and nature conservation value of buildings and land adjacent to it’. (E18)</li> <li>• Grade I listed St. Cuthbert’s Church is nearby: a key townscape feature whose setting will be protected. (E10)</li> <li>• Development not normally permitted within flood risk area.</li> </ul>
<b>Town Hall Grounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The car park is ‘to be retained for public use’ (stated capacity 85).* (T20)</li> <li>• Cycle route network runs through northern part of site (Leadyard Bridge to Market Place). (T36)</li> <li>• Grade I listed St. Cuthbert’s Church immediately to the north: a key townscape feature whose setting will be protected. (E10)</li> <li>• Adjacent to the Town Centre Conservation Area: development must preserve or enhance its character or appearance. (E35: not ‘saved’ but equivalent national policy applies)</li> <li>• Close to inner ring road: the appearance of the Borough from main travel routes such as this is to be ‘maintained and enhanced’. (E16)</li> <li>• River Skerne runs alongside: opportunities will be sought to ‘enhance the appearance, vitality, and recreation and nature conservation value of buildings and land adjacent to it’. (E18)</li> <li>• Development not normally permitted within flood risk area.</li> </ul>
<b>Beaumont Street West</b> (small car park site)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified as a Central Area Development Site: development permissible for offices or other travel-intensive uses including shopping, leisure and hotels. (EP11.3, S1, R24, TO4)</li> <li>• Site abuts the Town Centre Conservation Area: development must preserve or enhance its character or appearance.</li> </ul>
<b>All</b>	<p>Various general policies including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public car parks must give priority to short-stay parking. (T21)</li> <li>• Non operational parking space (inc. staff and customer parking) will be permitted only where it is compatible with the totality of the provisions of Policies T19-T20 (ie. proposals for public car parks), that it is generally available and that priority is given to short-stay parking.* (T25)</li> <li>• Desktop archaeological study and field evaluation required if site of archaeological importance. (E34)</li> </ul>

\* Note on Car Parking: the Local Plan proposals were on the basis that there should be approximately 2,000 parking spaces available for public use during the week inside the ring road and at least a further 1,000 spaces in car parks outside it. The Town Centre Development Strategy (below) reiterated these as minimum targets. The capacities cited for specific car parks were indicative, to show how the totals could be achieved, and are not prescriptive.

# 6. Appropriate Development Responses

## 6.1 Uses

The Feethams Area can be divided into four main areas and a supplementary area with associated suggested uses for each. These uses are based on the capacity of the site to accommodate them and to provide a good level of integration with the surrounding context and access arrangements. Mixed-use development with a horizontal and vertical stratification of uses is encouraged.

### Area 1

Predominantly office use capturing demand for Grade A accommodation. Other uses that would be encouraged on the ground floor would be cafés, bars and restaurants as well as small-scale retail.

There will also be a public open space in this area requiring active frontages.

### Area 2

Office, hotel, leisure, retail, restaurant, bar and cultural facilities would all be acceptable uses. Development would need to preserve and enhance the character of the Town Centre Conservation Area as well as preserving the setting of the listed buildings on Houndgate. Uses that promote active frontages and openings to the street and public spaces are favoured.

### Area 3

A full range of town centre uses occupying the ground floor and upper floors would be acceptable. Subject to design considerations it may be possible to accommodate a 5-750 space multi-storey car park in this area which should be wrapped in other uses on the main elevations. It is unlikely that extra parking could be accommodated over and above the that of the MSCP. Active frontages will be required addressing streets, public open space and the riverside.

### Area 4

This area is also a potential location for a 500 - 750 space multi-storey car park serving the needs of this area of the town. Development that should be wrapped around the car park or otherwise might include a variety of residence types, small offices, cafés, bars restaurants and cultural facilities of a scale sympathetic to the setting of St Cuthbert's Church and the riverside.

## Area 5

Enhancement of this area is proposed to create an attractive public space together with improved facilities for those waiting for buses and coaches. Development opportunities may arise in this area as a result of these improvements.

Developers should note an extract of the resolution of the Council on the 23rd November 2006 that states;

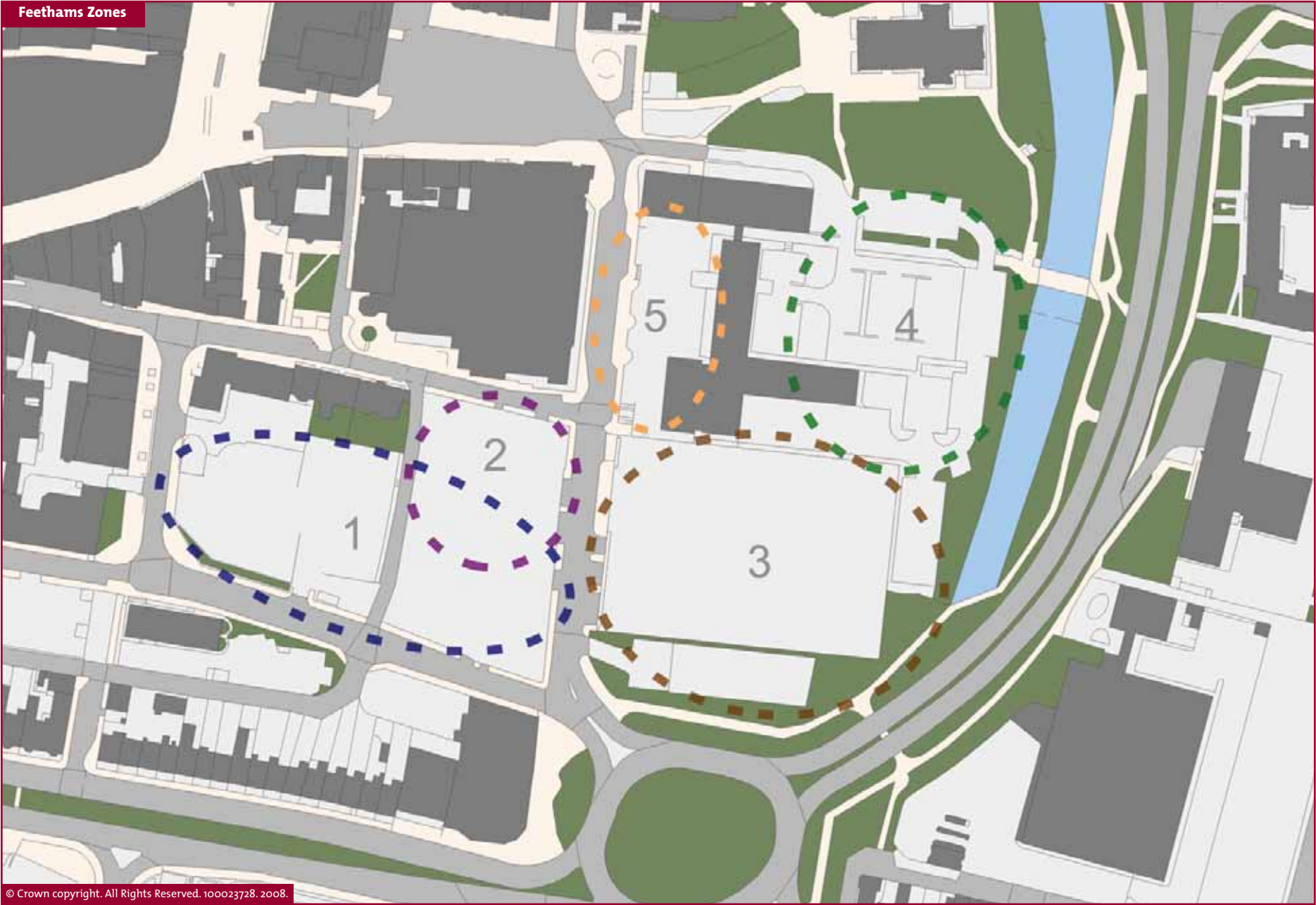
(b) That any subsequent offers for a large supermarket or superstore on Council land in Darlington Town Centre be not approved.

**In all areas, proposals that will provide improved leisure facilities for all ages will be encouraged.**

Listed building on Houndgate



Feethams Zones



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## 6.2 Market Demand

King Sturge LLP have been commissioned to undertake a Commercial Market Assessment that underpins the assumptions made in the brief regarding the mix of uses and quantum of development. Their findings have been used to inform the development of the brief.

Demand for Grade A offices has been responded to and provision made to accommodate these large floorplate uses. A portion of the site has been allocated for this use as proposals are already advancing and a preferred developer selected.

## 6.3 Planning Standards to be Applied

Potential developers should be aware that the Council has a number of standards and strategies that will be applied including:

- Open space either on or off site as appropriate
- Affordable Housing
- Highway design and access

As well as encouraging passive solar design, energy efficiency and micro generation and the quality of design and landscaping alongside major transport corridors.

The Council recognises the need to support existing communities and achieve social progress by tackling social exclusion, to protect the environment by reducing car-based commuting, and to ensure continued high levels of economic growth by expanding the local labour market. It will therefore encourage development that will provide opportunities suitable for people living in local communities, especially those that are disadvantaged or otherwise outside of the labour market, by undertaking targeted recruitment and training during the construction and occupation of the development.

## 6.4 Required Infrastructure and Off-Site Requirements

Contributions may be sought from developers towards the cost of the following:

Appropriate works to the highway network and junctions, including improvements to the wider highway network remote from the site (A Transport Assessment would be required to assess the impact of the development proposals on the highway network)

- An improvement in the facilities for bus and coach travellers to include waiting areas, toilet facilities and connections to other transport
- Improvement of the existing public realm within and around the Feethams area
- The creation of at least one new public square and a greenspace close to the River Skerne to a size of no less than 2500m<sup>2</sup>
- The building of a riverside promenade and improvements to the landscape and ecology value of the Skerne
- The building of a new access road or roads leading to the riverside
- The construction of the multi-storey car park
- Upgrading the town hall forecourt to improve linkages and amenity for the town

## 6.5 Access, Parking and Layout

### 6.5.1

All development proposals should ensure that access for all is maintained, improved and promoted. Development that is inclusive for all is a minimum aspiration.

- Service access must be retained for adjacent properties where applicable
- Access must be retained to all statutory undertakers apparatus and associated control cabinets
- Access to the side and rear entrances and servicing requirements of the town hall must be maintained.
- All developments should allow maximum permeability through the area, whilst ensuring that natural surveillance and security is taken into consideration.
- Connectivity with the existing pedestrian and cycle network will be required
- Public spaces should be accessible via ramps where level changes dictate
- All routes through the site both new and existing should benefit from a high level of natural surveillance and active frontages
- Vehicular access will be required to serve the needs of the multi-storey car park on Feethams East, with sufficient distance from the junction to prevent queuing.
- It is envisaged that Feethams will be the primary means of access for future development with individual buildings primarily accessed via side

roads and Beaumont Street except in exceptional circumstances.

- A new riverside promenade for both pedestrians and cyclists will be created on the west bank of the Skerne connecting to the existing provision and extending beyond Leadyard Bridge
- The riverside promenade and adjoining spaces may have restricted vehicular access similar to the Pedestrian Heart
- Where possible active frontages should be created on the existing Beaumont Street and Houndgate to make attractive and safe connections from the Feethams area to the retail areas to the west and the wider town centre.

### 6.5.2 Parking

There is a requirement for a 500 - 750 space multi-storey car park within the Feethams area, depending on associated uses. This should be accessed from a side road and designed so as to minimize its visual impact and be wrapped in development, with active frontages to the ground floor. Additionally any new car park should:

- Have a pedestrian entrance and exit that relates to pedestrian movement towards Darlington Town Centre
- Provide additional facilities for visitors including toilets, baby change and information

Cycle parking should also be provided as a central resource and related to new development. Also motorcycle parking, accessible parking and other design and policy considerations in the parking strategy must be adhered to. Car parking should meet 'secure' car park status with CCTV and adequate monitoring and surveillance.

It is anticipated that the car park will remain within Council control

It is desirable that all new developments must accommodate parking within the footprint of the building. As this is by nature a sustainable location parking standards will be relaxed to facilitate appropriate forms of development

Parking may be shared and designed so as to be complementary to other uses between for example day and evening.

### 6.5.3 Layout

Buildings proposed should have clear front, back and servicing arrangements. Refuse and recycling facilities should be designed so as to be unobtrusive.

Spatial enclosure and movement routes should benefit from active frontages, natural surveillance and a legible building line.

Where opportunities exist to harness the topography to allow level access these should be taken so as to ensure ease of movement.

## 6.6 Scale, Form and Massing

### 6.6.1 Basic Principles

Across the site, developments of less than three storeys will not be acceptable unless the building has a street frontage of less than 7m. Buildings of less than two storeys are not acceptable anywhere within the area defined by this brief.

Any buildings proposed must be built directly to the pavement edge, with only a small area of defensible space behind a clear boundary being acceptable except in exceptional circumstances.

### 6.6.2 Site Specific Prescriptions

#### Area 1

Developments of up to four storeys, rising to five at Feethams will be acceptable. The upper storey should be set back from the main elevations and any servicing kept away from the perimeter.

#### Area 2

Developments of up to three and a half storeys on the corner of Feethams and Houndgate will be acceptable falling to three storeys adjacent to the listed buildings and conservation area. This is based on the characteristics of the immediate area and to minimise the impact on the setting of the adjoining listed buildings

#### Area 3

Four to five storey maximum development height, subject to the size of the footprint and relationship to the public realm. Buildings of a large footprint will be limited to four storeys. Again buildings over four storeys should have a setback.

#### Area 4

Adjacent to the Town Hall development of up to five storeys will be acceptable. Along the riverside, adjacent to St. Cuthberts Church and in relation to any public space heights will be limited to three and a half storeys.

#### Area 5

There may be scope to improve facilities close to the town hall with an appropriately scaled kiosk and / or waiting facilities for coach travellers.

## 6.7 Landscape and Ecology

Any improvements to the public realm must demonstrate how they contribute to the green infrastructure of the Feethams area and the wider network. For example mature trees in a public square make a contribution to habitats, shading and the handling of precipitation.

The river corridor of the Skerne is to be improved through the redevelopment of the area. Every opportunity should be made to improve the public realm adjoining the riverside by making the area a positive outdoor experience, especially through the use of semi natural planting schemes and landscaping.

New public spaces, both alongside the River Skerne and elsewhere should be predominantly green in character, reflecting Darlington's arboreal heritage.

## 6.8 Features to be Retained

There is no requirement to retain any buildings or features within the area covered by this brief. Any net loss of habitat will have to be demonstrated to have been replaced elsewhere.

The brief area covers the existing Kids & Co, Nursery to the rear of the Town Hall. Potential developers should be aware that;

- If redevelopment proposals include the site occupied by the nursery alternative provision on site or elsewhere will need to be made.
- There may be a requirement for a contribution towards the costs of relocation.
- Kids & Co, are currently undertaking their own consultation exercise coinciding with the public consultation for this brief.

To the south of Feethams East there is a compound currently occupied by the Council's Markets function. Through the process of redeveloping the area alternative provision will have to be made on site, with easy access to the marketplace and the market hall.

## 6.9 General Design Guidance

Development within the area covered by this brief will be subject to the emerging 'Design of New Development' SPD that will form a part of the Local Development Framework. Covering all aspects of design including environmental performance, local character and liveability this document is

due for adoption in early 2009. Potential developers should also be aware that any development that is a result of partnership with OneNE may be subject their their own design quality standards, applied across the region.

### 6.9.1 Important Elevations

Buildings should front onto roads, streets and open space. In particular, elevations to the river, ring road, Feethams, Beaumont Street and Houndgate must be designed so as to maximise natural surveillance and be of the highest quality. Blank elevations with little or no articulation or visual interest will not be acceptable and a clear distinction between the front and rear of buildings is encouraged. (drawing required) Where new public spaces are created buildings must address the space directly creating enclosure and activity.

### 6.9.2 Active Frontages

Wherever possible buildings should be designed so as to maximise the activity at street level. This can take the form of entrances and reception areas, break out spaces and staff facilities in buildings that have a single point of access. Notwithstanding the main entrance must be to the street and made accessible to all.

Around public spaces and in particular parts of the Feethams area a variety of ground floor uses will be required to have a good fit with the surrounding area and to enliven the public realm. Areas that will require ground floor uses over and above entrances and reception areas are as follows;

2. The Riverside of Zones 3 and 4
3. Feethams in Zones 2 and 3
4. Houndgate in Zone 2
5. Any new street or streets leading to the riverside.
6. The Lane between Houndgate and Beaumont Street
7. Beaumont Street in Zone 1 around any potential public space
8. Any public space created in Zones 3 and 4
9. Any identified uses identified in 6.1 will be encouraged.



### **6.9.3 The Quality of the Public Realm**

The public realm must be created as a space for all, inclusive and accessible. Opportunities to improve the amenity of public space through high quality materials, landscaping and public art should be taken. New streets and spaces should be designed so as to be able to accommodate trees, as an inherent characteristic of Darlington is its leafy environment.

In designing any new part of the public realm, or improving existing assets, particular care should be taken to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities through all stages of the design and construction process.

The public realm must contribute to the green infrastructure of the area and benefit from a favourable aspect in terms of sunlight, shade and shelter. Buildings designed around the public realm must be high quality materials, interesting and accessible relationship with the space at ground level.

The needs of CCTV and ease of use for the emergency services must be taken into consideration.

### **6.9.4 Roofline**

Darlington town centre benefits from a varied and interesting roofscape, a result of incremental development responses and to topography. New development should;

1. Respond to the topography and reflect this in the roofline and eaves unless exploited at ground floor level for access
2. Where a traditional pitched roof is proposed it should be of an angle similar to historic examples nearby and achieved in a number of bays where the span is large
3. In buildings with a flat roof a parapet may be exploited to allow a variety of materials to be used behind, including green roofs and terraces.
4. Where the roofspace is to be used for accommodation incursions should be of the wall material and form a parapet gable.
5. Services should be accommodated away from the edges of the roof and designed so as to be inconspicuous.
6. Buildings above 3 to 4 storeys must have a setback if the roof is not pitched

### **6.9.5 Elevations**

In response to the local context new buildings should be designed with a clear bottom, middle and top.

The ground floor offers opportunities to use high quality materials, tactile and visually stimulating details and alternative solid to void relationships. Also ground floors should be designed to be flexible to allow adaptation over time and ceiling heights specified to this end.

A visual distinction between the top of the walls and the roof area should be made through detailing.

### **6.9.6 Corners**

Corners of buildings should be designed appropriate to the relative importance and hierarchy of the street network.

Buildings designed to turn corners elegantly, with visual interest; access and natural surveillance will be encouraged.

### **6.9.7 Materials**

Building materials should be high quality and resilient. Appropriate materials for new buildings might include brick, stone, glass, render, and high quality cladding as the primary wall material. Other locally distinctive materials include terracotta, faience and marble as areas of detail.

Materials and construction techniques that reduce the embodied energy of buildings will be encouraged, see 6.9.9 Sustainable Design.

### **6.9.8 Urban Grain and Plot Sizes**

Buildings of a necessarily large footprint have been zoned to the south of the area (see 6.1 uses). Close to the Town Centre Conservation area in Zone 2 development that reflects the character of the adjoining conservation area will be encouraged.

In Zones 3 and 4 buildings should be designed so as to create permeability in all directions and be articulated to reduce their perceived footprint from the primary streets and the riverside.

To the riverside a minimum of 7m frontage and a maximum of 20m should be used as a guide as to when to change the articulation of the buildings either in eaves height, detail or materials. These tolerances can be further subdivided into 10m or 14m increments.

### **6.9.9 Sustainable Design**

Climate Change and sustainable development are issues that everyone, including Darlington's population, must address. The Darlington Partnership signed the Darlington Declaration in 2005, which symbolises a commitment to tackling the cause and effect of climate change in Darlington.

The Darlington Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan sets out the actions needed to be taken to achieve this commitment. The planning system will contribute greatly to mitigating against the causes of climate change, whilst also ensuring that we adapt to the impacts of climate change that are already occurring, through promoting sustainable forms of development. This development should seek to minimise demand, use energy more efficiently, increase the amount of energy from renewable sources and reduce the reliance on fossil fuels.

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy seeks to achieve 10% of the region's electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2010 rising to 20% by 2020. Darlington's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan sets out ways the Borough can achieve this target by encouraging the use of a range of renewable technologies.

Scott Wilson have been commissioned to provide advice on the feasibility of micro-renewable energy production in the Feethams area. The report is appended to this brief. The Council will encourage schemes that take advantage of the opportunities available to generate energy on site through district heating, combined heat and power and micro-renewables.

Across the site, in line with the flood risk assessment, run off should be limited to that of a greenfield state. This can be achieved through SUDS and green roofs as well as the creative use of water as a design feature. Buildings should be designed to maximise water efficiency and conservation.

Proposals that take advantage of energy efficiency measures will be encouraged. As a minimum standard performance levels equivalent to BREAAAM 'Excellent' will be required of all commercial schemes and an equivalent Code for Sustainable Homes rating will be sought for residential development.

### **6.9.10 Public Art**

Public Art has played an important part in the development of new spaces in Darlington in recent years and the Council recognises the role it plays in developing a unique and high quality public realm. Opportunities for Public Art inclusion should therefore be maximised. It is recommended that artists are involved at the earliest stages of proposals to increase the potential for integrated artworks.

Public Art plays an important role in developing a unique identity for the region, attracting new visitors and encouraging community ownership and interaction with the environment. It enhances the quality of the built environment promoting high quality design and a sustainable environment.

# 7. The Development Process

## 7.1 Next Steps

This Planning and Development Brief represents the first stage of the redevelopment of the Feethams area.

Post consultation and adoption, and in response to market demand, there could be a number of possibilities;

- Parcels of land could be disposed of to meet demand and economic regeneration objectives, usually involving selection process and preferred developer.
- A competition could be held for a larger part of the area to bring forward a comprehensive redevelopment.

In either case a further consultation process through either the planning process or via the Council directly would be undertaken, allowing further comment on proposals made in response to this brief.

All proposals, in line with Council policy, must be consulted upon prior to an application being made in compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement.