



Cabinet Agenda

5.00 pm, Tuesday, 6 May 2025
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT

Members and Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.

1. Introductions/Attendance at Meeting.
2. Declarations of Interest.
3. To hear relevant representation (from Members and the General Public) on items on this Cabinet agenda.
4. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Cabinet held on 8th April 2025 (Pages 5 - 12)
5. Matters Referred to Cabinet – There are no matters referred back for reconsideration to this meeting
6. Issues Arising from Scrutiny Committee – There are no issues referred back from the Scrutiny Committees to this Meeting, other than where they have been specifically consulted on an issue and their comments are included in the contents of the relevant report on this agenda.
7. Key Decisions:-
 - (a) High Street Rental Auctions – Report of the Executive Director, Economy and Public Protection (Pages 13 - 26)
 - (b) SEND Strategy 2025-2029 – Report of the Executive Director, People (Pages 27 - 98)
8. Designation of New Middleton St George Conservation Area and Adoption of Finalised

Appraisal – Report of the Executive Director, Economy and Public Protection (Pages 99 - 222)

9. Release of High Needs Capital - Beaumont Hill Academy – Report of the Executive Director, People (Pages 223 - 228)
10. Membership Changes - To consider any Membership Changes to Other Bodies to which Cabinet appoints.
11. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting.
12. Questions.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

13. To consider the exclusion of the Public and Press :-

RESOLVED - That, pursuant to Sections 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the ensuing items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in exclusion paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

PART III NOT FOR PUBLICATION

14. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting.
15. Questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'A. C. Wennington', with a horizontal line underneath.

Amy Wennington
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Friday, 25 April 2025

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

Councillors Curry, Garner, Harker, McCollom, McEwan, Porter, Roche and Wallis.

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Paul Dalton, Democratic and Elections Manager, Resources and Governance, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays (e-mail paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk or telephone 01325 405805).

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**DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED BEFORE
WEDNESDAY, 23 APRIL 2025**

CABINET
Tuesday, 8 April 2025

PRESENT – Councillors Harker (Chair), Curry, Garner, McCollom, McEwan, Porter, Roche and Wallis.

INVITEES – Councillors Dulston and Snedker.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor M. Nicholson.

C129 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**C130 TO HEAR RELEVANT REPRESENTATION (FROM MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC) ON
ITEMS ON THIS CABINET AGENDA.**

No representations were made by Members or members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

C131 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS CABINET HELD ON 4TH MARCH 2025

Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Cabinet held on 4th March 2025.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

REASON – They represent an accurate record of the meeting.

C132 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET

There were no matters referred back for re-consideration to this meeting.

C133 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Scrutiny considered at this meeting.

C134 KEY DECISIONS:-

(1) UPDATED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - PART 1 (LOCAL PLAN)

The Cabinet Member with the Economy Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection to seek approval for consultation on an updated version of its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Part 1 (Local Plan).

The submitted report stated that a SCI sets out how Local Planning Authorities will involve local communities, businesses and key stakeholders in the preparation of the Local Plan and any future Development Plan Documents (DPD's) or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's), and that authorities are required to review their SCI's at least every five years. It was reported that the Darlington SCI – Part 1 was last reviewed in August 2020 with temporary updates made to reflect national COVID 19 pandemic restrictions.

The submitted report outlined that the proposed update would remove these restrictions and allow some other minor updates to be consulted on prior to the statutory consultation periods on the Local Plan Review. It was reported that an updated Design of New Development Supplementary (SPD) would also be prepared and consulted upon alongside the review of the Local Plan in line with the content of the updated SCI, and that once consultation had taken place and any comments received had been considered, an updated version would be brought back to Cabinet and Council for adoption.

RESOLVED - That the submitted Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Part 1 (Local Plan) be agreed for a public consultation.

REASON – The Council is required to have an up-to-date SCI as part of the plan review process.

(2) ANNUAL PROCUREMENT PLAN AND PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Resources and Governance to present the Annual Procurement Plan Update to Cabinet for approval. Cabinet was asked to consider and approve the assessment of contracts that are considered to be strategic or non-strategic.

The submitted report also updated Cabinet on the outcomes of procurement(s) previously designated as Strategic, about the decisions taken by the Procurement Board to waive the Contract Procedure Rules and on the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 and the new e-tendering system.

Reference was made to social value, the previous social value delivered and the work that could be undertaken to engage small and medium sized businesses in the procurement process.

RESOLVED - (a) That the assessment of strategic and non-strategic contracts as presented in Appendix 1 of the submitted report be approved, and that:

- (i) Further reports/ updates on the procurement process for those contracts designated as strategic (including decisions made by the Procurement Board) be brought to Cabinet.
- (ii) The contract award decisions for the contracts designated as non-strategic be delegated to the appropriate Directorate as listed in the plan at Appendix 1.
- (iii) The contract award decisions for the contracts designated as strategic, as listed in the plan at Appendix 1, be delegated to the Procurement Board to approve and

will be reported back to Cabinet.

(b) That the contents of this report in respect of the update of strategic procurements, Procurement Board waiver decisions, and Social Value be noted.

(c) That the adoption of the Procurement Strategy 2025–2027, be approved.

REASONS – (a) In respect of strategic/non-strategic contracts, the recommendations are supported by the following reasons: -

- (i) The Contract Procedure Rules require Cabinet to approve the designation of contracts as strategic and non-strategic, and
- (ii) Contracts designated strategic are of high value and high significance in respect of the impact on residents, Health & Safety and public safety.
- (iii) The contracts designated non-strategic are of a lower value and lower significance in respect of the impact on residents and public safety.

(b) In respect of Procurement Board waiver decisions, the recommendations are supported by the following reasons: -

- (i) In order to comply with the Contract Procedure Rules.
- (ii) To provide Cabinet with information about the decisions made by the Procurement Board.
- (iii) To supplement the reports that are taken to Cabinet about proposed spend over £100,000, that are set out in the Annual Procurement Plan and the in-year update to that report.

(c) In respect of the Procurement Strategy 2025–2027, the recommendation is supported to ensure we have a strategy which directs and informs our procurement activity and works in line with the Procurement Act.

C135 NORTH EAST DECLARATION FOR A SMOKEFREE FUTURE

The Cabinet Member with the Health and Housing Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of People which invited Cabinet to support and welcome the North East Declaration for a Smoke Free Future.

The submitted report stated that towards the end of 2023, a new North East Declaration for Smoke Free Future was launched by Fresh, the Association of Directors of Public Health North East and the NHS North East and North Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board. It was reported that this was a UK first for any region to have such a clear statement of intent and to demonstrate the scale of commitment and collaboration.

RESOLVED - (a) That Members support the progress made in Darlington working towards a Smoke Free Future.

(b) That Members welcomed joining the other 11 North East Local Authorities in supporting and endorsing the North East Declaration for a Smoke Free Future.

REASONS – (a) Smoking causes harm throughout people’s lives, and is a major cause of preventable ill health, disability and death and is a driver of health inequalities.

(b) Recent data shows that almost 7,000 adults in Darlington smoke.

(c) Making smoking history is a priority in the Darlington Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

C136 PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member with the Stronger Communities Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Chief Executive to inform Cabinet about the Government’s Plan for Neighbourhoods which will provide up to £20 million of funding and support over 10 years to 75 places across the UK, including Darlington, and to seek approval of recommendations to allow Officers to support the Towns Board take on the role of Neighbourhood Board and make the required submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 22 April.

The submitted report stated that a prospectus for Plan for Neighbourhoods was published on 5 March 2025, which outlined the new approach and confirming that Darlington is one of the 75 eligible authorities. It was reported that £20 million will be provided to the Council over the next 10 years.

The submitted report also highlighted that the Council was required to support the restructuring of the Towns Board to become a Neighbourhood Board, to develop a 10-year Regeneration Plan and provide oversight of its delivery.

Focus was given to the role and remit of the Neighbourhood Board and how greater emphasis could be placed on community involvement.

RESOLVED - (a) That a review of the Towns Board membership and structure ,to enable it to discharge to role of the ‘Neighbourhood Board’, be approved, and for the required submission to MHCLG to be made by 22 April 2025.

(b) That the reconstituted Neighbourhood Board be supported to develop a Regeneration Plan which complements the Council Plan.

(c) That it was agreed that the Chief Executive review the current support provided to ensure that there is capacity within the Council to deliver the initiative.

(d) That it was agreed that the Chief Executive be given delegated authority to progress recommendations 6a and 6c in consultation with the Leader and Stronger Communities Portfolio member.

REASONS - (a) To address the criteria laid down in the guidance.

(b) In order to secure the grant funding.

C137 ADOPTION OF FINALISED APPRAISAL FOR THE STOCKTON AND DARLINGTON RAILWAY: NORTHGATE CONSERVATION AREA INCLUDING CHANGES TO ITS BOUNDARY AND NAME

The Cabinet Member with the Economy Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection, which sought approval to adopt the finalised Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area Appraisal, including changes to its boundary and name. It was reported that the document that has been submitted is called 'Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area Appraisal. Finalised document. March 2025'.

The submitted report provided justification for adopting the finalised appraisal for the Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area. Members were advised that the draft version of the appraisal (September 2024) had been subject to a six-week public consultation period, and that amendments had been made in light of the comments received.

It was reported that by adopting the finalised appraisal, a new, much larger Conservation Area boundary would be designated by the Council, and that the conservation area name would officially be changed from Northgate Conservation Area to Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area.

Reference was made to the appreciation of our heritage value and whether the Council had the capability and capacity to respond.

RESOLVED - (a) That Cabinet recommends that the Council adopts the finalised appraisal for the Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area.

(b) That Cabinet recommends that the Council adopts the finalised boundary for the Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area (see chapter 6.0 of the appraisal).

(c) That Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the name change from Northgate Conservation Area to Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area.

(d) That Cabinet recommends that Council authorises the amendment of finalised Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area Appraisal with regards to the text marked in yellow, to reflect the adopted status of the document. The adopted appraisal will be named: Stockton & Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area Appraisal. Adopted document. March 2025.

REASONS - The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

(a) The Northgate Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset of international significance due to its structures and associations directly linked to the birth/early years of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) of 1825. Despite its high importance, it has been on the national Heritage at Risk Register since 2010.

- (b) The bicentennial of the S&DR is in September this year. The Council has been making significant investments in preparation for the celebrations inside the Conservation Area (e.g. Hopetown Darlington, Edward Pease house).
- (c) The current Northgate Conservation Area appraisal was adopted in January 2007 and is now deemed inadequate and out of date. The present Conservation Area boundary dates from 2003.
- (d) The new appraisal picks up some of the 'unfinished' work carried out by Durham County Council (2022) and Land Use Consultants (2021). It provides a detailed record and analysis of the existing Conservation Area, as well as proposals for boundary changes and name change, and suggestions for improvements so that the Conservation Area may eventually be removed from the Heritage at Risk register.
- (e) The responses on the draft document were generally very supportive of the appraisal and its proposals, including the feedback received from Historic England and the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.
- (f) Once the new appraisal has been adopted it will provide an evidence base for managing change in the area and form a material consideration in the Planning process, replacing the 2007 document.
- (g) It will also assist if funding is sought for larger regeneration schemes within the amended boundary. Historic England confirmed that they will not provide funding for improvement works within the Conservation Area until the new appraisal, including boundary changes and name change, has been adopted.

C138 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

The Cabinet Member with the Stronger Communities Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Chief Executive requesting that consideration be given to a programme of support to deliver the fifth extension of the Government funded Household Support Fund (HSF) Extension for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The submitted report stated that the Household Support Fund (HSF) will be extended from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living.

It was reported that the current programme is being delivered effectively, meeting spend and output targets, and it was therefore proposed that the programme delivered in this next round takes forward most elements in the current programme. A programme aimed at maximising household incomes was also included using the Low Income Family Tracker, targeting groups identified as requiring particular attention. It was stated that a delivery plan outlining spending plans needed to be submitted to the Department of Work and Pensions by 30 May 2025.

RESOLVED – (a) That the proposed programme and estimated costings outlined within the submitted report be approved.

(b) That delegation be given to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities, to amend funding pots as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the grant within the time period.

(c) That any revisions to the submission made to Government be approved.

REASONS - (a) To address the criteria laid down in the guidance.

(b) In order to secure the grant funding.

C139 AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director of Resources and Governance to present reports by the Council's external auditors, Forvis Mazars, on the audit for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The submitted report stated that, in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022, all Local Authorities were required to produce the draft annual Statement of Accounts by 31 May 2024, and an audited set published by 30 September 2024. Due to a national backlog in the publication of audited accounts reaching an unacceptable level on 30 September 2024, the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 came into force, and these regulations introduced statutory 'backstop dates' to help clear the backlog of audits and help rebuild assurance.

It was reported that the Amendment Regulations required the Council to publish its 2023/24 Statement of Accounts, including the auditor's opinion, by the backstop date of 28 February 2025. As a result of the backstop arrangements (the 2022/23 accounts were not signed off by our previous auditors until 29 November 2024), and Forvis Mazars had determined that there was insufficient time between the backstop dates to complete their audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate evidence to complete a full audit, and therefore Forvis Mazars would issue a disclaimer of opinion on the 2023/24 financial statements.

It was noted that Darlington was not the only Authority in this position and this position had arisen due to the national backlog situation which was outside of this Authority's control.

RESOLVED - (a) That the Audit Strategy and Completion Report for the year ended 31 March 2024, be noted.

(b) That the Auditor's Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2024, be noted.

REASON - To enable Cabinet to receive the results of external audit work carried out.

(**NOTE:** The Chair varied the order of the Agenda and took this item immediately prior to C134 at the meeting).

C140 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO OTHER BODIES TO WHICH CABINET APPOINTS.

There were no membership changes reported at the meeting.

C141 TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS :-

**DECISIONS DATED –
FRIDAY, 11 APRIL 2025**

**CABINET
6 MAY 2025**

HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTIONS

**Responsible Cabinet Member –
Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy portfolio
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources portfolio**

**Responsible Director –
Mike Poulter, Executive Director Economy and Public Protection**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek member approval to begin community engagement relating to the designation of a High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) area, to delegate powers to designate the final HSRA area and to delegate powers to implement individual rental auctions to the Director of Economy and Public Protection.

Summary

2. High Street Rental Auctions provides local authorities with a new power to require landlords to rent out persistently vacant commercial properties to new tenants. The Council is an Early Adopter of the HSRA Programme. HSRA can be used where attempts to work proactively and engage with landlords in bringing vacant premises back into use have not been successful. Not all properties or circumstances will be eligible. New Burdens Payments are available to fund some aspects of the process. HSRA follows a strict timetable and process set out in legislation, regulation and guidance.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Cabinet authorises undertaking a community engagement exercise on the draft High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) designated area, detail attached at **Appendix 1 and 2**.
 - (b) The draft HSRA designation and community engagement information is publicised via the Council's website, social media, local newspaper and direct mail to landlords of currently vacant properties within the draft area.
 - (c) The engagement period remains open for a period of 28 days to allow members of local communities and other stakeholders sufficient time to submit comments.

- (d) The draft HSRA designation is amended and finalised in the light of comments received during the community engagement period.
- (e) Approval of the final HSRA designation and any future variations to the HSRA designation is delegated to the Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Economy Portfolio Holder and Cabinet Member for Resources
- (f) Approval to implement each specific High Street Rental Auction is delegated to the Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Economy Portfolio Holder and Cabinet Member for Resources
- (g) Approval to undertake future community engagement exercises pursuant to a variation of the HSRA designation is delegated to the Executive Director of Economy and Public Protection, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Economy Portfolio Holder and Cabinet Member for Resources
- (h) Approval to draw down and administer New Burdens Payment

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) Whilst Darlington's vacancy rates are low compared to the North East average, there are several long-term vacant properties within the proposed HSRA area which could become occupied as a result of this new power.
- (b) Reducing high street vacancies aligns with Darlington Borough Council's Town Centre Strategy and will contribute to the overall vitality and sustainability of the town centre.
- (c) HSRA is a last resort which applies to eligible properties which have been unoccupied for 12 months or at least 366 days within a 24-month period and that occupation of the premises would be beneficial to the local economy, society, or environment.
- (d) It is a legislative requirement the council must publish any proposed high street designation and should invite comments from the local community and any other stakeholders who may be affected via email and post and for no less than a period of 28 days. The recommended use of a variety of publication methods aims to reach as many of the affected parties as possible.
- (e) Delegation of powers to approve each auction and the final HSRA designation area following the community engagement exercise will enable the council to begin implementation at pace. It is envisaged that community engagement comments will be geographical in nature and any subsequent amendment to the draft HSRA designation boundary at Appendix 1 will not be materially significant to finalisation of the HSRA area and implementation.

Mike Poulter
Executive Director Economy and Public Protection

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Sarah Wayman and Andrew Perkin - Extension 6308

Council Plan	<p>All reports should detail the relevance of the proposed decision(s) to the Council Plan and its priorities (adopted by Council in July 2024).</p> <p>The priorities are:</p> <p>ECONOMY - The new HSRA powers enable the Council to bring vacant business premises back into use in support of the economy.</p> <p>HOMES –The new HSRA powers can facilitate some high street properties, where appropriate, to be converted to residential use.</p> <p>LIVING WELL –N/A</p> <p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE –N/A</p> <p>COMMUNITIES –Bringing vacant premises back into use will provide natural surveillance, leading to safer areas and a vibrant town centre.</p> <p>LOCAL ENVIRONMENT – The local environment will be visually improved with occupied high street premises.</p>
Addressing inequalities	Not applicable
Tackling Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal will result in increased carbon emissions as vacant premises using no energy will begin using energy. • Landlords must make eligible properties capable of being let, which includes meeting the minimum Energy Performance criteria under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES). • Improvements to vacant properties under MEES will mitigate the climate change risks.
Efficient and effective use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These new powers present additional officer workload as a result of the decision and there may be potential impact of this on the speed of provision of overall services by Estates and Property.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact is mitigated by New Burdens Funding provided by Government in respect of some of the aspects of the process, which allows outsourcing of parts. The funding can be drawn down in tranches.
Health and Wellbeing	A vibrant town centre, with minimal vacant units, will contribute in general to the wellbeing of residents.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Vacant properties attract crime and disorder. The new powers will help to mitigate the number of vacant properties in the town centre.
Wards Affected	This requires a simple analysis of whether there are particular wards affected more than others, or whether all wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	The decision will affect landlords of eligible vacant properties within the HSRA designation. These landlords will be engaged by the Council to attempt to let their properties, and if the property remains vacant and no relevant reason for the vacancy is apparent, then the Council will be able to auction off a lease of that property with or without the landlord's involvement or permission.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	<p>Yes</p> <p>It is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities (particularly landlords) living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the Borough.</p>
Urgent Decision	This report is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) provides local authorities with a new power to require landlords to rent out persistently vacant commercial properties to new tenants, such as local businesses or community groups. HSRA can be used where attempts to work proactively and engage with landlords in bringing vacant premises back into use have not been successful.
6. HSRA is a statutory mechanism introduced by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and detailed within the High Street Rental Auctions (England) Regulations. The non-statutory guidance was published on 2 December 2024.
7. The legislative framework establishes clear procedures and conditions that councils must follow when implementing HSRA, ensuring vacant commercial properties are efficiently and transparently returned to active use.
8. The Council was confirmed as an Early Adopter of the HSRA Programme, by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) at a launch event held on 21 November 2024 in Wolverhampton. Darlington has been identified alongside Mansfield, Bassetlaw, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils as Early Adopters. A further tranche of Early Adopters was announced by MHCLG on 6 March 2025 being Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Camden London Borough Council, Hillingdon London Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, North Northamptonshire Council, North Somerset Council and Westminster City Council.
9. The proposed HSRA aligns with existing policies outlined in the Council's Town Centre Strategy and the Local Plan, both emphasising regeneration, vibrancy, improved occupancy rates, and economic resilience.

HSRA Process Summary

10. Areas which may require High Street Rental Auction powers must first be defined, designated and published, including a 28-day minimum community engagement period.
11. A vacancy register relating to the designated HSRA must be compiled and maintained as part of the designation exercise.
12. Following designation of a HSRA area, the Council should engage with the landlords of vacant properties, if it has not done so already, to work with them to identify reasons for the vacant and alternative solutions. Should landlords not comply with responses to requests for information, this will constitute a criminal offence and a fine up to £2,500.
13. HSRA is not suitable for all properties. For example department stores, properties subject to complex redevelopment plans and properties with very high refurbishment costs.
14. If a property is eligible for auction, a strict timetable for serving notice on the landlord, surveying the property and preparing the auction pack follows. The process begins with a 10-12 week Notice Period and then a 12-Week Auction Period.

15. Prior to auction, the Council will survey the property and compile a list of any repair works required prior to letting. The landlord must carry out the repair works prior to the letting.
16. Following the auction, the landlord and successful tenant will enter into leasing contracts.

Designation Process and Approach

17. The Council must designate a specific area deemed appropriate for High Street Rental Auction. The area must be defined with a plan and by street names and be subject to a public engagement exercise.
18. The proposed HSRA designation area is shown at Appendix 1.
19. The proposed designation reflects the Town Centre as defined in the adopted Local Plan ("TC1", as defined here: <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/18086/adopted-darlington-local-plan-feb22-r.pdf>, map 10);
 - (a) Plus, the section of Bondgate between Bondgate roundabout and the junction with Woodland Road;
 - (b) Plus, the section of Victoria Road from Feethams roundabout to the western entrance of Bank Top station.
20. The designated area can be revised or widened at a later date.

Vacancy Register

21. Prior to designating a HSRA, the Council is encouraged to establish and maintain a comprehensive vacancy register detailing vacant commercial units, vacancy duration, previous occupancy history, property condition, and reasons for ongoing vacancy within the proposed HSRA designated area.
22. Due diligence surrounding the nature and duration of each vacancy will be carried out by collecting data from the Land Registry, local business rates records, and direct communications with property owners.
23. This information will be analysed to identify properties meeting the eligibility criteria and therefore suitable for proceeding to a HSRA

Public engagement / consultation

24. In line with the guidance, the local authority must publish any proposed high street designation in such a way it brings it to the attention of—
 - (a) Members of the local community in relation to the high-street or area concerned, and
 - (b) Any other person who may, in the opinion of the local authority, be affected by the designation, or by the variation or withdrawal of the designation.

25. Local authorities should invite comments from the local community via email and post and for no less than a period of 28 days. It will be publicised via the Council's website, social media, press release and direct mail to landlords of currently vacant properties within the draft area
26. The proposed text for the consultation is shown in Appendix 2.
27. In addition, it is intended to engage with landowners following designation and before service of notices via preliminary letters issued, introducing the HSRA concept.
28. Following the public engagement exercise, any boundary changes suggested by stakeholders may be considered prior to final designation of the HSRA area.
29. Following designation of the area, the Council may then begin the process for auctioning leases of persistently vacant properties.

Eligibility Criteria

30. To use a HSRA the following eligibility criteria must be considered:
 - (a) A property must have been vacant for a year or 366 days in the previous two years;
 - (b) Occupation of those premises for a suitable high street use would be beneficial to the local economy, society or environment
 - (c) Efforts to proactively engage the landlord must have been made before using HSRA
 - (d) The property is not vacant due to a valid reason, e.g. there is no market for it, or it is awaiting redevelopment etc.
 - (e) Costs to bring property back into repair are not significant.
31. Follow-up interviews are conducted to identify landlord concerns and opportunities for collaboration.
32. Evidenced based decision making, in line with the Town Centre Strategy, will be used to decide which properties are chosen for auction.

Implementation of a High Street Rental Auction

33. The Council should arrange a survey of the identified premises to:
 - (a) Consider suitability of the property for HSRA
 - (b) Consider the Energy Performance Certificate requirements (and commission one if necessary)
 - (c) Draw up a list of works required to bring the premises up to the minimum standard for HSRA

- (d) The minimum standard is defined in the guidance and ensures the property is clear, safe, secure, watertight and operational.
- (e) The costs of these surveys are unrecoverable should the landlord let the premises prior to the service of a final notice
- (f) These pre-tenancy works will be carried out by the landlord as part of the tenancy contract (agreement for lease)
- (g) The Council should attempt to mutually agree access for surveys with the landlord. Where this is not possible, powers to enter and survey land without landlord consent can be used.

34. A strict timetable governs the pre-auction “Notice Period” process:

Week 1 – 8	Council serves initial letting notice on landlord. Landlord has 8 week grace period to let or licence the property with consent of Council. Landlord may sell the property, but initial notice remains in place. Initial notice registered as local land charge.
Week 9-10	Council serves final letting notice on landlord which comes into effect after 14 days. Final notice registered as local land charge. Landlord may not let or carry out works to the property without consent of the Council. Criminal offence for landlord to contravene the restriction.
Week 11-14	Landlord may serve a counter notice within 14 days of the final notice, opposing the letting on specified grounds.
Week 15-16	Council has 14 days to consider counter notice and withdraw / proceed
Week 17-18	Landlord can appeal to county court if Council does not withdraw
	County court will decide to confirm or revoke

35. Assuming the final notice is not withdrawn by the Council following counter-notice or successfully appealed, a 12 week period begins to auction the premises and exchange the tenancy contract. The “Auction Process” is summarised below:

Week 1	Council to carry out searches and compile auction pack. Council to serve notice of intention to go to auction on the landlord.
Week 2	Council to provide the landlord with details relating to the tenancy contract and tenancy. Landlord to provide the local authority with pre-contract enquiry details, i.e. Commercial Standard Property Enquiries (CPSEs), proof of title and safety certificates. Failure of the landlord to comply is a criminal offense.
Week 3	Landlord to make certain specified representations in response to tenancy and contract information provided.
Week 4	Council to finalise tenancy and contract, taking into consideration landlord representations. Council to issue auction pack to include marketing brochure, information and representations from the landlord and legal, survey and search fees which are payable by the tenant.
Week 5-9	Marketing period of at least 5 weeks with mandatory requirements to include a prominent link on Council website and advertising on a leading website such as Rightmove, Zoopla or Property Link.
Week 10-12	The Council to serve all bids on the landlord in week 10, as well as any late bids in week 11. This is to give the landlord more time to consider bids as they come in. The landlord must advise the Council of the preferred bidder within two days of receiving the late bids. The Council will inform the successful party and provide contracts as soon as possible.

36. There are specific requirements concerning how prospective tenants may bid for a property:

- (a) Only one bid can be submitted
- (b) The annual rental offer exclusive of VAT must be stated
- (c) The proposed use must be provided
- (d) Signed tenancy contract (agreement for lease) included
- (e) Proof of identity of bidder provided
- (f) Time limited; submissions to be received no later than tenth week

37. All bids must be recorded and logged on a register. The Council will validate bids, and inform prospective tenants where their bid is invalid as soon as possible.
38. The landlord will make the final decision on the preferred tenant bidder. If the landlord does not make a decision, the Council will accept the highest bid, or the most reasonable bid if the highest bidder is not viable. The Council may also choose not to select a bidder.
39. The successful bidder will enter into two contracts following the auction:
 - (a) A tenancy contract (also known as an agreement for lease)
 - (b) A tenancy (lease)
40. The tenancy contract will cover the landlord's obligations in relation to the works they must carry out at their own cost and which are required to bring the property up to Minimum Standard. The landlord must carry out these works otherwise they will be in breach of contract, and the successful bidder will not be bound to enter into a tenancy (lease) until the works are completed. The tenant will be able to exercise "step-in rights" in order to carry out the works and recover the costs through rent, other remedies include liquidated damages.
41. Standard lease templates are provided for auction leases with the following notes:
 - (a) The Council can set the use clause of the property, and include user restrictions
 - (b) Planning consent and listed building consent will apply as usual for works and development
 - (c) Permitted Development Rights to temporarily change a different existing use to a high street use will apply if required
 - (d) The Council can set the tenancy length between one to five years, and decide which rights should be granted to the tenant
 - (e) The Council can set either no service charge, a standard service charge or bespoke service charge where information has been provided by the landlord
 - (f) There is no automatic right to renew the lease
 - (g) The tenant may fit out the property at their own expense and receive a 4 week rent free period
42. The legislation provides that the local authority has the power to grant the tenancy contract as though they were the landlord. In entering into the tenancy contract, the local authority must act in its own name, but with an indication that it is acting so as to bind the landlord rather than itself. The tenancy contract has effect as if it were entered into by the landlord of the premises instead of the local authority. It is anticipated that this power would only be used in extreme circumstances as an absolute last resort.

Financial Implications

43. Funding has been made available from central government where new or amended legislation is assessed to have a financial burden on local authorities. The New Burdens Payment will compensate local authorities for costs incurred in the implementation of new powers during a three-year transition period.
44. To ease resource issues, some elements of the HSRA process can be outsourced to external consultants provided that each step is signed off by the Council. The vacancy register, some legal work and the auction and marketing costs are covered by the New Burdens Payment.
45. If an initial notice has been served and the Council does not progress the case to the marketing stage, it is entitled to draw down £1,791. This is to cover the legal costs incurred in issuing the initial notice and to gain access to the premises.
46. Where the High Street Rental Auction enters the marketing stage, the Council can draw down the full £5,223 to cover the legal, marketing and auction costs.
47. Costs borne by the tenant are legal conveyancing, searches, surveys, including a schedule of condition and fit out costs.
48. Costs borne by the landlord are works to bring the property up to Minimum Standard.
49. Should the vacancy register show that the vacancy rate is 8% or higher, refurbishment costs will also be eligible for funding.
50. Applications for the New Burdens Payment opened on 15 January 2025 and will close on 14 January 2028.
51. Criteria for payments include documented evidence of administrative actions, engagement activities, enforcement measures, vacancy register preparation, and reporting requirements as mandated by central government guidelines.
52. Some elements are not covered by the New Burdens Payment such as legal costs for implementation of a new power, form of designation, service of notices and registration of land charges, costs to run the public engagement exercise and in-house surveyor time to project manage the scheme. Legal fees are estimated at £2000 for the form of designation and £2000 per property for associated advice and land charges.
53. As this is new legislation and the number of properties and actions required to bring those properties into the HSRA are currently unknown, the full cost to the Council cannot be determined at this stage. It is clear that the work required to undertake the actions within the legislation will require significant resources and due to the points noted above, and the fixed nature of the New Burdens funding, it is assumed at this stage that the funding will be insufficient to cover the additional costs and therefore will be a budget pressure. During the first year of operation of the new legislation the costs and income received should become clearer and any additional costs will need to be addressed through future budget setting.

Legal Implications

54. The HSRA process will be carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation referenced in paragraph six of this report. External legal advice has been sought.

HR Implications

55. There are no HR implications.

Estates and Property Advice

56. Comments from Estates and Property are embedded in the report, as author.

Procurement Advice

57. Procurement will be carried out in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023.

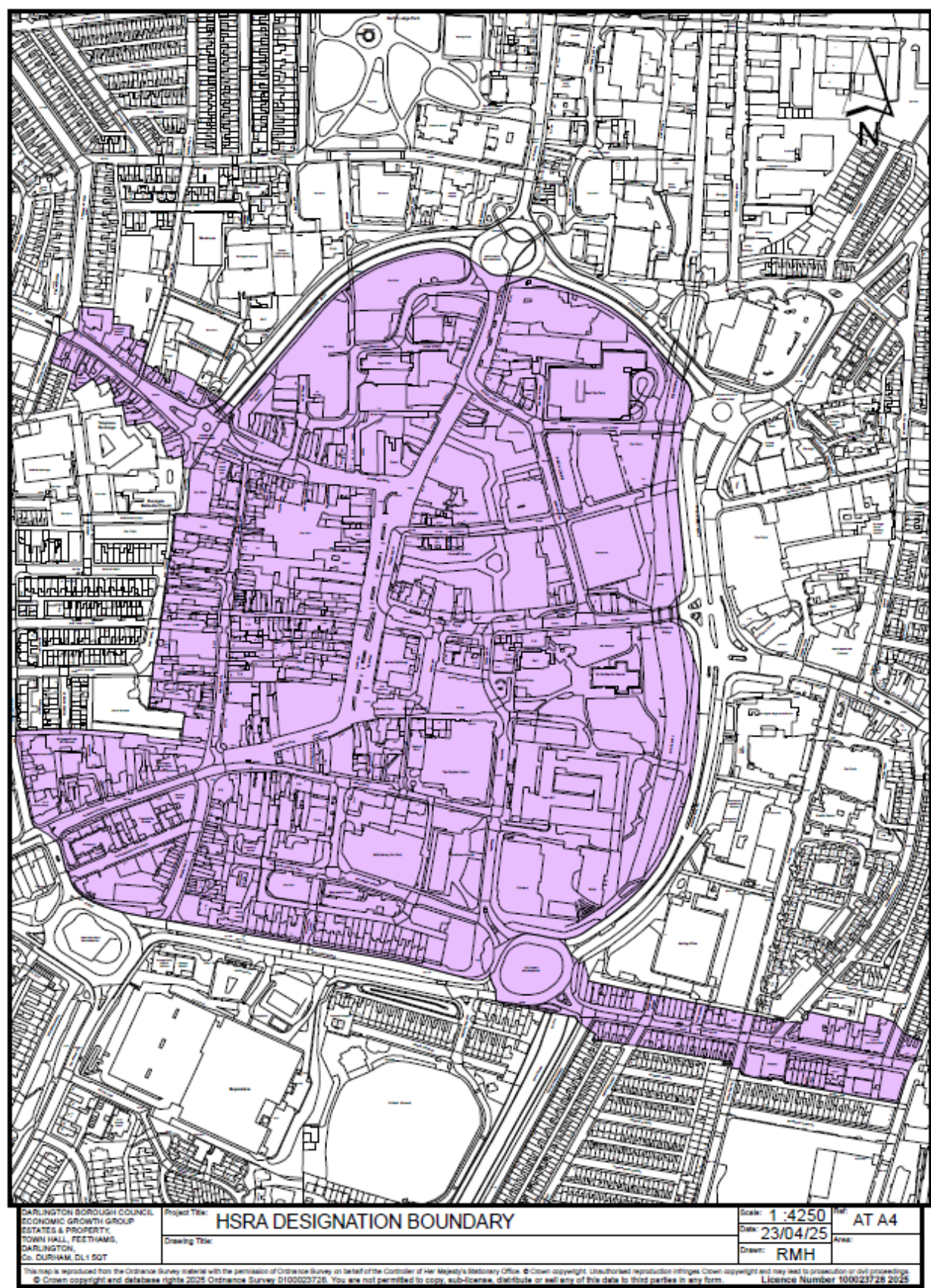
Carbon Impact and Climate Change

58. The proposal will result in increased carbon emissions as vacant premises using no energy will begin using energy. Landlords must make eligible properties capable of being let, which includes meeting the minimum Energy Performance criteria under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES). Improvements to vacant properties under MEES will mitigate the climate change risks. The scheme will not affect the Council's carbon emissions target but it will impact on the overall Borough emissions – which are tracked by the Council. Businesses bringing vacant properties back into use can be signposted to the webpage <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/climate-change-and-sustainability/business-and-climate-change/> for links to advice on mitigating emissions, as well as the Business Resilience Manual <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/13726/business-resilience-manual-vs2.pdf> . MEES does not cover resilience or adaptations to climate change but with increasing flood risk and potential overheating it is something that will need to be considered.

Equalities considerations

59. There are no equalities considerations.

Proposed High Street Rental Auction Designation Boundary for inclusion in the public engagement exercise



High Street Rental Auction Public Engagement and Consultation

Darlington Borough Council are consulting with businesses and premises owners on the recent permissive power known as High Street Rental Auction.

High Street Rental Auctions (HSRA) is a new power for local authorities to require landlords to rent out persistently vacant commercial properties to new tenants such as local businesses or community groups.

Darlington Borough Council have designated an area of Darlington Town centre as shown in the plan below.

The new legislation allows councils to step in when landlords leave commercial properties vacant for over a year. Not all properties or circumstances will be eligible. Local authorities will have the power to auction leases for vacant units. The HSRA system offers local authorities a new tool for regenerating town centres and reducing vacancies.

Darlington Borough Council may seek to exercise the right to pursue a High Street Rental Auction procedure on a commercial property or properties in the future, in-line with government guidance which is documented here: [High Street Rental Auctions: Non-statutory guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Anybody wishing to comment upon the proposals can do so by emailing:
business.support@darlington.gov.uk

The following map shows the proposed area in Darlington Town Centre where we will seek to utilise the High Street Rental Auction powers. Do you agree with the proposed area?

[Map included as per Appendix 1]

**CABINET
6 MAY 2025**

SEND STRATEGY 2025-2029

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Nick Wallis, Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
James Stroyan, Executive Director of People**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report introduces the SEND Strategy 2025-2029 for Darlington Local Area SEND partnership, which comprises a comprehensive plan to enhance the provision of services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The strategy reflects the outcomes of extensive engagement with stakeholders, including parents, carers, educators, health and social care professionals, and young people themselves. The strategy supports Darlington's Council Plan by promoting social inclusion, enhancing educational outcomes, building a skilled workforce, strengthening community health, and ensuring sustainable development. The strategy aligns with key legislation, including the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2015, and Equality Act 2010, ensuring compliance with statutory duties. The SEND Strategy 2025-2029 is an ambitious plan designed to improve the lives of children and young people with SEND in Darlington.

Summary

2. The SEND Strategy establishes our strategic approach to the delivery of SEND services for children and young people in Darlington, ensuring the offer is coordinated and responsive to the needs of our community. The strategy sets out our shared local area vision, principles, and priorities to ensure that partners across the Darlington local area are working together effectively to identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) from birth to the age of 25. The SEND Strategy has been coproduced with partners across the borough, and is fundamental to implementing partners responsibilities under the Children and Families Act 2014. It reflects the ambitions and priorities of the Council Plan and other key strategic documents.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that :-

- (a) Adopt the SEND Strategy 2025-2029 on behalf of Darlington Borough Council attached at **Appendix 1**.
- (b) Agree the Year 1 action plan to implement the aims of the strategy attached at **Appendix 2**.

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) The strategy is produced in the context of the statutory requirements set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 together with the guidance in the SEN Code of Practice that was issued alongside the 2014 Act. These provisions include the duty to keep under review the educational provision, training provision and social care provision made in its area for children and young people who have special educational needs or a disability and made outside its area for children and young people for whom it is responsible who have special educational needs or who have a disability (section 27 of the 2014 Act).
- (b) Approval of the SEND Strategy contributes to the fulfilment by the Council of these obligations.

James Stroyan
Executive Director of People

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Tony Murphy: Extension 5637

Council Plan	The strategy supports the commitments for children and young people-supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations
Addressing inequalities	This strategy sets out our local plan for addressing inequalities faced by young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and ensuring that they can receive access to high quality educational provision and outcomes.
Tackling Climate Change	The effective delivery of this strategy will support the council's Climate Change priorities.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The strategy supports the commitments in the council's Safety Valve Agreement to ensure efficient use of the Dedicated School Grant High Needs Block
Health and Wellbeing	Health lifestyles of children and young people is a key component of the SEND strategy
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific elements of the strategy which address crime and disorder
Wards Affected	All wards are affected
Groups Affected	Children, young people families and key stakeholders
Budget and Policy Framework	No proposed changes to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	Yes
Urgent Decision	No
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The effective delivery of the strategy will positively benefit looked after children and care leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. This report introduces the new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy for Darlington, covering the period from 2025 to 2029. This strategy has been developed to support the local area in responding to the growing and diverse needs of children and young people with SEND across the country. It outlines a comprehensive framework designed to enhance the provision, inclusivity, and outcomes of SEND services addressing five ambitions:
 - (a) Being healthy as possible
 - (b) Having good education, training and opportunities
 - (c) Family, friends and relationships
 - (d) Into adulthood towards independence
 - (e) Darlington - our town, community and environment
6. Implementation of this strategy will:
 - (a) Affirm the commitment of Darlington Borough Council to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

- (b) Ensure work in Darlington aligns with national legislative frameworks and addresses local needs assessments.
 - (c) Support the provision of a clear and actionable roadmap for the development and implementation of SEND services over the next four years.
 - (d) Facilitate the allocation of necessary resources and support for the effective execution of the strategy.
 - (e) Enable ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement and accountability in delivering SEND services.
7. Darlington Council is committed to providing high-quality, inclusive educational and support services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reflecting government policy and best practice. The development of the SEND Strategy 2025-2029 builds upon previous work and addresses both longstanding and emerging challenges within the SEND landscape.
 8. The shared vision, *"in Darlington we are committed to working in partnership across our local area to coordinate support, care, and learning for SEND children, young people and their families, so they are able to fulfil their ambitions and to thrive"*, was informed by consultation with children and young people and has been agreed by all the key stakeholders. This vision has informed the SEND strategy and accompanying action plan. This co-ordinated approach to strategy and policy development ensures alignment and better supports the achievement of the overall vision for all children and young people.
 9. In recent years, the Darlington SEND system has shown improvement in meeting statutory duties and delivering SEND services, as highlighted by past inspections from OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The 2022 inspection resulted in a written statement of action, and a subsequent 2024 inspection noted improvements in the SEND system. The 2025 inspection report said children and young people with SEND have a voice in Darlington. They are valued, visible and included in their communities. Children, young people and their families are included in decision-making about the individual support plans and types of support that they receive. There are many positives about the partnership's SEND arrangements and the experiences and outcomes for children for young people with SEND.
 10. Inspectors stated the local area partnership is committed to improving the education, health and social care services across Darlington which benefit children and young people with SEND. However, inspectors found the partnership's arrangements for some children and young people can lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes. These findings underscored the need for a robust, comprehensive strategy to support a co-ordinated approach by the system to addressing gaps and improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
 11. Performance indicators and data will be used to monitor and evaluate the successful implementation of the strategy. There are ambitious plans to also evaluate the SEND strategy using an Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People at a pupil level. Officers are currently considering the most effective way of collecting, collating and analysing the data and pathfinder activity will commence in late-2025.

Financial Implications

12. The Local Authority funds services to support special educational needs through a combination of both General Fund and a ring-fenced grant from the Department of Education (known as the High Needs Block (HNB) of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)). The HNB is expected to contribute towards the cost of provision & additional resources for pupils & students with SEN to participate in education & learning; whilst the General Fund is expected to cover the cost of delivering the local authority's statutory duties in relation to assessment, annual reviews and strategic planning of SEN. High Needs Block Spend is reported and monitored by Schools Forum. Any changes to the MTFP as a result of the delivery plan will be considered through future MTFP/budget setting.

Legal Implications

13. The strategy aligns with key legislation, including the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2015, and Equality Act 2010, ensuring compliance with statutory duties.

Carbon Impact and Climate Change

14. The effective delivery of this strategy will support the council's Climate Change priorities. Specifically, by reducing the need to access specialist provision through the continued development of early intervention models. Specialist out of area provision often requires significantly longer travel to school.

Equalities considerations

15. While this strategy sets the high-level vision and approach, equality impacts for specific initiatives will be addressed within the relevant project-level Equality Impact Assessments. This ensures that equality considerations are effectively integrated throughout implementation.
16. Children and young people with SEND often experience inequalities of access and outcomes across the country. Each of the key priorities aims to address the inequalities experienced by children, young people and families. The core work, in strengthening mainstream provision will enhance the principles of inclusion and providing nurturing environments for all, regardless of their needs.

Consultation

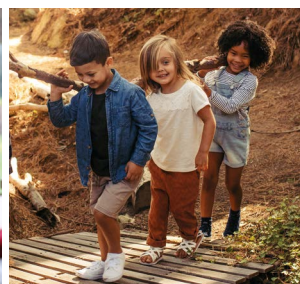
17. Initial consultation on this strategy took place with a range of partners through 2024. The SEND Strategy has been co-produced with key stakeholders including children and young people and parents/carers. In the recent Local Area SEND inspection inspectors noted how children and young people were working with the partnership to co-produce a new SEND strategy to improve the support that they receive. Following cabinet approval in October 2024 a full public consultation was undertaken between 25 October 2024 and 31 December 2024.

Outcome of Consultation

18. The outcomes of the public consultation are summarised in **Appendix 3**. These insights have directly informed the refinements to the strategy and action plan, ensuring it is both ambitious and practical.



Darlington Local Area Partnership
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
SEND Strategy
2025-2029



This refreshed Darlington local Area SEND Strategy sets the Local Area's priorities for the next 4 years.

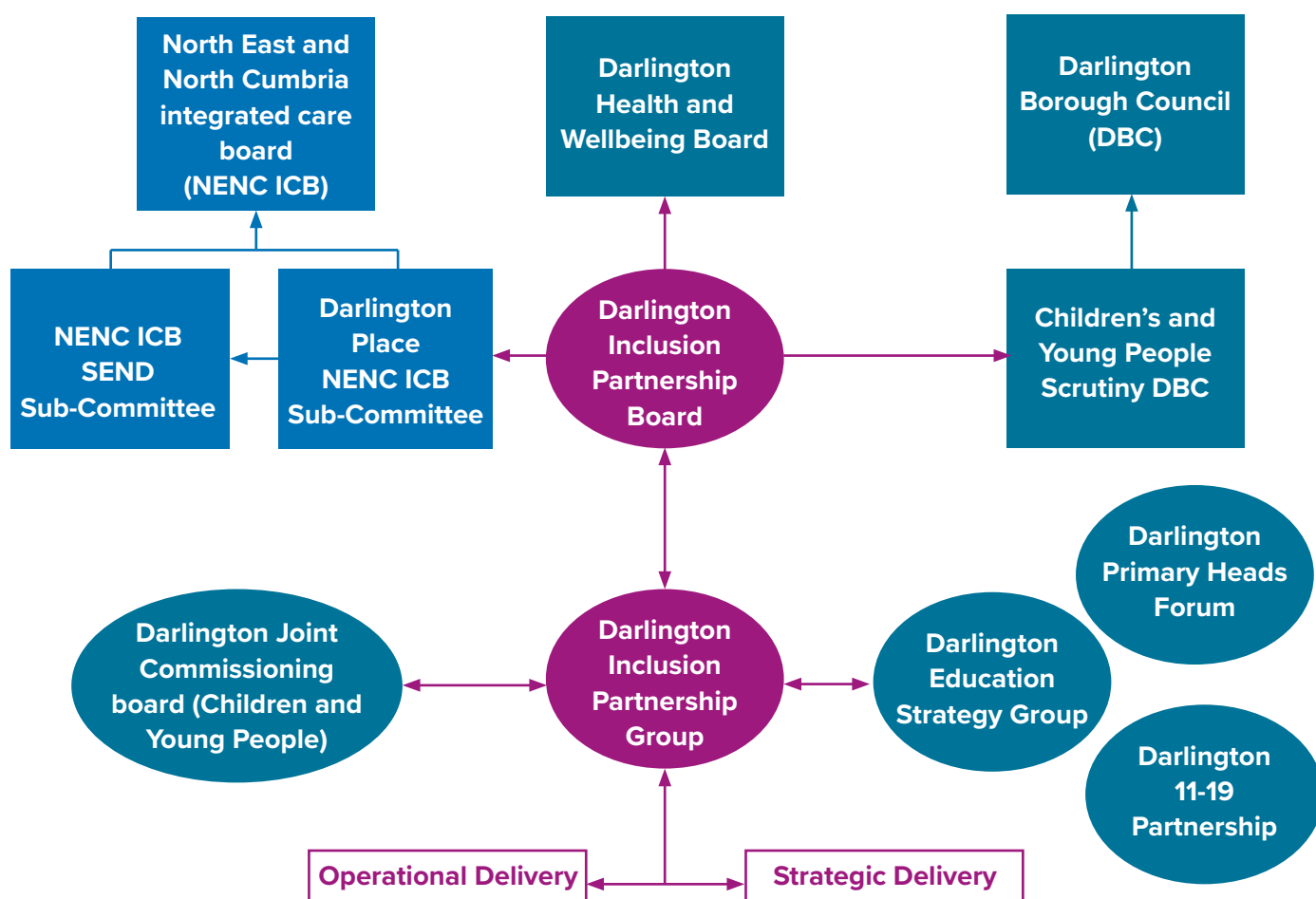
In Darlington we are committed to working in partnership across our local area to coordinate support, care and learning for SEND children, young people, and their families, so they are able to fulfil their ambitions and to thrive.

The Strategy builds on existing good practice and addressing those areas where services need to be strengthened. This includes:

- improved access to and experience of therapeutic, mental health, and physical health services;
- supporting more children and young people to attend an inclusive setting or school in Darlington where needs are met earlier; and
- broadening access to a wide range of short breaks and local community activities.

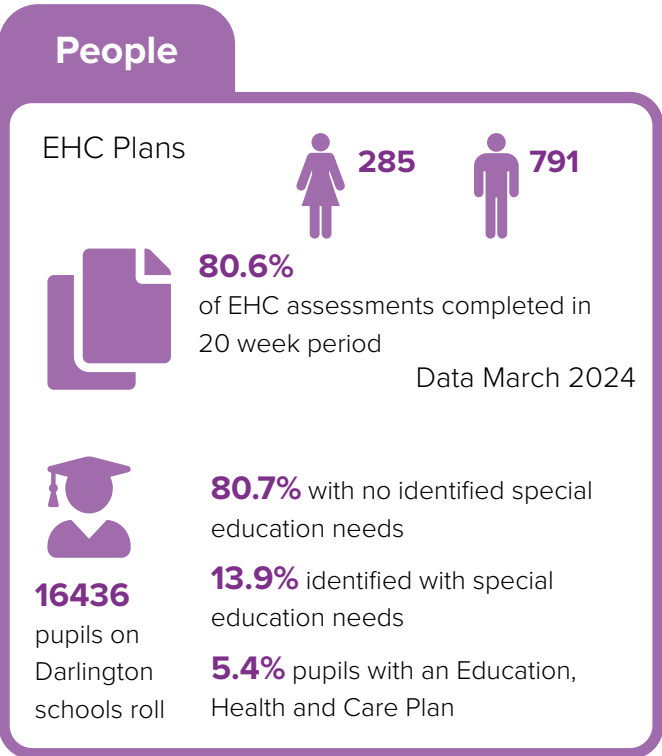
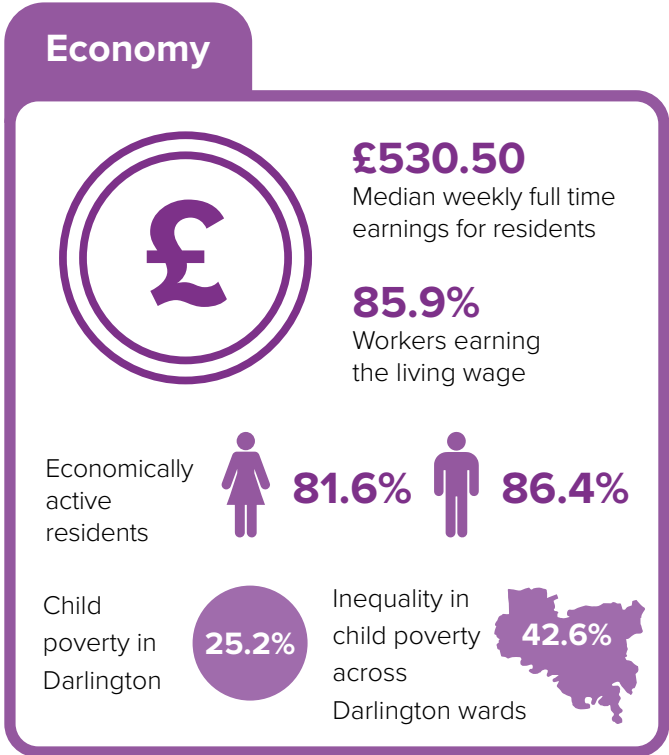
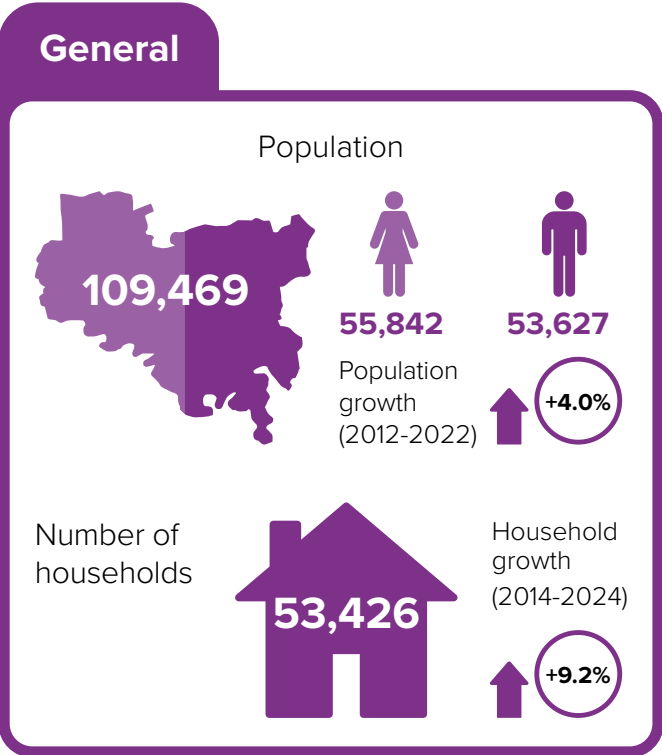
We are proud of the quality of the schools and early years provision in Darlington: we know our schools and settings work hard to deliver good outcomes for children and young people. We know however, that we need to work hard to improve some areas of our services and that we need to improve our communication with children, young people, parents and carers to improve our understanding of their experiences and to involve them more closely in the design and delivery of the services which support them.

Local governance



Darlington Inclusion Partnership - Governance

Darlington context



National and local drivers

This strategy is informed by related key national documents such as the Children and Families Act (2014), SEND Code of Practice (2015), National Autism Strategy (2021), the National Disability Strategy (2021) and the NHS Long Term Plan.

It is consistent with the values and ambitions outlined in the Darlington Council Plan 2024-2027.

Co-producing the strategy

Darlington's Local Area SEND partnership has developed this strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) through co-production. It has been co-created by children and young people; parents and carers; and those who work with them across the partnership. The following set of priorities has been shaped into a clear set of actions the shared thoughts, words and phrases of children, young people, parents and carers (via the Darlington Parent Carer Forum), and strategic partners.

The priorities directly respond to the ambitions for children and young people in Darlington identified through a series of events and consultations undertaken in the last year, involving children and young people, their parents and carers, and those who support young people. Five key areas, building on the preparation for adulthood outcomes were used as headings in the consultation and form the framework for this strategy. It was agreed that this approach will encourage a more effective pathway into adulthood and enable children and young people to build on life skills and support their aspirations.

The voice of children and young people has been clear. This is their borough. They want their voices to be heard in shaping the future of Darlington.



Strategy framework

The strategy framework sets the Local Area's priorities for the next 4 years.

It is set out across the five key areas

Five key areas

1. Being as healthy as possible

2. Having good education, training and opportunities

3. Family, friends and relationships

4. Into adulthood towards independence

5. Darlington - our town, community and environment

Each Key area is presented across the following four headings:

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parents and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The Difference this will make
This is a summary of what Children and Young people said was most important to them when thinking about each key area.	This is a summary of what Parents and carers said was most important to them when thinking about each key area.	This is an expression of the commitments that the Local Area Partnership has made to children and young people with SEND in Darlington.	This sets out the difference the strategy looks to deliver for children and young people, parents and carers.



Being as healthy as possible

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>Having good mental health is important: Being able to talk to people who listen, understand and support you helps.</p> <p>To be healthy It's important to have a balanced diet, healthy eating habits and to drink lots of water - not focusing purely on fruit and vegetables but having a mix of everything, as well as a good nights sleep.</p> <p>Exercise in whatever way suits you best is good for your mental and physical health e.g. the gym, walking, sporting clubs, dancing, swimming.</p> <p>Not focusing on unrealistic health expectations from media.</p>	<p>Maintaining positive mental health and physical health is important.</p> <p>Effective and timely access to mental & physical health support.</p> <p>Having suitable education provision is important in ensuring good physical and mental health.</p> <p>It can be difficult to maintain a healthy diet, particularly where sensory needs impact this.</p> <p>Communication between health and education services needs to be improved.</p> <p>More inclusive opportunities for exercise and social inclusion are needed.</p> <p>Independence in respect of healthy lifestyle choices.</p>	<p>We will improve inclusive opportunities to be active in Darlington.</p> <p>We will support community organisations and community facilities to be more inclusive of children and young people.</p> <p>We will effectively manage waiting lists for health appointments especially access to mental health services.</p> <p>We will ensure the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is fully inclusive of children and young people with SEND</p>	<p>I will know when, where and how to access support if I am physically or emotionally unwell.</p> <p>I will be able to access support and advice in a timely way.</p> <p>I will be able to make a healthy meal or snack.</p> <p>I will be able to choose from and access a range of activities either independently or with support to help keep me as active as possible.</p> <p>People supporting me will talk to each other and work with me and my family/carers to plan my support together.</p>

Having good education, training and opportunities

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>'Need to be learning about real life issues, so we can know how to handle them when it happens.'</p> <p>Prefer practical/'fun' learning.</p> <p>More extra-curricular learning e.g. clubs, groups, after school activities.</p> <p>More support to help me plan my future: qualifications, further and higher education, advice and guidance on accessing different jobs (childcare, police, army, beauty therapist YouTuber, robotics etc).</p> <p>More volunteer/work experience opportunities needed from a younger age.</p> <p>No Bullying, including online.</p>	<p>Suitable education in a suitable school environment.</p> <p>To feel included, respected, valued and safe while at school.</p> <p>Availability and accessibility of information in relation to SEND support, improved and consistent SEND offer in schools and training / upskilling of school staff in respect of SEND.</p> <p>Skills for independence to be included consistently in education.</p> <p>Ensuring early identification of needs that are met flexibly, effectively and consistently through thorough and coordinated planning to prevent emerging needs escalating including for emotional, social & mental health needs.</p> <p>Choice and flexibility regarding appropriate, supported and fulfilling education and employment opportunities.</p>	<p>We will launch an Inclusion Charter across all Darlington education settings.</p> <p>We will work with education settings to address barriers to attendance for children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>We will work with education settings to include developing skills for independence as part of their offer.</p> <p>We will develop and implement a multi-agency strategy for Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) to support children and young people, families and educational settings.</p> <p>We will make sure that Preparation for Adulthood is central to all Education, Health and Care Plans and individual SEN plans.</p>	<p>I will feel safe, happy and valued in my nursery, school or college.</p> <p>I will go to my local nursery, school or college and my teachers will know how to support me to achieve my goals.</p> <p>I will enjoy my early years, school or college setting and will have good attendance.</p> <p>I will be able to achieve good qualifications to help me get a good job or higher education.</p> <p>I will know where and how to access information on jobs, courses and volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>I will be confident that I have the skills I need to move on to the next phase in my journey to adulthood.</p>

Family, friends and relationships

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>Love, care and support.</p> <p>Recognising that families are all different. Being loved and cared for as well as stability, security, trust and safety are important.</p> <p>Stability, security, trust, safety, communication, listening.</p> <p>Making friends is important.</p> <p>Healthy relationships are important e.g. friendships, family, school.</p> <p>Being provided for e.g. food, Wi-Fi, pocket money, shelter.</p> <p>Independence support.</p>	<p>Positive relationships with friends and family.</p> <p>To develop reciprocal relationships/ lasting friendships.</p> <p>Support to develop confidence and self-acceptance.</p> <p>Child/young person's voice is listened to.</p>	<p>We will support schools, education providers and health services to offer education on healthy relationships.</p> <p>We will work as a partnership to support individuals and families to greater empowerment.</p> <p>We will make sure that there is a range of high quality local short break opportunities available for eligible children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>We will hold regular events for Parents and Carers to discuss current SEND issues with local area Leaders. We will find a way to expand this to a children and young person's opportunity.</p> <p>We will listen to, and support, children and young people with SEND to raise their aspirations and achieve their ambitions.</p>	<p>I will know what a healthy relationship is and know how to manage my relationships with different groups of people.</p> <p>I will be able to access places and activities in the community where I can make and maintain friendships.</p> <p>We will be involved in more local decision making.</p> <p>My family/carers will be supported to support me achieve my dreams.</p> <p>We will be more aware of what is, and what isn't, happening in Darlington.</p> <p>I will have a better choice of short breaks available locally.</p>

Into adulthood towards independence

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>More support with independence from an earlier age.</p> <p>Help with transitions.</p> <p>More support with taxes, budgeting and finances.</p> <p>More work opportunities for under 18's.</p> <p>Life skills - knowing how to move into adulthood.</p> <p>Being able to do things on your own (not relying on anyone), walking to school yourself, cooking own meals, doing laundry yourself.</p>	<p>Improved preparing for adulthood support from an earlier age learning skills for managing finances, transport/travel training opportunities, support to develop confidence and self-acceptance.</p> <p>Choice and flexibility regarding appropriate, supported and fulfilling education and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Increase/improvements in the local post 16 offer.</p> <p>To be as independent as possible.</p> <p>That young people are appropriately supported to become active and contributing members of society.</p> <p>That young people's voices continue to be heard and listened to.</p> <p>Supported opportunities in respect of independent living skills including safe and appropriately supported housing options.</p>	<p>We will make sure that there are clear pathways into adulthood that have been co-produced.</p> <p>We will make sure good quality information and guidance is available for individuals, and their families, as they move from childhood to adulthood. This will include advice on:- finance; benefits; adult services in the NHS and Darlington BC; getting a job; getting a place to live; and adult rights and independence.</p> <p>We will make sure there are clear pathways into employment and opportunities for all.</p> <p>We will make sure that local housing and independent living opportunities are available for those who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.</p> <p>We will work with local +16 education setting to provide better life skills training.</p>	<p>I will know how to manage money and take care of myself.</p> <p>I feel confident to travel safely wherever I want to go.</p> <p>My views are listened to, I will be able to make decisions about the support I need.</p> <p>I will be able to choose where I live, who I live with and will feel supported to live as independently as possible.</p> <p>I will have better support towards work and if I have a job.</p>

Darlington - our town, community and environment

What Children and Young People said is important to them	What Parent and Carers said is important to them	What we will do	The difference this will make
<p>Having a variety of activities that they enjoy. The Dolphin Centre, parks and sports are popular and they enjoy activities such as bowling, shopping, gaming and funfairs as well as groups like Scouts, Brownies & Rainbows.</p> <p>They would like to see less crime and a calmer, cleaner environment with more nature spaces, more play areas with green spaces and more events for teenagers.</p> <p>More youth centres and a wider variety of shops/centres e.g. comic shops, gaming centres, youth centres</p> <p>Safer & better public transport with buses that run after 6pm</p> <p>Less potholes</p>	<p>Increased social & leisure opportunities for those with similar interests including for those with the highest need</p> <p>Safe and inclusive meeting spaces/ places to check in within the community.</p> <p>Increased understanding and acceptance from the whole community with inclusive community opportunities for all ages.</p> <p>To feel valued and to have a sense of belonging and involvement in the community.</p>	<p>We will create and develop a new Local Offer for Darlington. Making sure it is the main information and communication point for SEND locally</p> <p>We will work with local clubs and organisations to support children and young people with SEND to be included in activities and opportunities available across Darlington.</p> <p>We will make sure that community safety works on inclusion of children and young people with SEND, including looking a safe spaces in the local community.</p> <p>We will make sure children and young people with SEND are involved in service development and commissioning activity</p> <p>We will work with local transport providers to make sure public transport is more inclusive and welcoming</p>	<p>I will be able to choose from a variety of activities in Darlington that interest me</p> <p>I know that staff in youth clubs, leisure centres and shops will understand me and know how to communicate with me</p> <p>I can make friends at Inclusive Youth events across Darlington</p> <p>I will feel safer when I am out and about in Darlington</p> <p>I will be asked for my views and be able to change and shape services and facilities in Darlington for me</p> <p>I will be able and supported to use public transport in Darlington</p>



How will we know we have made a difference?

This Strategy will be underpinned by a detailed delivery plan created from the commitments we have made in this strategy.

We will measure impact through performance data gathered across schools, the local authority and the NHS. We will measure this against national and/or local data wherever possible.

The voices of children, young people and parents and carers will be captured through feedback received as part of the quality assurance and review process of both EHC plans and SEN support planning in Schools.

An annual survey and/or engagement sessions in schools and settings will provide the opportunity to gather evidence of impact on the experiences of children and young people.

We will work closely with Darlington Parent Carer Forum, and others, to ensure the voice of parents and carers is heard and understood.

The strategy and plan will be delivered through Darlington Inclusion Partnership Group and monitored by Darlington Inclusion Partnership Board with updates submitted regularly to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

An annual report to the Health & Wellbeing Board will outline our collective achievements as well as any challenges encountered and joint solutions developed which will be publicly available.

Darlington Local Area Partnership

Through these commitments the Local Area SEND partnership looks to offer opportunities for children and young people with SEND to thrive and become active and valued members of the Darlington community.

SEND Strategy Delivery Plan 2025 – 2029

The following document forms the basis for the delivery of Darlington's Send Strategy 2025-2029. The strategy and the delivery plan have been co-produced and are based on an inclusive approach across five key themes.



Themes are illustrated throughout the delivery plan using a colour key at the top of each Action Area. The 17 Action Areas have:

- Clear commitments to things **We Will** work towards
- An **Impact** statement of what this will achieve
- A list of **Tasks** that will help us achieve our commitments
- **Evidence of Outcomes** that will show we have completed the tasks
- **Start** and **Finishing** dates
- **A Lead** who is responsible for making sure tasks happen
- **Other resources** we know will support in making tasks happen

1 – Inclusive Opportunities to be active

We will:

- Improve the inclusive opportunities to be active in Darlington.
- Support community organisations and facilities to be more inclusive of children and young people with SEND.
- Work with local clubs and organisations to support children and young people with SEND to be included in activities and opportunities across Darlington.

Impact:

- Children & Young people will report having a good range of inclusive activities/clubs/groups to access
- Children will be more active

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1	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
1.2	Bench marking/mapping exercise to be completed to identify gaps & ensure promotion of availability	Baseline of provision established	May 2025	Sept 2025	Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC)	
1.3	Survey providers to establish any training needs	Baseline of training requirements established	Oct 2025	Dec 2025		
1.4	Analysis and recommendations published exploring potential incentives for both participation and provision	Gaps identified and plan established to fill. Training Offer developed	Jan 2026	March 2026		

1.5	Promote opportunities to children & families through Local offer	Increased footfall on local offer. Survey of Local offer users – immediate feedback/comments facility	April 2026	Ongoing		
1.6	Develop Training offer to providers (including how to partner with parents)	Provider confidence survey	Sept 2026	Ongoing		
1.7	Hopetown Darlington recognises the need to ensure that the site and as many activities and learning opportunities as possible are accessible through market research and consultation with users and non – users, including Darlington Parent Carer Forum we will seek to update our information on the learning and physical needs of our target audiences.	Increased access to Hopetown Darlington for families and young people with SEND	Sep 2025	Ongoing	Development Director Hopetown Darlington	

2 – Access to Health Services

We will:

- Effectively manage waiting lists for health appointments especially access to mental health services.
- Leaders in health should continue to take action to reduce waiting times across some health services, including neuro-developmental pathways as well as therapies that include occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. In the intervening waiting period, the partnership should continue to mitigate the impact for children and young people.

Impact:

- There is access to advice/support for children, young people and their families that are waiting for an assessment and or interventions associated with OT/Speech language communication and Autism/ADHD (neurodiverse needs). Targeted work undertaken to improve access to the outlined services and reduce waiting times to be in line with national waiting time standards.

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2		Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
2.1	a.	Occupational Therapy Review capacity and demand for Occupational Therapy.	Clear waiting well offer in place for all Children and Young People awaiting assessment/intervention. Service demand and capacity aligned to deliver services within the national 18 weeks waiting standard	May 2025	April 2026	Jo Heaney (NENC ICB)	Sandra Sleeman
2.2	a.	Neurodevelopmental Pathway Increase workforce capacity and increase the number of assessments		March 2025	April 2026	Lynne Massam NENC ICB	Iain Marley

2.3		for Autism and or ADHD as set out in the Darlington Neurodevelopmental Improvement Plan (October 2024)	Increased numbers of providers completing specialist assessments Reduction in numbers of children waiting 2+ years for assessments				
	b.	Remain focussed on the child's voice, through the development of a task and finish group and ensuring young people are involved in decision making.	Youth Group established Youth voice incorporated into referral pathway and assessment process.	March 2025	April 2026	Iain Marley NENC ICB	Young People's Involvement & Opp Worker (DBC)
	c.	Embed the graduated response through the development of a workforce development and training plan.	Earlier identification of needs and support offered with or without a diagnosis	March 2025	April 2026	Lynne Massam NENC ICB	SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC) Workforce Development Manager (DBC)
	a.	Speech and Language Therapy Continue with the trajectory of reducing the average waits for assessments to within 126 days (18 weeks) national ambition.	Reduction in waiting times. Children and Young People receive therapeutic support earlier.			Lynne Massam NENC ICB	
	b.	Mobilisation of the new Tees Valley Speech and Language Therapies Service	All elements of the new service specification embedded.	April 2025	March 2026	Jo Heaney NENC ICB	Lynne Massam NENC ICB

	c.	Exploration/Agreement of jointly commissioned opportunities as part of the Tees Valley wide specification through education support earlier identification and right support at the right time.	Speech and language needs met through education with consultative support in place and pathways to specialist therapies.	September 2026	September 2027	Lynne Massam NENC ICB	Lead Commissioning and Contracts Manager – Children (DBC)
2.4	a.	Mental Health Develop strategic governance for Children and Young People MH and I-Thrive across Tees Valley and ensure connections with Darlington as 1 of the 5 LA areas	A New Tees Valley -I Thrive group is established with clear terms of reference, agreed membership.	April 2025	April -May 2025	Kimm Lawson Strategic Head of Commissioning – Tees Valley NENC ICB	Lynne Massam Commissioning NENC ICB
	b.	Operationalise the Darlington Mental Health Support Team through education settings following completion of academic training.	Full coverage for mainstream school Improved earlier outcomes for children	Continued from 2024	September 2026	Lynne Massam NENC ICB	
	c.	Continue to effectively manage waiting lists as part of an I-thrive System of Care and	Maintained access rates for numbers of children seeking mental health support Time between referral and first contact and referral and second contact (treatment) is monitored and is within 126 days (18 weeks)			Lynne Massam NENC ICB	
	d.	Procurement of a Getting Advice Signposting and Getting Help Service across Tees Valley	New service in place	May 2025	January 2026	Lynne Massam NENC ICB	

3 – Learning Disability Pathway

<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders should continue to strengthen the systems and processes to support children and young people to access support and assessment for a learning disability. The partnership should ensure that these children and young people receive suitable support across education, health and social care that meets their needs well. 	
<p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Learning Disability pathway/process aims to improve the multiagency identification of Learning Disabilities. This is intended to improve access to specialist services where required and increase take up of Annual Health Checks. 	

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3	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
3.1	Business case to be approved at board for clinical psychology time to support diagnosis of a Learning Disability	This aims to increase capacity within the system to ensure that learning disabilities are diagnosed at the earliest opportunity to enable access to specialist services when required and Annual Health checks.	April 2025	May 2025	Mark Porter (ICB DCO)	
3.2	Identify how we support Educational Psychology to play a wider role in the early identification of learning disabilities Create a clear process through which information of potential learning disabilities gained through Educational Psychology working practices is gathered and shared in line with the LD-ID	Improved early identification of Learning Disabilities, and to reduce transitions between services for the children and young people.	Sept 2025	April 2026	Mark Porter (ICB DCO)	DPIA Information Sharing agreements

	Framework (Learning Disability Identification Framework)					
3.3	Implementation of a Process to complete LD Diagnosis.	<p>To Improve identification and diagnosis of learning disabilities.</p> <p>Improved access to specialist support services when required, LD AHC's, DSR and CeTR</p>	April 2026	April 2027	Mark Porter (ICB DCO)	

4 – Health and Wellbeing

We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is fully inclusive of Children and Young People with SEND 	
Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying additional vulnerabilities and barriers to accessing support for children with SEND. Need to clarify what is the public health action plan for Children and Young People with SEND and how will we know that there has been a positive impact. 	

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4	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
4.1	Deep dives for Darlington Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2029 will include consideration and contributions from SEND young people and families. Development of a performance dashboard	Public health data will routinely form part of SEN Strategic dashboard Integrated into wider work across the local authority	Sep 2025	July 2026	Director of Public Health	Health and Wellbeing Board
4.2	Public Health will work with Beaumont Hill and Marchbank to plan and will implement whole school supervised toothbrushing from September 2025. Staff training will take place in June	Improved oral health rates for young people with SEND	Sep 2025	July 2026	Public Health Officer Darlington Borough Council	

	and parent and carer support sessions in June and September.					
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5 – Inclusion Charter

<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch an inclusion charter across all Darlington education settings that outlines what the local area understands by Inclusion with a joint commitment to shared principles. 	
<p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people will feel included in the education setting they attend. Education settings will work in inclusive ways. Children And Young People & their families will be confident that their children’s need can be identified and met in their local mainstream educational setting regardless of where they access education. Settings will consistently be confident in making reasonable adjustments and implementing a graduated response to identifying and meeting need, knowing when how and where to seek external support. 	

5	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
5.1	Education Exploration Partnership developed with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) co-construct an evidence-based solution to address identified challenges. It offers a structured and collaborative approach to data gathering and analysis, identifying potential priorities and solutions.	<p>Academic data</p> <p>AP data</p> <p>EHE data</p> <p>VPP data</p> <p>SEND data</p>	March 2025	June 2025	Head of Education Partnerships	<p>Educational settings</p> <p>EEF</p> <p>PCF</p>

5.2	Inclusion principles shared, agreed and signed up by all educational settings	Charter signed by all settings leaders	Jan 2025	February 2025		Children + Young People
5.3	Engagement with Children and Young People & Families - ownership / co-production	Feedback from Children and Young People & Families	Sep 2025	July 2026		DBC Inclusion Officer
5.4	Available in different accessible formats	Attendance data Suspension & Exclusion Data	Sep 2025	July 2026		Educational Psychology
5.5	Learn from good practice examples re how we really impact/ fully implement this	Good practice shared at all education forms (SENCO Networks, 11-19, ESG, Primary schools Forum as evidenced in minutes/agendas)	Sep 2025	July 2026		

6 – Skills for Independence

We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with education settings to include developing skills for independence as part of their offer. 	
Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Young People, and their parents will report that they are confident in progress being made towards independence 	

6	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
6.1	Curriculum development group to examine independence skills as part of PHSE offer Create clear report/recommendations	Systematic QA of individual plans (education, health and social care) will demonstrate that progress is being made towards PfA outcomes	April 2025	April 2026	Head of Education Partnerships	Parents Children And Young People Education Settings Public Health (PHSE Officer) Social Care (Adults & Children's)

6.2	Multi agency training developed on co-producing age appropriate PfA outcomes and training for obtaining views and aspirations	Systematic QA of individual plans (education, health and social care) will demonstrate that progress is being made towards Preparation for Adulthood outcomes	April 2025	April 2026	Workforce Development Manager	SEND Team Manager (DBC) DCO (ICB) Head of Practice and Quality SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead
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7 – Better attendance in education

We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a multi-agency strategy for Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) to support children, young people, families and education settings. We will work with education settings to address barriers to attendance for children and young people with SEND. 	
Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children will enjoy attending, feel safe in their educational setting and have good attendance 	

7	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
7.1	Engaging with Children and Young People & Families to gather info on missed opportunities and learning	Children and Young People & Family voice	May 2025	March 2026	Principle Educational Psychologist	CAMHS 0-19 Team MHST
7.2	Co-produced multi agency graduated response developed utilising evidenced based best practice	Focus Group survey	April 2026	March 2027		LA Attendance Team

7.3	Promote and Educate on EBSA / Triggers with settings; Parents & Carers; and Children and young people	EHE data Focused Attendance data	April 2027	March 2028		Early Help PCF School leads
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8 – Improving Education, Health and Care Plans

We will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that “Preparation for Adulthood” is central to all Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and Special Educational Needs Plans (SEN Plan). Leaders should continue to strengthen the systems and processes to further improve the quality of Children and Young People’s EHC plans, including updates to EHC plans following annual reviews, to ensure that EHC plans reflect the most up-to-date information from education, health and social care. 	
Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Young People and their families will be clear on their individual pathways and will be confident about progress and next steps Continue to improve quality of EHC plans, by ensuring that they are fully representative of children & young people’s education, health & care needs and the provision required to help them achieve positive outcomes in line with their aspirations. The partnership will ensure that EHC plans are comprehensive and incorporate relevant health and care provision in addition to education. 	

8	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
8.1	EHC plans will be based on a single information system	<p>All new EHC plans are fully recorded on the Early Help Module of Liquid Logic.</p> <p>There is a clear plan of how older plans are being managed within the single system.</p>	Jan 2025	Sept 2026	Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC)	<p>Designated Clinical Officer (ICB)</p> <p>Head of Practice and Quality</p>

		Reviewing EHC plans is supported in the use of the single system.				(Principal Social Worker) (DBC) DBC Systems
8.2	Rolling Programme of EHCP QA with focus on PFA.	QA - audits will demonstrate EHCP's include PFA outcomes on a multi-agency basis linked to aspirations.	May 2025	Ongoing	Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC)	SEND Team Manager (DBC) SENDCOs Designated Clinical Officer (ICB) Head of Practice and Quality (Principal Social Worker) (DBC) SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC)
8.3	Termly multi agency deep dives of EHC plans to monitor timely participation and quality of information from all parties	Termly deep dive events are taking place. Reports are submitted to Darlington SEND LA Partnership Group and Board, at following meeting. Clear development activity happening as a result of deep dives.	Spring 2025	Ongoing on termly basis	Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC)	SEND Team Manager (DBC) Designated Clinical Officer (ICB) Head of Practice and Quality

						(Principal Social Worker) (DBC)
						SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC)
8.4		Develop systematic QA process for SEN Support Plans		May 2025	Sept 2026	Head of Education Partnerships (DBC)
8.5		Implement a rolling programme of QA for SEN Support Plans across all education settings	QA: audits will demonstrate SEN Support plans include PFA outcomes on a multi-agency basis where appropriate linked to aspirations	Sept 2026	Ongoing	SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC)
8.6		Link quality assurance models to recorded data and Peoples group models in DBC	Data: Transitions towards adult services are completed well in advance of Children and Young People turning 18	Sept 2026	Ongoing	Designated Clinical Officer (ICB)
						Head of Practice and Quality (DBC)
8.7	a.	Partners and families will be able to directly update information via portals for new assessments. This will facilitate effective compliance with statutory obligations of all partners.	All EHC plan applications and advice use the portal system to update EHC records.	February 2025	September 2025	Head of SEND and Inclusion
	b.	initial test pilot of portals	Work through system issues and solve initial problems	April 2025	July 2025	SEND Team Manager (DBC)
	c.	review of pilot	Adjust how to implement further across system	Aug 2025	Sept 2025	Designated Clinical Officer (ICB)

	d.	Open portals across all schools	Portals available across all schools	Sept 2025	July 2026		Head of Practice and Quality (DBC)
	e.	Fully operational with all EHC plans running on new system		Sept 2026	Onwards		
8.8		Review process of annual review to ensure full compliance by all stakeholders in statutory obligations, identify barriers and mitigate against them	Quality multi agency input into EHC plans will be evidenced in termly Deep Dive exercise	Sept 2025	August 2026		SEND and Inclusion Advisory Lead (DBC)

9- Healthy Relationships

We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support schools, education providers and health services to offer education on healthy relationships 	
Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Young people will understand what a healthy relationship looks like and will know where to get help/advice/support if they are worried 	

9	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
9.1	12 schools currently working on the PSHE Quality Mark, 5 schools working on the Health and Wellbeing Toolbox Pilot, focussing on obesity and oral health.	Increased participation in schools in PHSE Quality Mark	May 2025	July 2026	Public Health Officer (DBC)	
9.2	27 schools for 24/25 expected to rise to 30& Families or the Healthy Lifestyle Survey in the next academic year, Consultation on Healthy Lifestyles survey to inform future versions.	Increased participation in Healthy Lifestyles survey to inform future service delivery and commissioning activity.	May 2025	July 2026		

10 – Short Breaks

We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure there is a range of high-quality short break opportunities available for eligible children and young people with SEND 	
Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families will feel supported in their caring responsibilities with good access to respite. Increased social opportunities for Young People Reduced need for emergency foster placement and out of area placements 	

10	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
10.1	Undertake review of the community short breaks framework to maximise the offer for Darlington children and determine the most effective form of contracting arrangements going forward	Wider use of a wider range of short break solutions. Short break stays available for those who meet criteria. Children and Young people are supported	Sep 2025	April 2026	Lead Commissioning and Contract Manager (DBC)	Commissioning Social Care Senior Leads
10.2	Co-working is planned with the YMCA regarding their youth offer in the new designated youth centre.	Families are supported	April 2025	April 2026		
10.3	Ensure all information, and any updates, on short breaks is available on the Local Offer		April 2025	Ongoing		

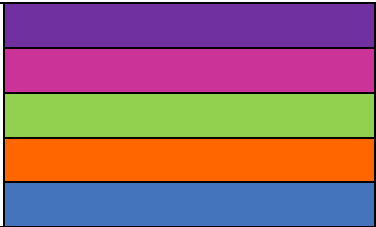
11 – Engagement in strategic decision making

We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular events for parent and carers to discuss SEND issues with local area leaders. • Find a way to expand this to a children and young person's opportunity • Establish a SEND Children and Young People group create opportunities to systematically engage with Children and Young People 	
Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of Parent/carers will have the opportunity to share views and influence strategic decisions on matters of importance to them. • Children + Young People with SEND will be able to share their views and influence strategic decision making 	

11	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
11.1	Work in partnership with the PCF and provide senior leadership support at PCF events if required	Minutes, attendance records, agendas	Jan 2025	Ongoing	PCF	All strategic leads
11.2	Continue to host termly parent/carer engagement meetings Increasing number of attendees inviting participants to set the agenda	Agendas and minutes of Local Area SEND Partnership meetings will show themes identified by parents/carers and Children and Young People are taken forward strategically	July 2025	Ongoing	Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC)	Workforce Development Manager (DBC)

11.3	Create a sustainable, representative Children and Young People SEND Group who meet on a termly basis as a minimum.	Children And Young People voice will be clearly heard and demonstrably have influenced priorities in all action plans	Sept 2025	April 2026	Participation Officer (DBC)	Young Persons SENDIASS (DBC) YP Health Facilitator (ICB)
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12 – Co-production

<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to, and support, children and young people with SEND to raise their aspirations and achieve their ambitions. • Make sure children and young people with SEND are involved in service development and commissioning activity. • Work as a partner to support individuals and families to greater empowerment. 	
<p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young People will be more involved in local decision making that affects them. • Children and Young People will be empowered and will feel empowered to make decisions concerning their lives and the support that they need. • Children and Young People will achieve their co-produced outcomes. • Children and Young People will be ready to move on to their next stage of their lives and be confident in the support to do so. • Those supporting Children and Young People will work together to help them plan for moving on. 	

12	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
12.1	<p>Educations settings, health & social care will share QA processes to ensure that the voice of Children and Young People is captured in their individual plans, outcomes and provision.</p> <p>This is a longer-term programme to establish how across whole inclusion partnership we share this knowledge and information.</p>	<p>QA will demonstrate clear evidence of Children and Young People voice in all plans and outcomes are linked to their aspirations.</p> <p>A growing knowledge of the aspiration of Children and Young People is incorporated into future planning.</p>	April 2026	April 2028	Inclusion Board	<p>Head of SEND and Inclusion (DBC)</p> <p>SEND Team Manager (DBC)</p>

12.2	An agreed co-production charter is created and agreed across the local area Inclusion Partnership	A co-production charter is agreed across the Inclusion Partnership	Sep 2025	Aug 2026		SEND & Inclusion Advisor (DBC)
12.3	Co-production Charter Launched	A co-production charter is agreed across the Inclusion Partnership	Sep 2026	Ongoing		Virtual School Head (DBC)
12.4	Co-production is monitored and information shared as part of the Data Dashboard	The Inclusion Partnership is aware of how co-production is advancing and where action may be needed.	Sept 2027	Ongoing		Social Care Health Children and Young People Parent and Carers
12.5	Ensure there is access to high quality CIAG (Careers Information, Advice and Guidance) available in all Darlington Schools This 2-year programme will be developed by Darlington CIAG Group in conjunction with TVCA	EHCP's will demonstrate that all children will have had CIAG from Y9 onwards	Sept 2025	Sept 2027	Head of Employability and Skills (DBC)	TVCA Education Partners CIAG Group

13 – Into Adulthood

We will:

- Make sure that there are clear pathways into adulthood that have been co-produced.
- Make sure that there are clear pathways into employment and opportunities for all.
- Make sure that local housing and independent living opportunities are available for those who meet the relevant criteria.
- Work with local 16+ education settings to provide better life skills training.

Impact:

- Pathways will be clear and understood and available on the Local Offer website.
- Increased opportunity for independent living for those who want to move out of parents' home.
- Reduced need for commissioned support.
- Better outcomes for the person.

13	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
13.1	To bring together all work across the partnership on Preparation for Adulthood.	Preparation for Adulthood governance structure in place	Jan 2025	Sept 2025	Joss Harbron	People Group
13.2	Co-produce a single pathway into adulthood across all services and agencies in Darlington. This will include guidance at key stages of a young person's journey from 13/14 - 25.	A single pathway into adulthood is agreed and available to all	Sept 2025	Sept 2026	Assistant Director Adults Social Care (DBC)	ICB Education Partners

13.3	Create and launch a single partnership wide Preparation for Adulthood Strategy – this will include Employment and Occupation, Housing, Money, Friendships & Relationships and Community.	A Preparation for Adulthood strategy is agreed and in place	Sept 2025	Sept 2026		Darlington College PCF Children and Young People
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14 – Local Offer and better information

Page 73	We will:					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and develop a new Local Offer for Darlington. Making sure it is the main information and communication point for SEND locally Make sure good quality information and guidance is available for individuals, and their families, as they move from childhood to adulthood. This includes advice on finance; benefits; adults services in the NHS and Darlington BC; getting a job; getting a place to live; and adult rights and independence. 					
	Impact					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Darlington Local Officer is seen as a “One Stop Shop” where Children, young people and families, as well as, supporting professionals will have comprehensive information and advice in one place. Children and young people know where to go and use information and guidance. The Local Offer will support working together, ensuring accuracy and consistency. Regular review of available information and advice. Improve wellbeing by timely and appropriate access to resource and support, including signposting. The use of the local offer will increase. 					

14	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
14.1	Identify and agree resources, roles and responsibilities for the running and oversight of Darlington Local Offer	A comprehensively upgraded and updated SEND Local Offer for Darlington.	May 2025	September 2025	Tony Murphy Assistant Director	DBC Corporate Communications Team

		<p>The Local Offer is being used across the Local Area Partnership to share information, communication and resources</p> <p>Footfall and use of the Local Offer and the technology it provides.</p>			<p>Education and Inclusion (DBC)</p> <p>Jo Heaney (NENC ICB)</p>	<p>DBC Web Development</p> <p>ICB Information and Communications Team</p>
14.2	<p>Develop the Local Offer as the comprehensive central information resource for all matter SEND and Inclusion</p> <p>Create areas that cover all aspects of SEND and Inclusion in Darlington which are clearly understood by all, especially children, young people and families.</p> <p>Identify Champions for each area within the Local Offer, with clear roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>A comprehensively upgraded and updated SEND Local Offer for Darlington.</p> <p>Clarity of responsibilities for information, ensuring the information is of quality and up to date.</p>	September 2025	January 2026		<p>Family Information Service (DBC)</p> <p>Parent Carers</p> <p>Children and Young People</p> <p>Lead professionals</p>
14.3	<p>Develop fresh information across all areas within the local offer, giving information, guidance and contacts. This should be using formats that are as user friendly as possible.</p> <p>Ensure that professional guidance is also included within the Local Offer.</p>	<p>Clear quality information, guidance and contacts are available on the Local Offer.</p> <p>Information and advice is available in user friendly formats.</p> <p>Children, young people and family know about and use the Local Offer</p> <p>Increased access / attendance to services</p>	January 2026	May 2026		

		One page per topic Easily accessible format & language.				
14.4	Ensure that all future portals or access points for self-service are contained within the Local Offer (for example EHC plans can be accessed via a link on the local offer)	Greater use of the Local Offer by all	Sept 2025	Ongoing		
14.5	Regular and routine exercises to be undertaken at least annually to ensure information on the local offer remains up to date	Feedback function on local offer will show positive results Information is to update High level of usage Positive feedback from families Universal commissioned services are used as first step to support	Jan 2026	Ongoing		

15 – Safe spaces

We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure community safety works on inclusion of Children and Young People with SEND, including looking at safe spaces in the local community.	
Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased engagement with community groups.• Children and Young People will feel safe and enjoy a range of activities in line with their interests.• Safe spaces known and used across Darlington.	

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15	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
15.1	Work with Darlington’s Community Safety Partnership (CPS) to ensure the partnership’s priority to protect and support vulnerable people is inclusive of families and young people with SEND		May 2025	August 2026	Head of Community Safety (DBC)	Community Safety Partnership (CPS)
15.2	Community Safety will launch in partnership with Darlington Association on Disabilities (DAD) on a Safe Spaces scheme for Darlington Town Centre to include for young people with SEND		May 2025	August 2026	Head of Community Safety (DBC)	Darlington Association on Disability (DAD)

16 – Local Transport

We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local transport providers to make sure public transport is more inclusive and welcoming. 	
Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Young People will feel safe and welcome on local transport. They will be confident to access public transport as independently as possible. 	

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16	Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
16.1	Promotion of the Tees Valley 21 & under £1 single ticket, and the £3 day ticket valid all day on eligible local bus services within the Tees Valley area to support independence and access to education and employment opportunities	Monitoring of public transport usage through the Darlington Transport Plan	May 2025	June 2026	Transport Planning Manager (DBC)	SEND Local Offer
16.2	Explore with TVCA and transport providers how we make local transport more welcoming and inclusive.					PCF Children and Young People DAD
16.3	Assessment and review of independent travel training needs in Darlington	Report and recommendations for independent travel training across Darlington	Sep 2025	April 2026	Head of Skills and Employability (DBC)	Schools Transport Manager (DBC)

17 – Partnership Governance

<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders should continue to strengthen their governance arrangements to deliver and monitor the implementation and effectiveness of their SEND strategy across the partnership. This includes ensuring that: • the partnership continues to strengthen and further improve the quality of data it uses to accurately identify where there are gaps in provision and commission appropriate services to effectively address those gaps; • the partnership strengthens the information that is currently available to all partners and uses this effectively in order to hold each other accountable for the effective commissioning and delivery of services to improve outcomes for children and young people; • the planned increase in special school places for post-16 students proceeds to timeframe to alleviate capacity issues in special school provision. 	<div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
<p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a full partnership data dashboard in place and being used in conjunction with other intelligence sources we will see a better-informed partnership and leadership able to monitor and demonstrate activity clearly across the partnership. This will in turn support a clearer proactive commissioning process leading to better sufficiency and development of future service. • Children, young people and their families will have a clear picture of activity at a local level. • All partners will be able to access information to support better local understanding and the ability to effectively challenge the partnerships delivery. • Strong Challenge / Strong Support • Additional specialist 6th form capacity 	

17		Task	Evidence of Outcomes	Start	Finish	Lead	Other resources
17.1	a.	Data Dashboard – full review and refresh	<p>A revised and operational data dashboard is updated and published on a termly basis.</p> <p>Shared understanding of performance data across Darlington Local Area Partnership.</p>		April 2025	<p>Christine Shields Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation (DBC)</p> <p>Jo Heaney (NENC ICB)</p>	Head of Transformation and Performance (DBC)
	b.	Quality assurance of data dashboard in place	<p>A clear mechanism for quality assuring and agreement of termly published Data Dashboard in place.</p> <p>Any changes to the data dashboard are agreed via Darlington's Local Area Partnership Group and Board.</p>	April 2025	April 2026	<p>Christine Shields Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation (DBC)</p> <p>Jo Heaney (NENC ICB)</p>	Head of Transformation and Performance (DBC)
	c.	Power BI dashboard in place	Power BI dashboard in place		April 2026	<p>Christine Shields Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation (DBC)</p> <p>Jo Heaney (NENC ICB)</p>	Head of Transformation and Performance (DBC)

17.2	a	Refreshed and operational SEND JSNA	Darlington JSNA clearly identifies and provides regularly updated information regarding the SEND Community in Darlington	April 2025	April 2026	Lorraine Hughes Director of Public Health (DBC)	Public Health Team (DBC) Head of Transformation and Performance (DBC) Performance and Analysis (NENC ICB)
17.3	a	Data dashboard and intelligence being used by assurance group, implementation group and joint commissioning	Use of a data dashboard is clear within the assurance group, implementation group and joint commissioning		May 2025	Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) /Jo Heaney (NENC ICB)	SEND Local Area Partnership Board, SEND Local Area Partnership Group
	b	Publish an easy read data dashboard on Local offer	Easy read data dashboard available and updated on a routine basis.		April 2026	Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC) /Jo Heaney (NENC ICB)	SEND Local Area Partnership Board, SEND Local Area Partnership Group
17.4	a	Create a new sixth form centre for Beaumont Hill Academy in the former Haughton Children's Centre. This in turn would free up 30 secondary SEND places, following refurbishment of the vacant space, in the main school.	Additional physical capacity for Beaumont Hill Academy and the opening of a stand-alone 6 th form centre for the school.	May 2025	Sept 2025	Tony Murphy Assistant Director Education and Inclusion (DBC)	Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT) Head of Skills and Employability (DBC)

Glossary of Acronyms

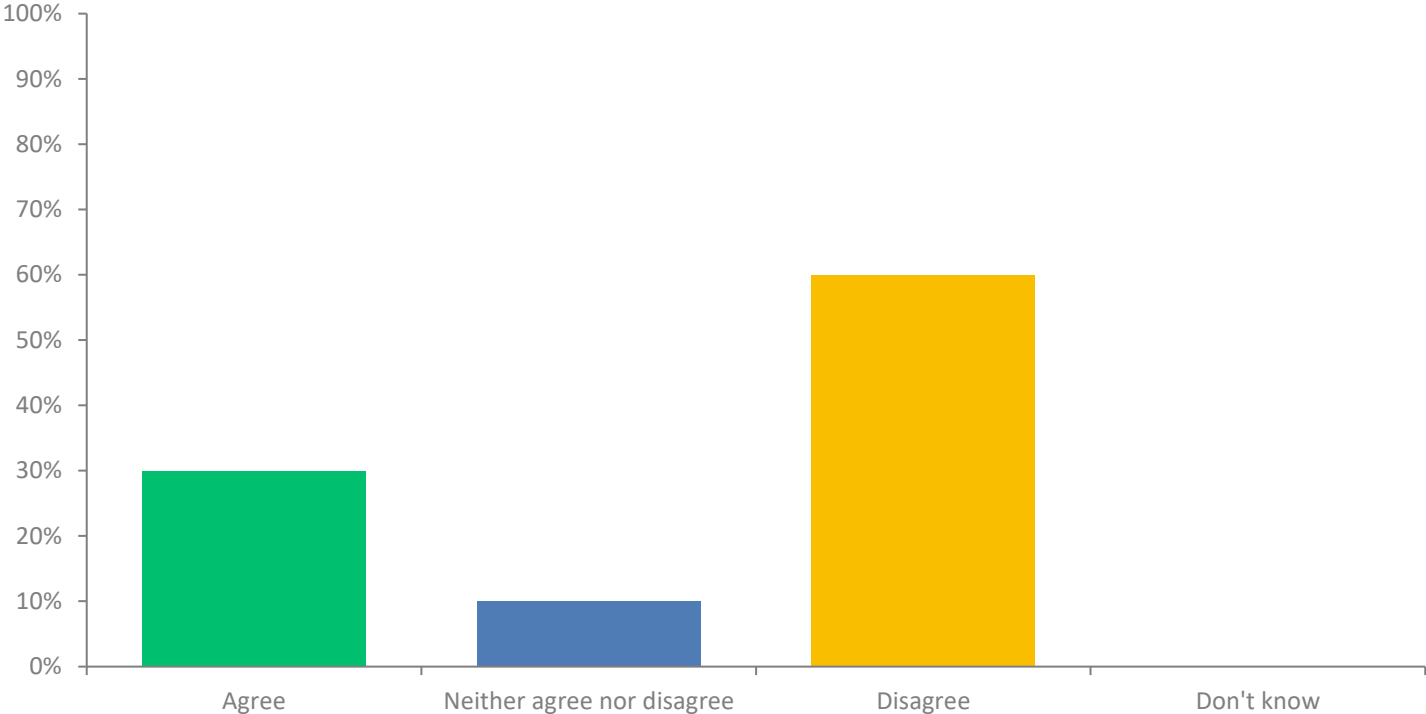
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
CETR	Care Education and Treatment Reviews
DAD	Darlington Association on Disability
DBC	Darlington Borough Council
DCO	Designated Clinical Officer
DPIA	Data Protection Impact Assessment
DSR	Dynamic Support Register
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
EHC plans	Education, Health and Care plans
EVAT	Education Village Academy Trust
ID	Identification
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Analysis
LD	Learning Disability or Disabilities
LD AHC	Learning Disability Annual Health Check
NENC ICB	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
OT	Occupational Therapy
PCF	Darlington Parent Carers Forum
PFA	Preparing for Adulthood
Power BI	An information and data management system
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (Schools)
VPP	Vulnerable Pupil Panel

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Darlington Local Area SEND Strategy 2025 - 2029 (60-day Public Consultation)

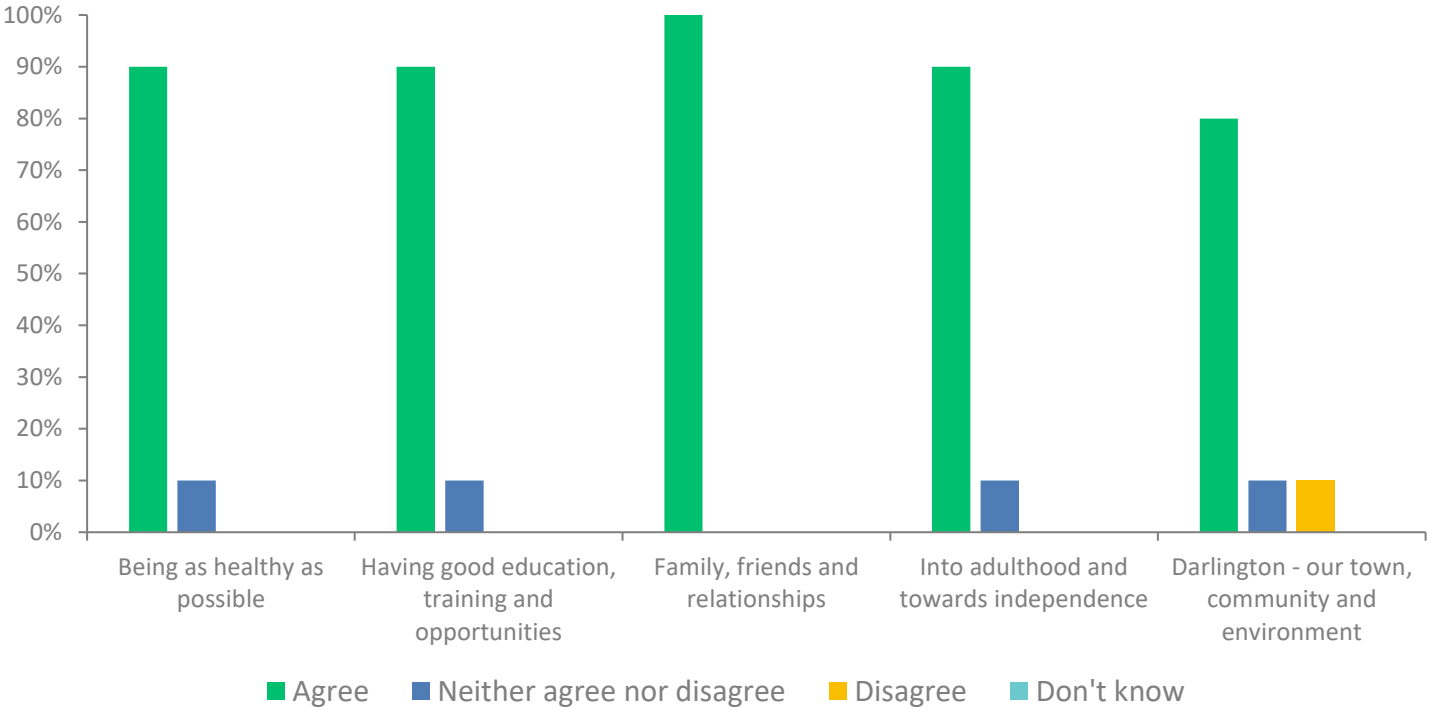
Wednesday, January 22, 2025

In Darlington we are committed to working in partnership across our local area to coordinate support, care and learning for SEND children, young people, and their families, so they are able to fulfil their ambitions and to thrive. Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the strategy's five key areas?

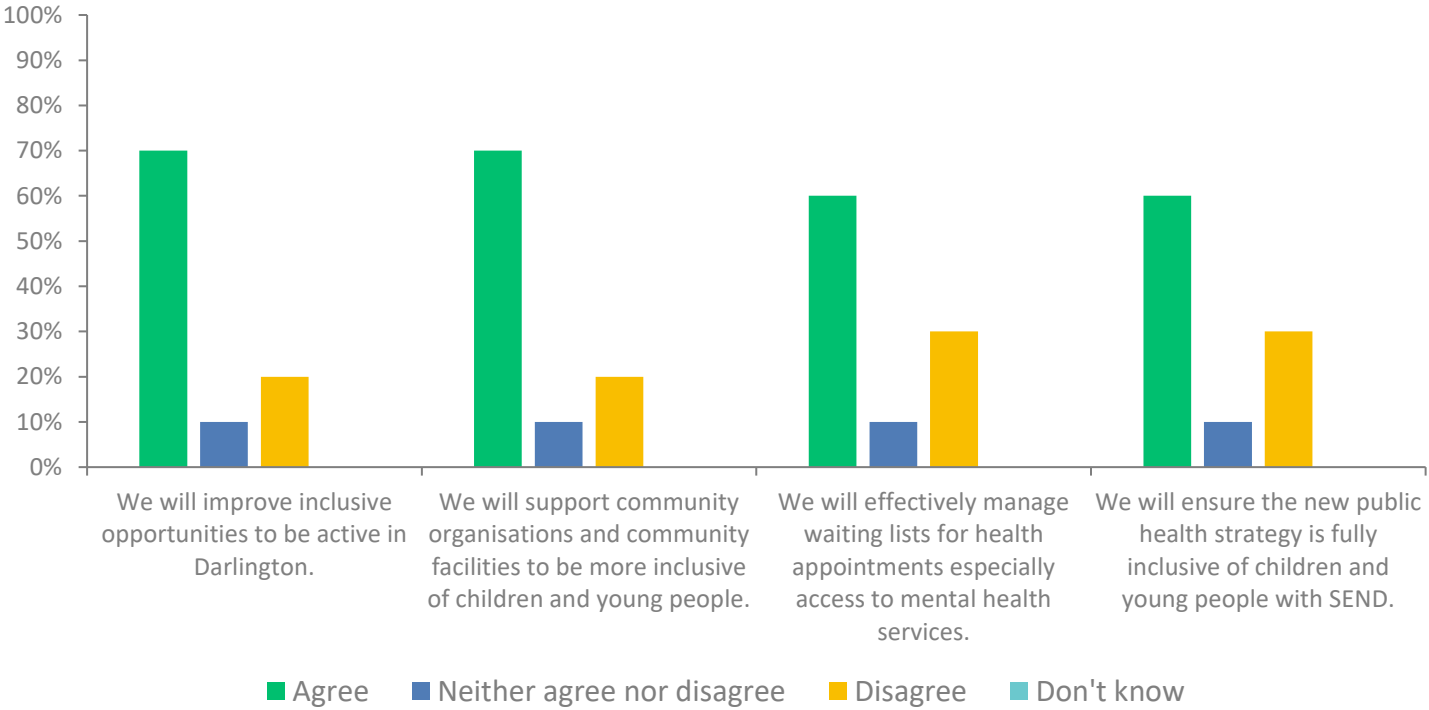
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To what extent do you agree or disagree with the what we will do statements?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0

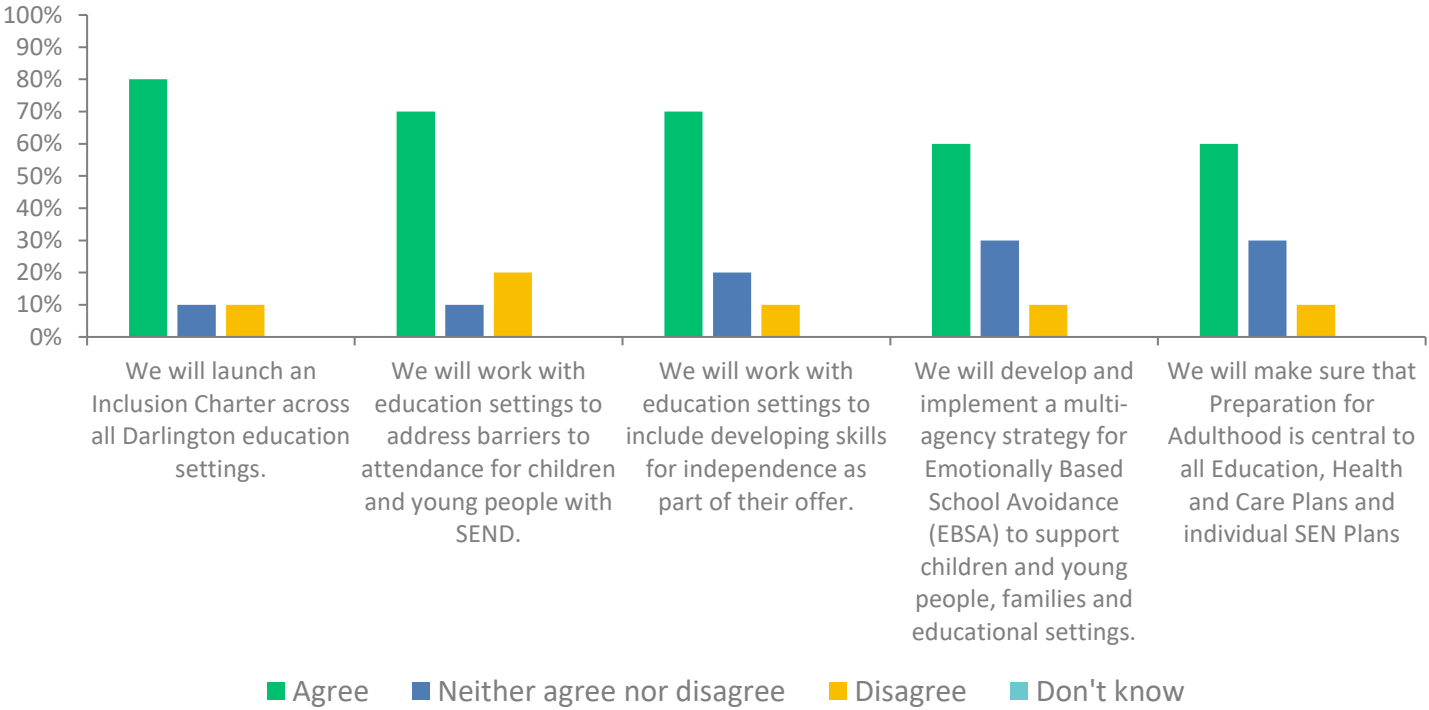
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To what extent do you agree or disagree with the what we will do statements?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0

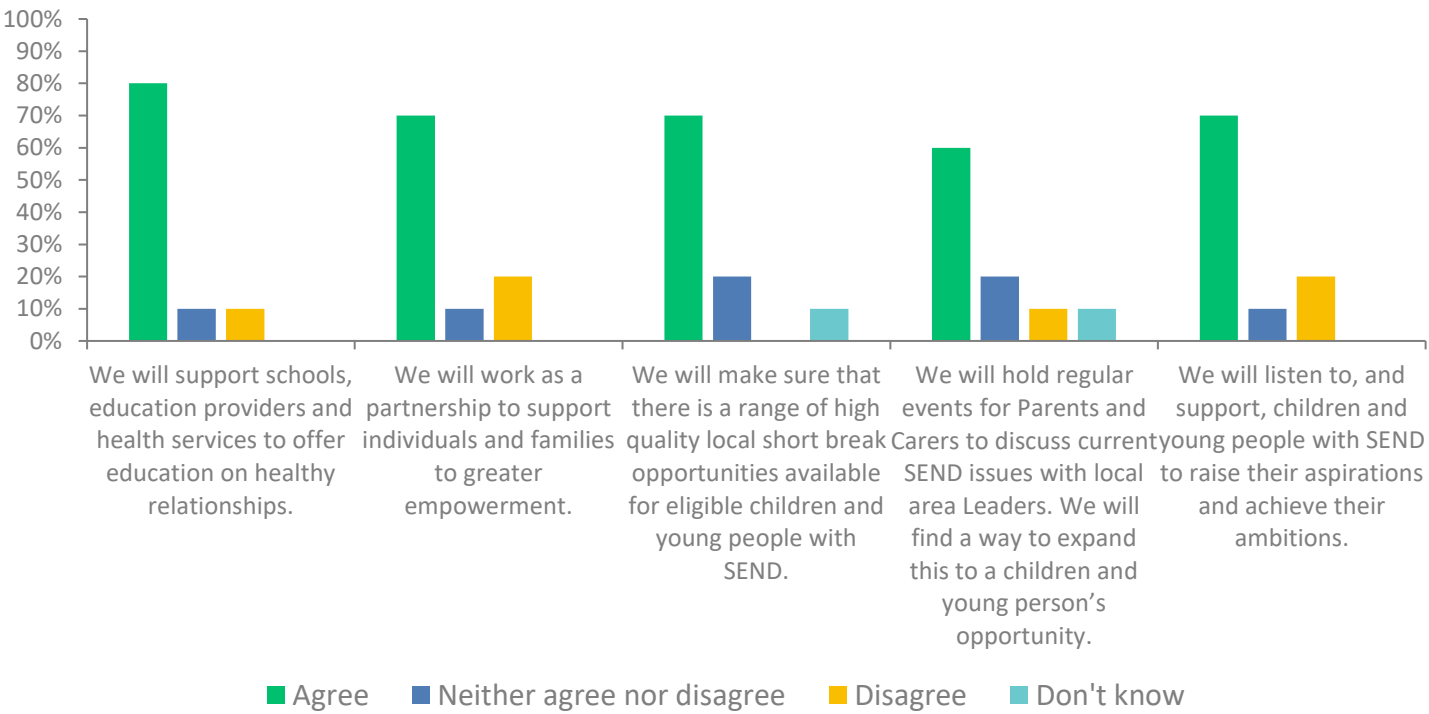
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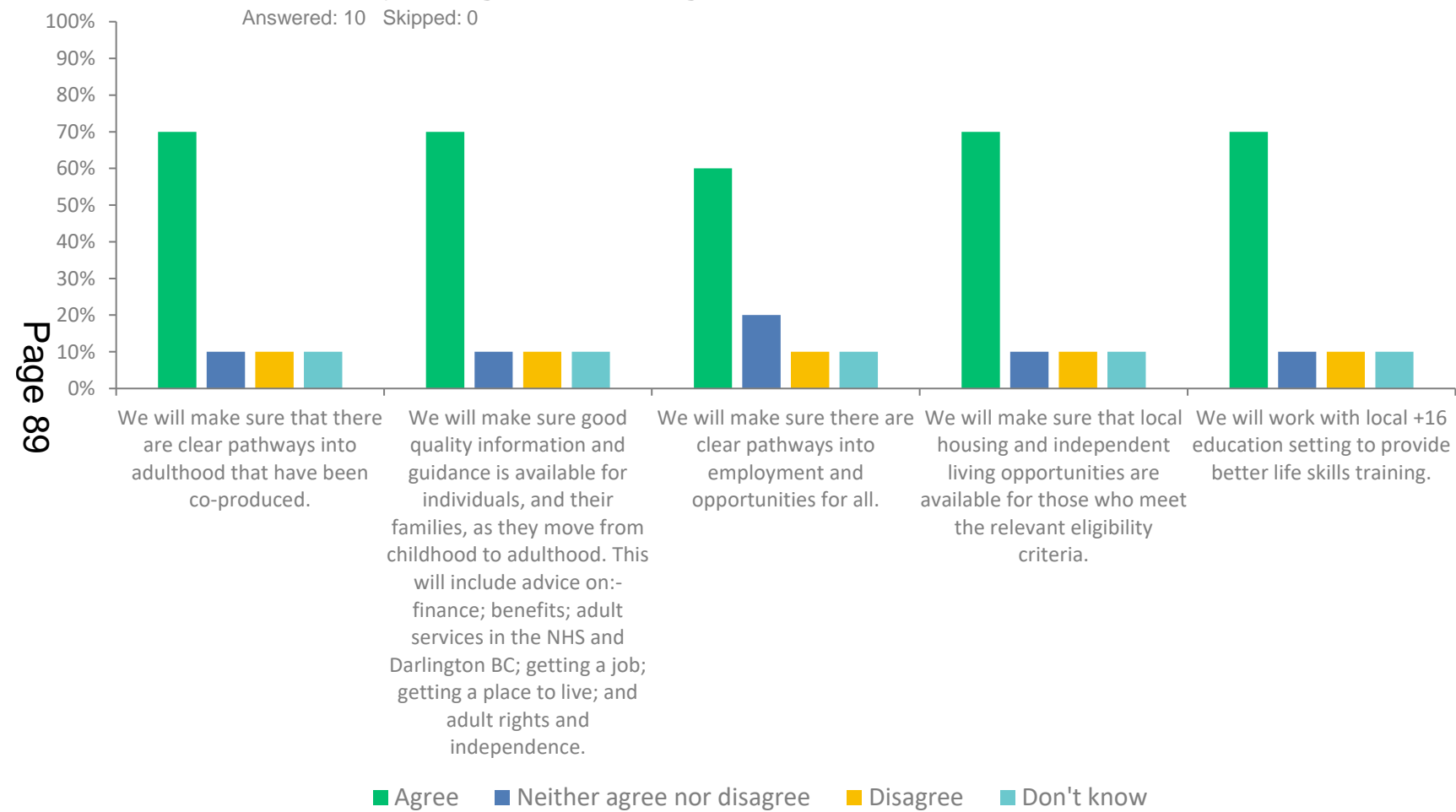
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the what we will do statements?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0

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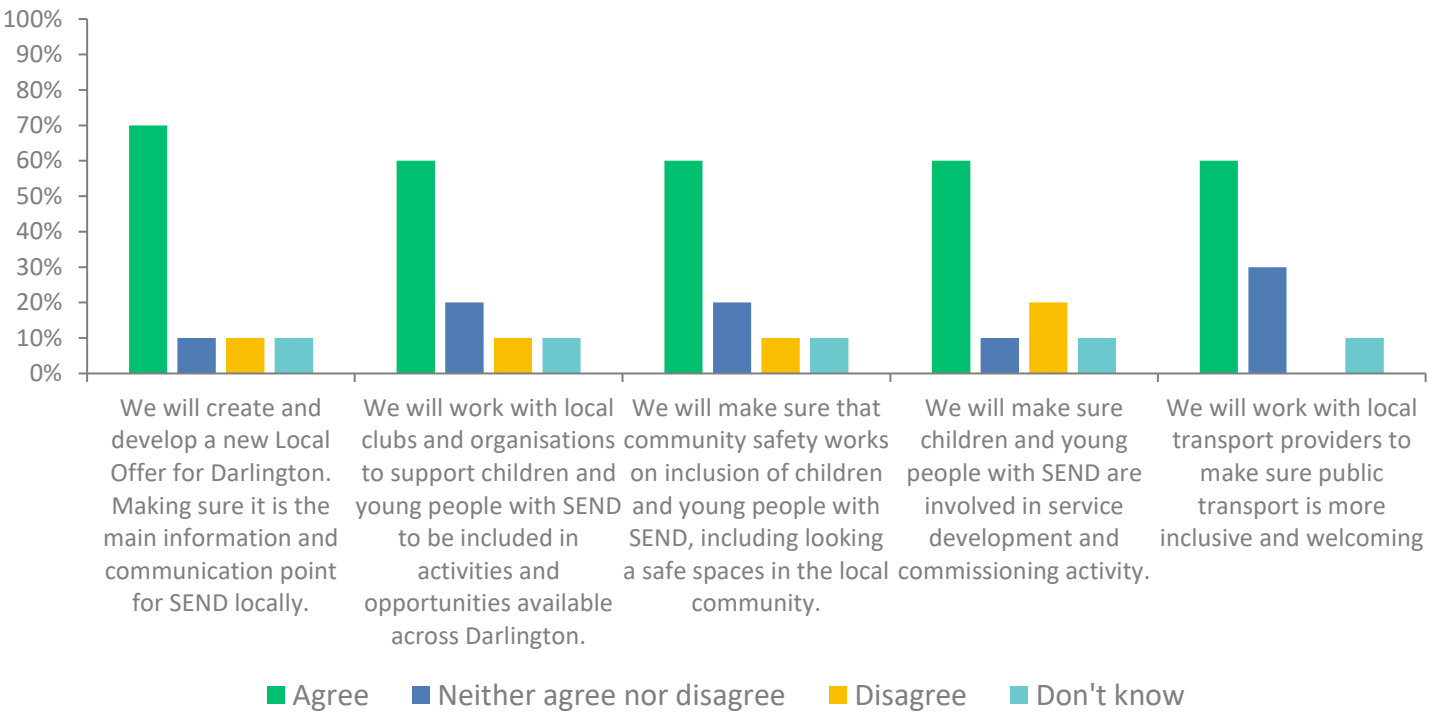
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the what we will do statements?



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the what we will do statements?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0

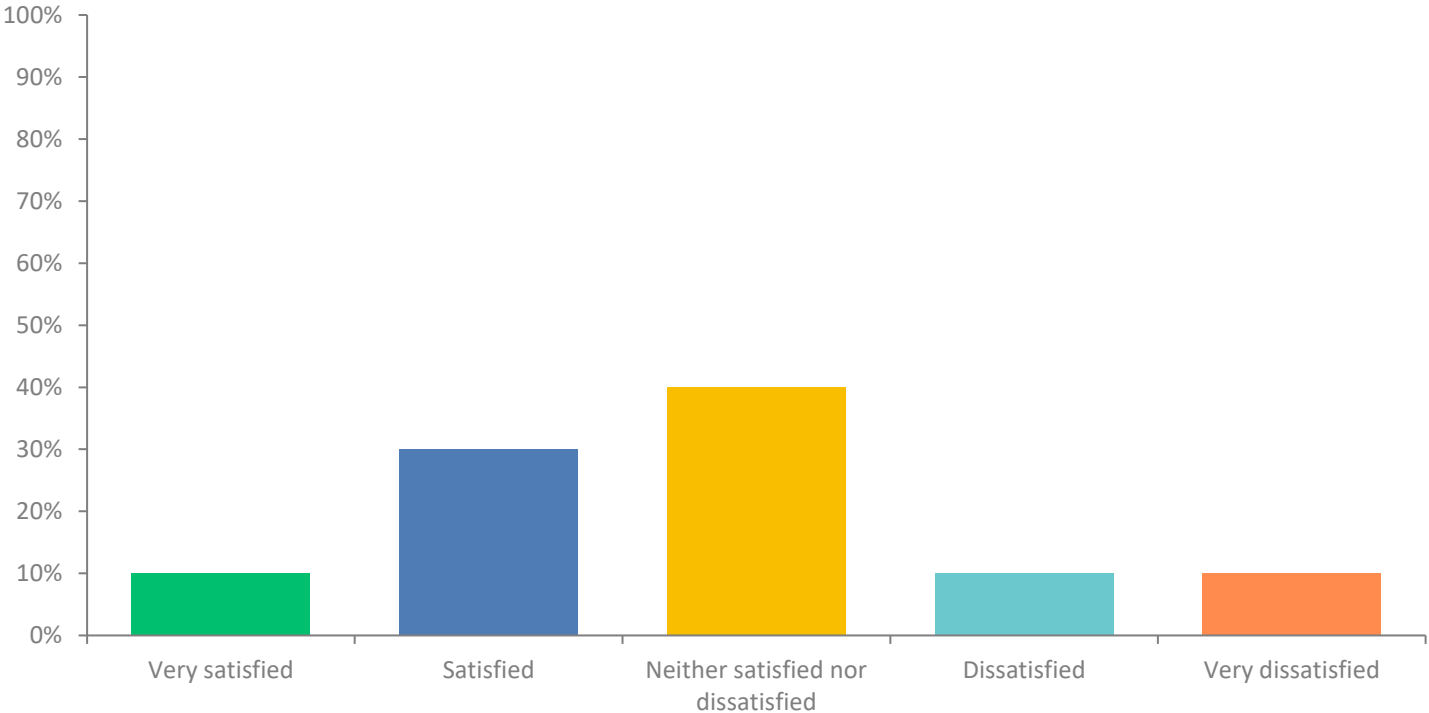
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Overall, how satisfied are you with the SEND Strategy 2025-2029?

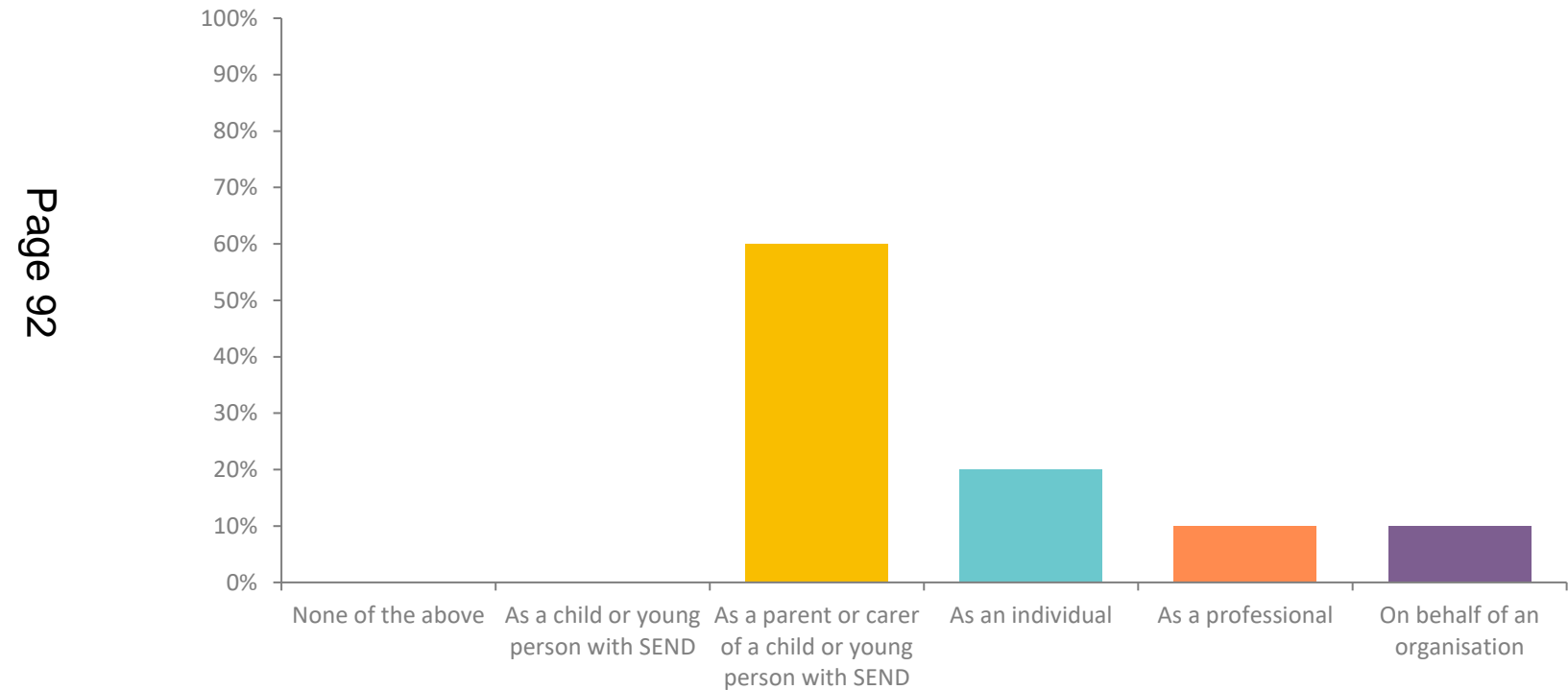
Answered: 10 Skipped: 0

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Are you responding to this consultation...

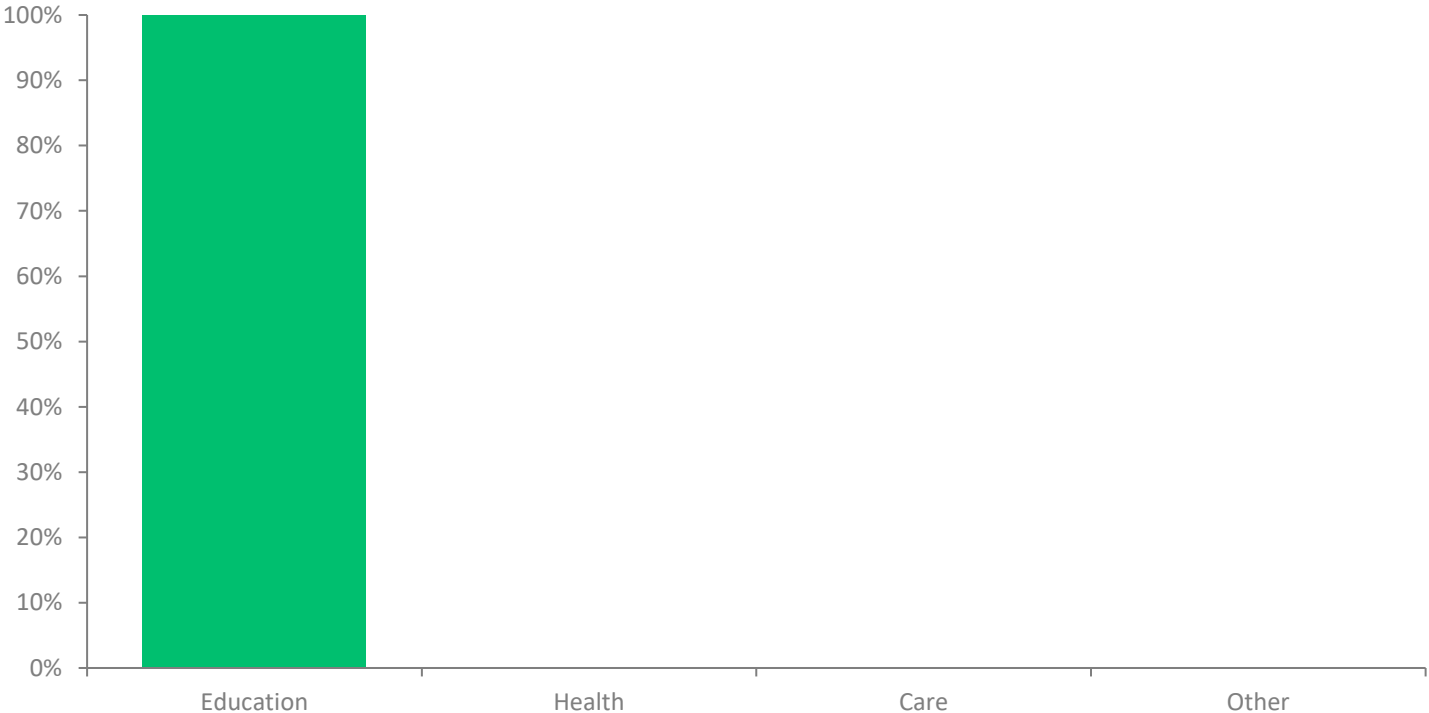
Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



Which area do you or your organisation work in

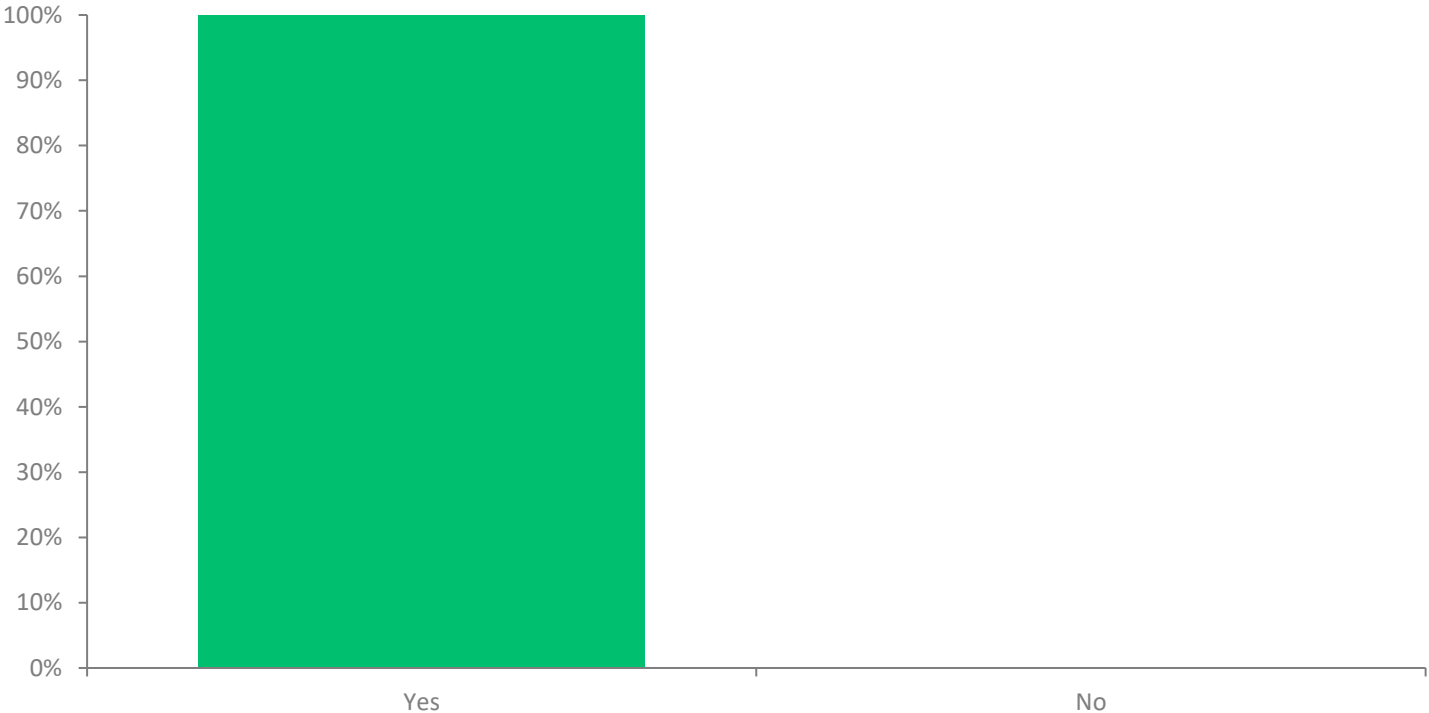
Answered: 2 Skipped: 8

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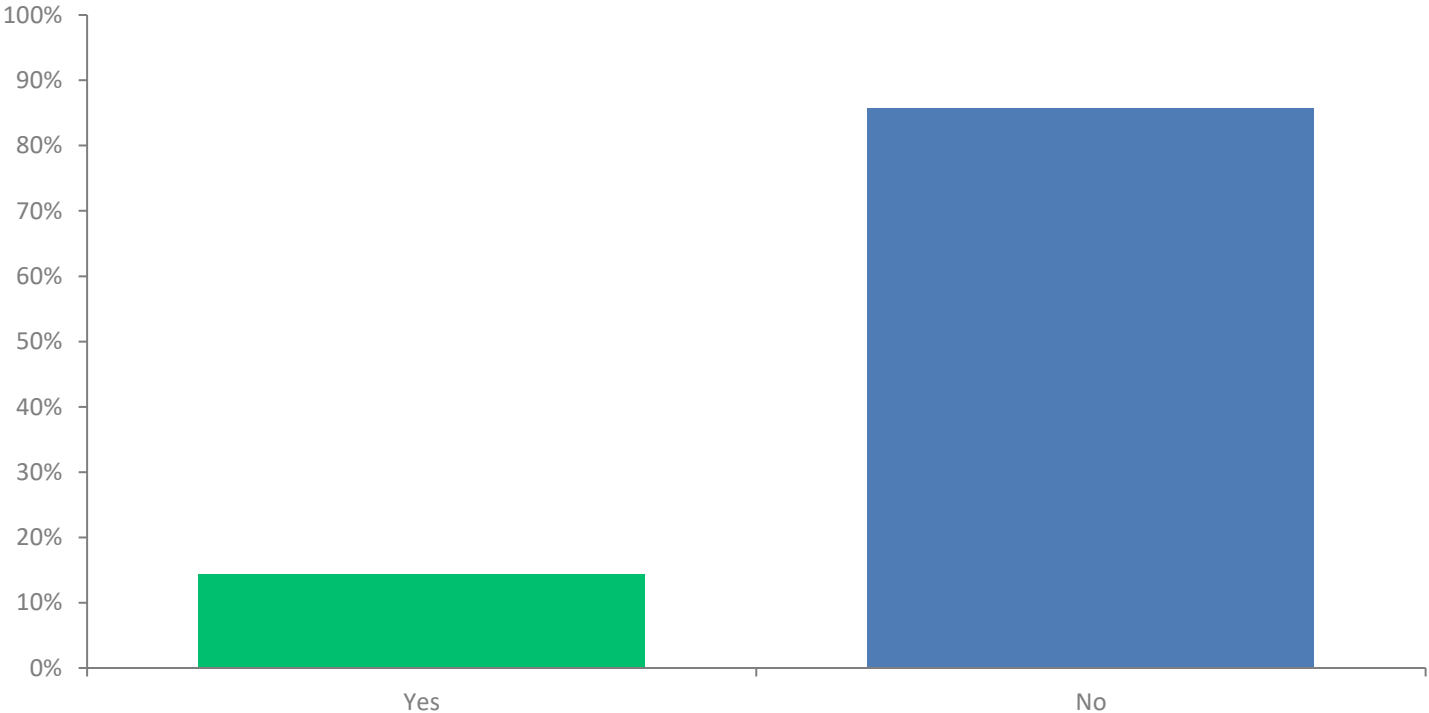
Are you, or the person on whose behalf you are responding, a resident of the borough of Darlington?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 2



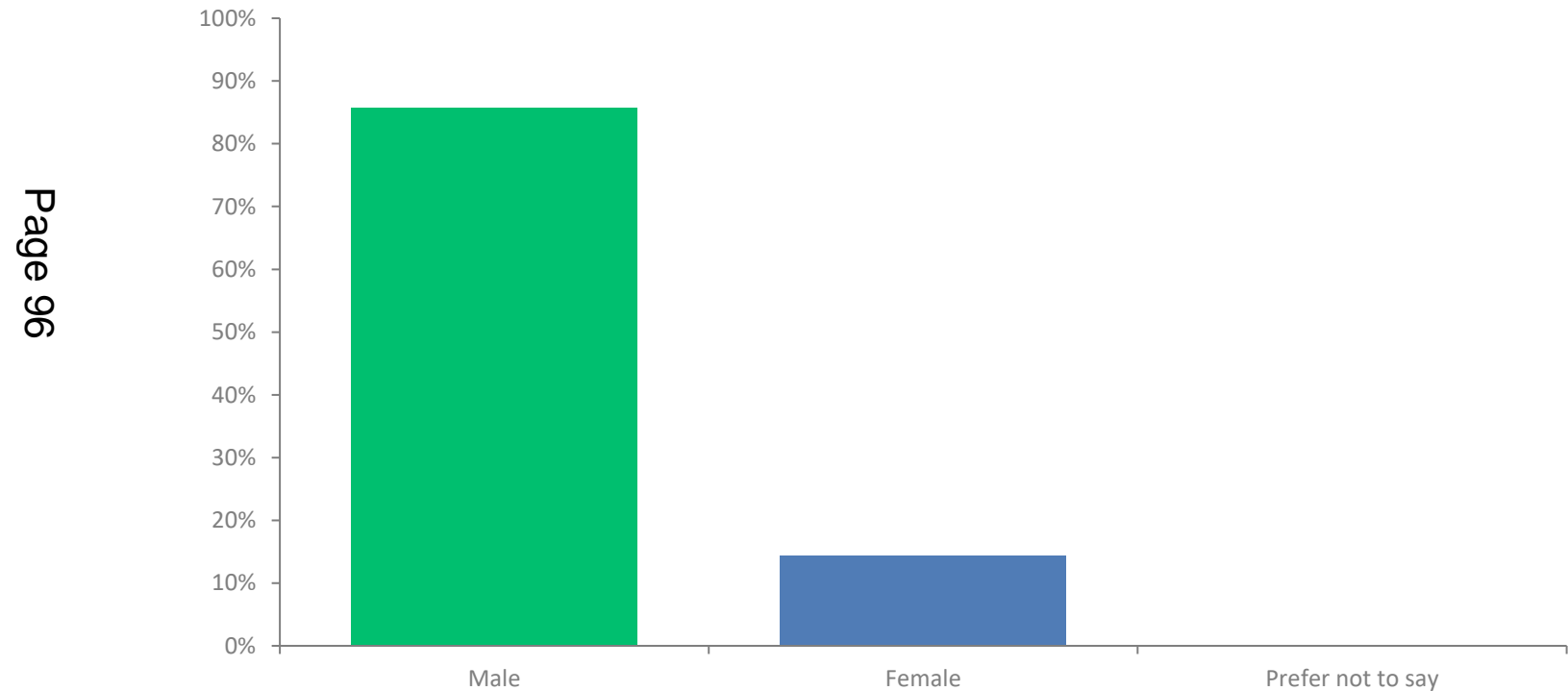
Do you work in, or for, children, young people or families with SEND in Darlington?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 3



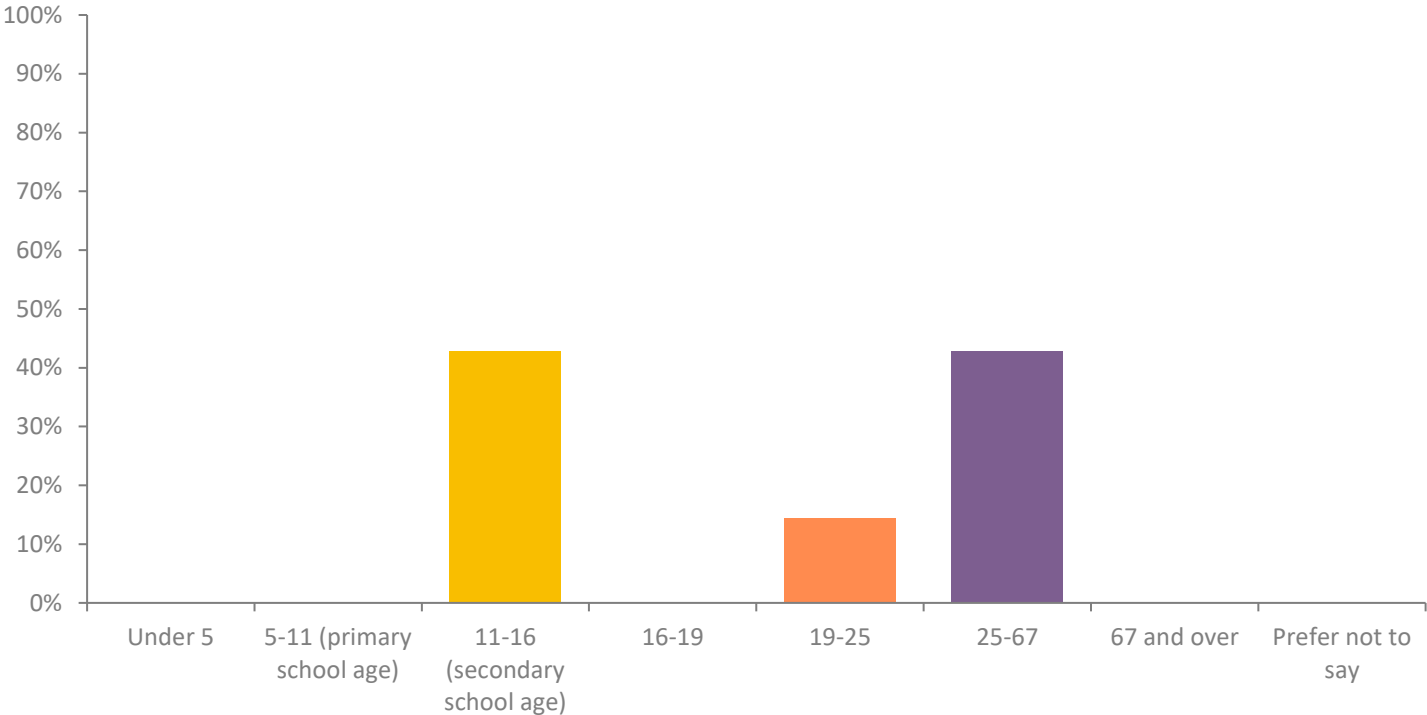
What is your, or the person on whose behalf you are responding, sex?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 3



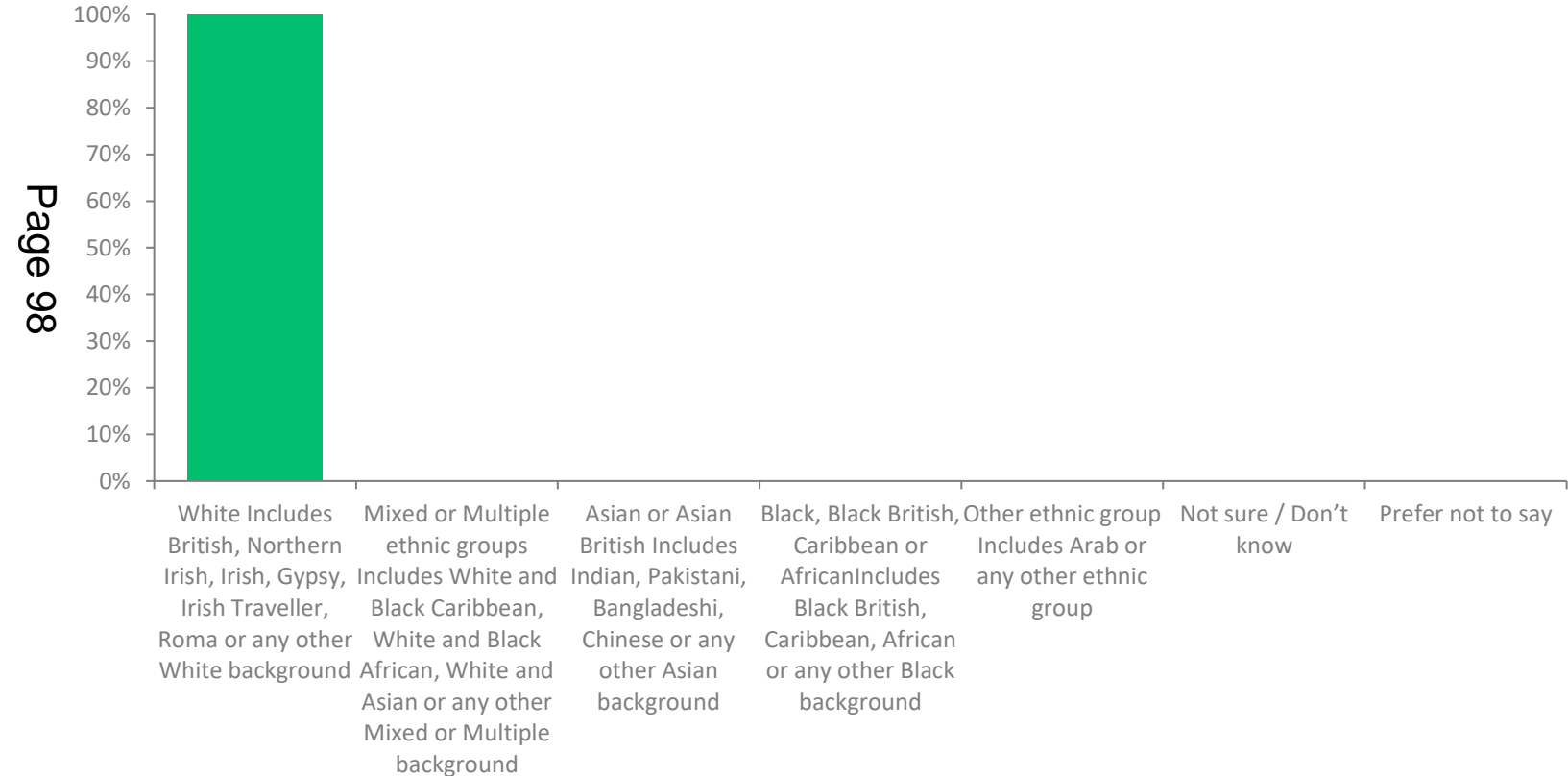
What age group do you, or the person on whose behalf you are responding, fall into?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 3



What is your, or the person on whose behalf you are responding, ethnic group?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 3



CABINET
6 MAY 2025

**DESIGNATION OF NEW MIDDLETON ST GEORGE CONSERVATION AREA
AND ADOPTION OF FINALISED APPRAISAL**

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
Mike Poulter
Director of Economy and Public Protection**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The report seeks Councillors' approval to designate a new conservation area at Middleton St George and adopt the corresponding appraisal. The document that has been submitted is called *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Finalised document. May 2025*. See **Appendix 1**.

Summary

2. The report provides justification for the designating a new conservation area at Middleton St George and adopting the corresponding appraisal. The draft version of the appraisal (December 2024) had been subject to a six-week public consultation period. Amendments have been made in light of the comments received.
3. Following the adoption of the finalised appraisal, the text currently marked in yellow will be amended to reflect the adopted status of the appraisal. No other changes will be made. The adopted appraisal will be named: *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Adopted document. May 2025*.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Cabinet recommends that Council adopts the new conservation area boundary at Middleton St George (see chapter 6.0 of the finalised appraisal).
 - (b) Cabinet recommends that Council adopts the new conservation area's name: *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area*.
 - (c) Cabinet recommends that Council adopts the finalised appraisal for the new Middleton St George Conservation Area.

- (d) Cabinet recommends that Council authorises the amendment of finalised appraisal with regards to the text marked in yellow, to reflect the adopted status of the document. The adopted appraisal will be named: *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Adopted document. May 2025.*

Reasons

5. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) Fighting Cocks was an original stopping point (station) along the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) of 1825. The presence of the railway led to the establishment of the Middleton Iron Works in 1864, which sparked the development of the village of Middleton St George.
- (b) The bicentennial of the S&DR is this year. There will be many events along the former route to celebrate the birth of the modern railway. Darlington Borough Council (DBC) has been making significant S&DR-related investments, and Middleton St George Parish Council is also preparing for its celebration within the village. Over the past few years, heritage assets at Fighting Cocks have been promoted through the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan, S&DR Heritage Action Zone and Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub.
- (c) The appraisal demonstrates in detail that sufficient special interest survives at Middleton St George which is associated with the S&DR and the industrial development of the village justifying the designation of a conservation area. It picks up the 'unfinished' work by Durham County Council who proposed a (different) conservation area boundary for Middleton St George in 2022.
- (d) The draft conservation area boundary proposed by DBC has generally been welcomed by residents who took part in the public consultation. It is also supported by the Friends of the S&DR and Middleton St George Parish Council. Amendments have been made following feedback received, including concerns raised by Historic England.
- (e) Once the conservation area boundary has been adopted, the appraisal will provide an evidence base for managing change in the area and form a material consideration in the Planning process. Conservation area designation can also assist if funding is sought for larger regeneration or conservation schemes within the boundary.
- (f) The appraisal also includes suggestions to improve the condition of the area. These are in line with the aims of the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan and the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub.

Mike Poulter
Director of Economy and Public Protection

Background Papers

- (i) Darlington Borough Council (2024) *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Public Consultation Draft. December 2024*
- (ii) <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/17327/msg-np-made-version.pdf>
- (iii) <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/16184/fighting-cocks-heritage-hub-guide.pdf>

David Hand : Extension 6294

Council Plan	<p>The appraisal:</p> <p>(a) Supports economic growth through sustainable and well-planned development (priorities).</p> <p>(b) Underpins the Plan's priority of valuing our heritage and culture.</p>
Addressing inequalities	No impact
Tackling Climate Change	Possibly slightly positive impact. The appraisal raises some awareness against the use of modern materials that are incompatible with traditional buildings, which often have a high-carbon footprint and adverse effect on the insulating properties of traditional structures.
Efficient and effective use of resources	If the appraisal is adopted, there may be a slight increase in additional officer workload in planning applications and enforcement.
Health and Wellbeing	Possibly slightly positive impact. The information provided in the draft appraisal may lead to wider improvements in the area.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Possibly slightly positive impact. The information provided in the draft appraisal may lead to wider improvements in the area.
Wards Affected	Sadberge & Middleton St George
Groups Affected	No impact
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	No

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Background Information

6. A conservation area is '*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*' (Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
7. There is currently no conservation area at Middleton St George.
8. Fighting Cocks was an original stopping point (station) along the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) of 1825, which is of international significance being the world's first public railway on which a locomotive hauled passengers. The village of Middleton St George did not exist at the time. This stopping point in the middle of nowhere was likely chosen as it is the location of an ancient road junction where the old lane from Darlington met the route of the former Roman road. With the advent of the railway, industrial sites were established at Fighting Cocks. In 1864 the Middleton Iron Works occupied a large site further to south which sparked the development of Middleton St George including rows of workers houses and a village centre.
9. Much of the surviving special interest at Middleton St George comprises structures and other elements linked to the S&DR, the regionally important Fighting Cocks Reservoirs which predate the historical settlement, and buildings associated with the industrialisation and resulting creation of the village.
10. Up until the appraisal, the focus at Middleton St George was mainly on the S&DR.
11. General interest in the railway heritage increased as minds started to focus on the S&DR Bicentennial and the founding of the Friends of the S&DR in 2015. Darlington Borough Council (DBC) has been making significant S&DR-related investments, and Middleton St George Parish Council is also preparing for its 2025 celebration within the village.
12. A 2016 Historic Environment Audit identified Fighting Cocks as a location of significant heritage value with several S&DR-related assets and remains still to be found.
13. In 2017, Historic England accepted the whole 26-mile route of the former S&DR as a Heritage Action Zone, following an application by the Stockton & Darlington Railway Heritage Board which included DBC. Launched in May 2018, the S&DR HAZ aimed to better manage, preserve and utilise heritage assets with a view to stimulate economic growth through various projects in the build-up to the railway's bicentenary in 2025. Programme outputs which directly affect Middleton St George include improvement works to the level crossing and the provision of information and interpretation.
14. In May 2019, Middleton St George Parish was formally designated as a neighbourhood area. In September 2022, the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan (2022-2036) was made which includes actions and policies protecting the former route of the S&DR.

15. In early 2020, the Parish Council and the Friends of the S&DR responded to local interest by establishing the Middleton St George S&DR Heritage Steering Group with the mission of delivering the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub, which comprises a number of projects to improve the heritage assets at Fighting Cocks.
16. In July 2022, Durham County Council (DCC) provided *Conservation Area Assessments – Route of the former Stockton & Darlington Railway. Darlington & Middleton St. George*, proposing a conservation area boundary for Middleton St George. It was not accompanied by an appraisal to justify their proposal (see chapter 5.0 of the appraisal).
17. In November 2023, DBC's Conservation Officer was shown around Fighting Cocks by the Friends of the S&DR. Projects to be delivered by the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub were also outlined. The Conservation Officer met the Friends on other occasions in 2024 when there was progress or completion of some of the projects (e.g. mural, waiting shed, vegetation clearance).

Draft Appraisal (December 2024)

18. An appraisal for Middleton St George was drafted between March and June 2024 by the Conservation Officer. It included:
 - (a) Information on the planning implications of conservation area designation (chapter 2.0).
 - (b) A detailed assessment of the significance of Middleton St George and its surroundings based on its historical development, spatial/character analysis and values attributed by the local community and other stakeholders (chapter 3.0).
 - (c) A description of its condition and its causes and any issues which have led to the deterioration of the area (section 4.1).
 - (d) An assessment of threats/potential future issues as well as opportunities for enhancement (sections 4.2 & 4.3).
 - (e) Proposed conservation area boundaries based on the special interest of the area, including DCC's initial suggestion as well as additional areas (section 5.1).
19. At the cabinet meeting on 3 December 2024, Councillors approved the public consultation on the document *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Public Consultation Draft (December 2024)*.

Public Consultation

20. The draft appraisal was available for consultation on the Council's Conservation Areas webpage from 13 January to 24 February 2025, along with a feedback form to be completed. There was also a link to an online portal where the document could be viewed and commented on.
21. Paper copies of the appraisal (read only) and feedback form were available at the Town Hall (by appointment only) and at the Crown Street and Cockerton libraries.

22. The public consultation was advertised on the DBC website and Facebook page.
23. Site notices were hung in various locations of the proposed new conservation area boundary.
24. In addition, the Council directly notified individuals, groups and organisations that were likely to have a particular interest in the Middleton St George Conservation Area.
25. At the request of the Middleton St George Parish Council, the Conservation Officer gave a presentation on the proposed new conservation area at the Middleton St George Women's Institute on 20 January 2025 (see Appendix 1 of the finalised appraisal).
26. During the consultation period, a total of 15 responses were received comprising representatives of (number of responses in brackets):
 - (a) (9) Residents (in or close to assessment area)
 - (b) (1) The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway
 - (c) (1) MSG Parish Council
 - (d) (1) Darlington Borough Council
 - (e) (1) Historic England
 - (f) (1) Durham County Council
 - (g) (1) Other
27. Following the public consultation period, a summary of all the comments received was put on the Council's Conservation Areas webpage on 26 February 2025:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/22796/middleton-st-george-conservation-area-consultation-responses-jan-2025.pdf>.
28. The feedback on the draft appraisal and proposed conservation area boundary was generally supportive, including from the Friends of the S&DR and Middleton St George Parish Council. However, there were two objections including from Historic England who argued that more work was needed to clearly identify the special architectural or historic interest that DBC sees as desirable to conserve or enhance, and to use this to reconsider the boundaries proposed.

Finalised Appraisal (May 2025)

29. Following the consultation period, the Council's Conservation Officer worked methodically through all the feedback received and made amendments throughout the document where deemed necessary. An overview of the comments and how they were processed is provided in appendix 2 of *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Finalised document. May 2025*. See Appendix 1.

30. Extra care has been taken to provide considerable clarification on the identification of the special interest (see section 3.1 of the finalised appraisal) and justification for proposed boundary designation (see section 5.1 of the finalised appraisal) using Historic England guidelines. It is considered that the concerns of Historic England have now been adequately addressed.
31. Moreover, additional areas have been included in the finalised new conservation area boundary (see section 5.2 of the finalised appraisal).
32. The finalised appraisal includes text marked in yellow which will be updated once the document is approved for adoption. There will be no other changes. The adopted document will be named: *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Adopted document. March 2025.*

Financial Implications

33. Advertisement costs: Notice of the newly designated boundary will be published in the London Gazette and at least one local newspaper.

Legal Implications

34. Conservation area designation under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

Estates and Property Advice

35. The proposed boundary changes will affect the DBC-owned land, most notably the former railway corridor and the Whinnies nature reserve.

Carbon Impact and Climate Change

36. The appraisal raises some awareness against the use of modern materials that are incompatible with traditional buildings, which often have a high-carbon footprint and adverse effect on the insulating properties of traditional structures.

Consultation

37. See point 20 to 25 above

Outcome of Consultation

38. See points 26 to 31 above.

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Stockton & Darlington Railway:
Middleton St George
(Fighting Cocks)
Conservation Area Appraisal

Finalised document
May 2025



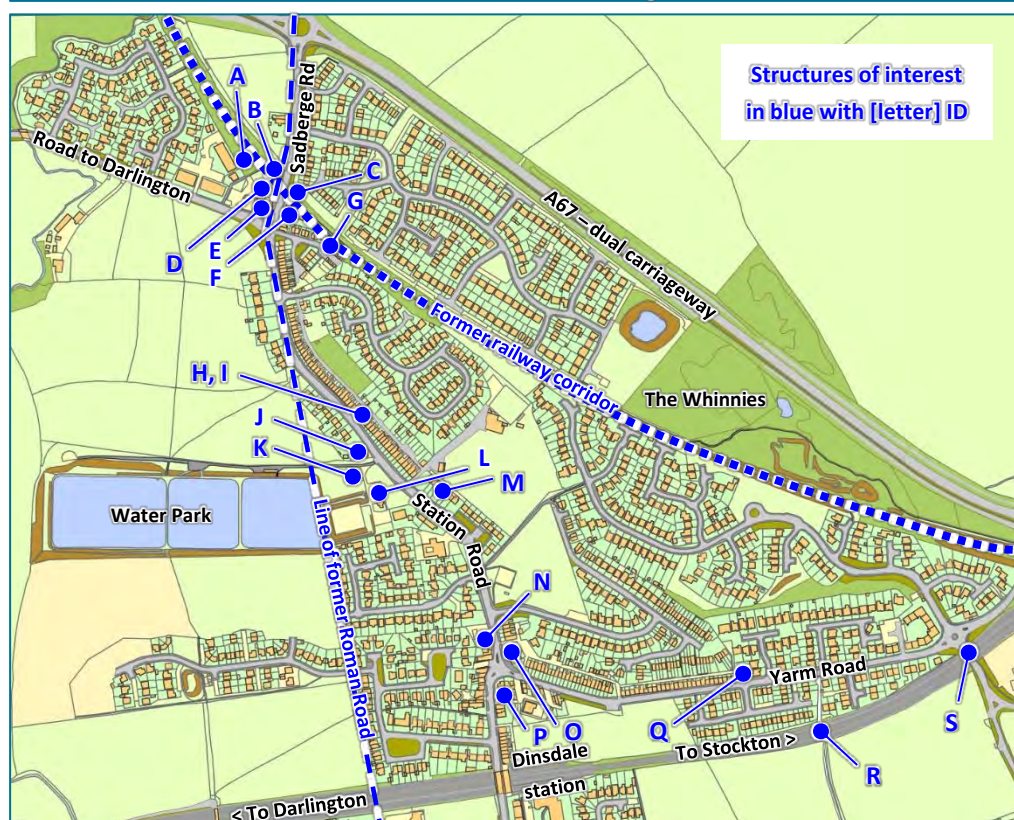
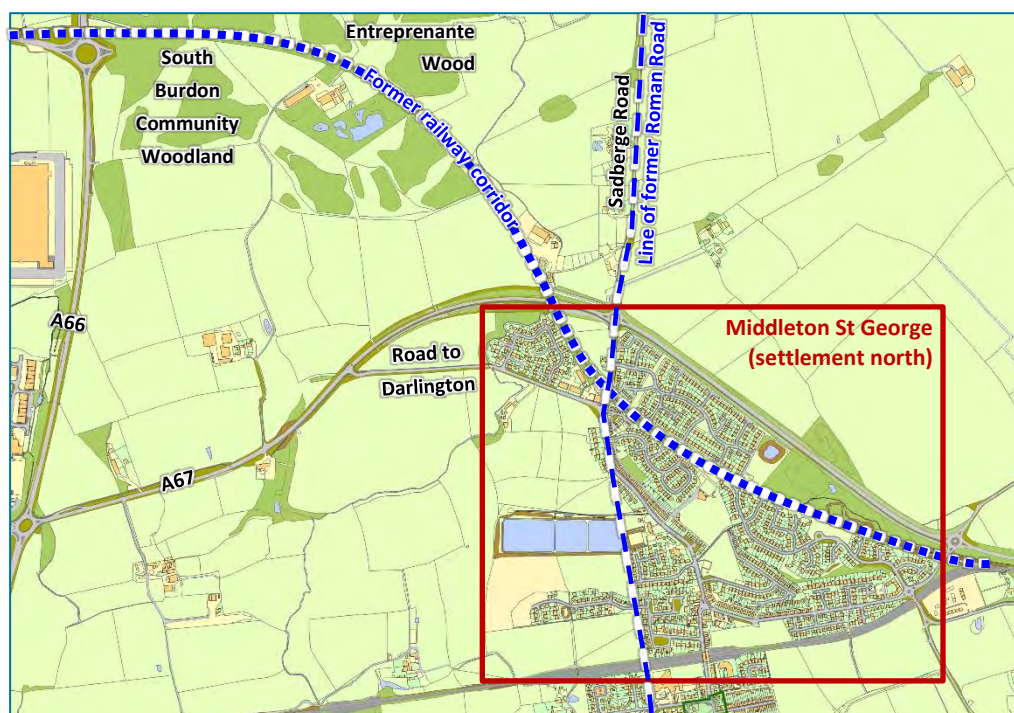
DARLINGTON
Borough Council

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< Cover image: Former station building (painted white) and station master's house at Fighting Cocks. The modern garage is in the location of the former platform, with the wall facing the trackside displaying a mural of the historic station. (Photo © Gaby Rose, April 2024)

Maps of the Assessment Area



Top: Full extent of assessment area. Existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary in dark green. Bottom: Settlement north (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024. Graphics by Gaby Rose)

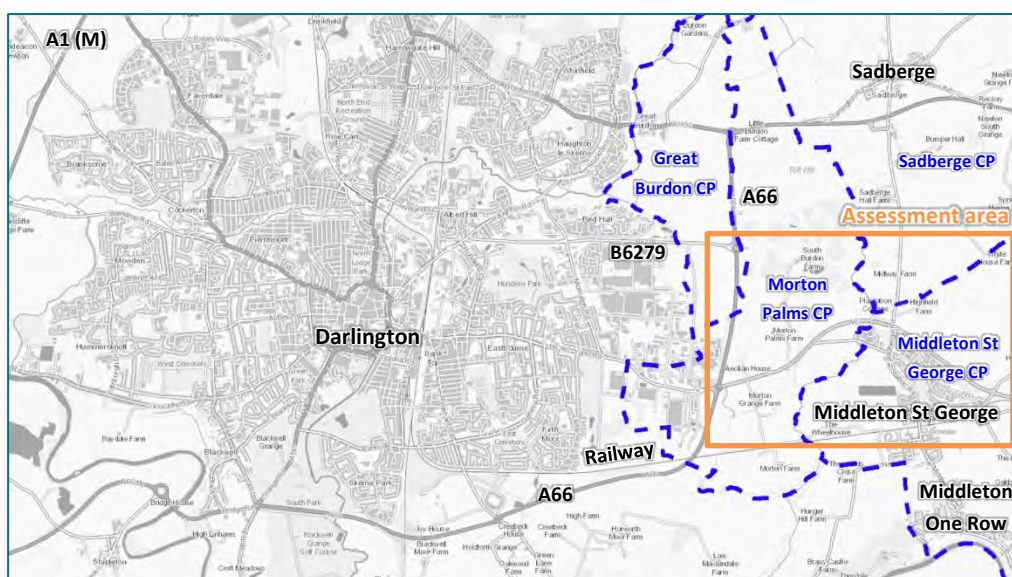
[A] Crane Base & Platform (remains). [B] DRDC Loading Dock. [C] Waiting Shed (remains). [D] Coal Depot (remains). [E] Fighting Cocks Inn. [F] Station Master's House & Station Building. [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor (remains). [H] The Lyric. [I] Undenominational Mission Hall. [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. [K] Board Room & Entrance Gate. [L] Pumping Station. [M] Cocks Memorial Homes. [N] Havelock Arms Hotel. [O] Killinghall Arms. [P] Co-op & Stable. [Q] Middleton Iron Works (remains). [R] Masonry Railway Bridge. [S] Metal Railway Bridge.

1.0 Introduction

A character appraisal assesses the **special interest** of an existing or proposed new conservation area that merits designation. It describes and evaluates the contribution made by the tangible (visible) aspects of its special interest which define the area's **character and appearance**. An appraisal aims to be informative and educational about our cultural heritage and raise public awareness and support. Adopted documents provide an evidence base for managing change and will be a material consideration in the planning process. They can also identify opportunities for enhancement and assist if funding is sought for larger regeneration schemes, such as heritage action zones.

At the time of assessment (see section 1.2), there was no conservation area at Middleton St George to the north of the live railway line, although parts of the village to the south of the line were in the Middleton One Row Conservation Area¹. Designation within the northern part of the settlement had previously been considered in July 2022, when Durham County Council suggested a conservation area boundary for the former railway corridor at Middleton St George (see chapter 5.0).

1.1 The Assessment Area



Location of assessment area (orange). Parish boundaries in dark blue, dashed (Map contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2024. Licence Number 100023728 2024.)

Middleton St George is a large village approximately five miles to the east of Darlington, County Durham, in the Northeast of England. The assessment area subject of this appraisal – detailed maps on previous page – was drawn up around the full extent of proposed designation suggested by Durham County Council in 2022 (see above), comprising the former route of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR), now a green corridor, as well as the wider setting. The assessment area is bordered by the A66 to the west up to the roundabout with the B6279 to the north, the live railway line to the south and its former junction with the S&DR to the east (see section 3.2). It also includes the northernmost tip of the existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary, as designated in 1972. Whilst its character is mainly rural, much of the village is of a suburban nature. The assessment area

¹ <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/1959/middleton-web-map.pdf>

currently lies in the Sadberge & Middleton St George ward, and in the Middleton St George, Morton Palms, Great Burdon and Sadberge parishes.

At the time of assessment (see section 1.2), there were seventeen conservation areas within Darlington Borough, with Middleton St George proposed to be the eighteenth such designation. Further information on our conservation areas can be found on the Council's website (see section 7.3).

1.2 The Appraisal

This document was drafted between March and June 2024 by the Darlington Borough Council Conservation Officer, Gaby Rose, providing a comprehensive assessment of Middleton St George and its setting as well as a proposed conservation area boundary line. **3 December 2024 represents the 'time of assessment' or 'time of review of the assessment area'**, coinciding with the Council's cabinet meeting when the draft document was first available to the public (see section 1.3).

The appraisal is an opportunity to assess the area in accordance with current planning policy and guidance, providing a robust document that can be of greater influence in the planning process (see chapter 2.0). Whilst it tries to cover the main aspects of Middleton St George and its setting, it cannot be completely comprehensive. **Omission of particular buildings, features or spaces does not imply that they are of no interest.**

The appraisal focusses on the following aspects:

- The special architectural and historic interest of the assessment area at the time of review (see chapter 3.0)
- The condition of the assessment area, any problems or threats to it, and opportunities for beneficial change (see chapter 4.0)
- A proposed conservation area boundary at the time of assessment (see chapter 5.0)
- The finalised boundary line **which will be adopted** (see chapter 6.0)

The author would like to thank Ross Chisholm and Peter Bainbridge for their time and providing additional information during the draft stage of the conservation area appraisal, and Caroline Hardie for providing additional information when finalising the document.

1.3 Public Consultation on Draft Appraisal

At the cabinet meeting on 3 December 2024, Councillors approved the public consultation on the document ***Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Public Consultation Draft (December 2024)***.

The draft appraisal was available for consultation on the Council's Conservation Areas webpage (see section 7.3) from 13 January to 24 February 2025, along with a feedback form to be completed. There was also a link to an online portal where the document could be viewed and commented on. Paper copies of the appraisal (read only) and feedback form were available at the Town Hall (by appointment only) and at the Crown Street and Cockerton libraries. The public consultation was advertised

on the Darlington Borough Council website² and Facebook page. Site notices were hung in various locations of the proposed new conservation area boundary. In addition, the Council directly notified individuals, groups and organisations that were likely to have a particular interest in the Middleton St George Conservation Area. At the request of the Middleton St George Parish Council, the Conservation Officer gave a presentation on the proposed new conservation area at the Middleton St George Women's Institute on 20 January 2025 (see appendix 1).

The author would like to thank Middleton St George Parish Council for advertising the public consultation of the draft appraisal on their website and Facebook page.

Following the consultation period, a summary of all the comments received was available on the Council's Conservation Areas webpage from 26 February until DATE.

The draft appraisal was then reassessed and amended in light of the feedback received (see appendix 2). Various other amendments were made throughout the document when finalising the appraisal, to provide more clarity, etc.

1.4 Adoption of Appraisal

The revised document ***Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Finalised document. May 2025*** will be put to Councillors at the Cabinet meeting on 6 May 2025 and at the Council meeting on 15 May 2025 to seek formal adoption of the appraisal and designation of the Conservation Area (see chapter 6.0). Please note that the assessment area and time of review (see sections 1.1 & 1.2) have remained unchanged.

Following the adoption of the appraisal and designation of the Conservation Area, the document will be edited one more time to reflect its adopted status [only the text highlighted in yellow will be amended], and its title changed to ***Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George Conservation Area Appraisal. Adopted document. May 2025***. Notice of the newly designated boundary will be made to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and Historic England, and be published in the London Gazette and at least one local newspaper³.

² <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/consultations/current-consultations/?id=68>

³ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sections 70 (5) & (8)

2.0 Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPPF) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This includes an environmental objective to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment⁴. Some of the policies under *16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment* specifically refer to conservation areas or designated heritage assets, which include conservation areas. A **heritage asset** is a *building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest*⁵. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance⁶, which forms the basis for all plan-making and decision-making.



All heritage assets within a conservation area are classified as designated heritage assets (see section 2.1).

The *Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036. Adopted February 2022*⁷ is compliant with the NPPF. At the time of review, the following policies applied to the Middleton St George assessment area – please refer to the Local Plan for the full wording and the Policies Map identifying the relevant locations:

Policy SH 1 Settlement Hierarchy (2) Service Villages. Will be maintained as villages that offer a range of facilities and services, where a level of development will meet local needs and facilitate economic diversification of rural areas. Development should safeguard and reinforce the distinctive character of each settlement and not detract from their landscape setting.

Policy H 1 Housing Requirement – Middleton St George: 860 units. Housing will be delivered to meet a minimum requirement of dwellings per annum. It is anticipated that the sites will be delivered in accordance with the housing trajectory which indicates that a continuous five-year supply of housing will be maintained throughout the plan period.

Policy H 2 Housing Allocations. The land to the south and west of Station Road (plot 99, Maxgate Farm) is allocated for housing development to help meet the requirement set out in Policy H 1.

Policy H 3 Development Limits. Development within the limits identified on the Policies Map will be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant national and local policies.

Policy H 5 Affordable Housing – affordable requirement: 20% (of which 50% affordable rent and 50% affordable home ownership). In order to meet the needs of people who are not able to access the general housing market, the provision of affordable housing will be expected in residential development schemes of 10 or more dwellings.

⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024, paragraphs 7 & 8

⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024, page 73

⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024, paragraph 202

⁷ Darlington Borough Council 2022

Policy ENV 2 Stockton and Darlington Railway. Proposals that conserve and enhance elements which contribute to the significance of the S&DR and its setting will be supported. Proposals will be supported where they include measures that preserve any physical remains along the route, include site interpretation and, where appropriate, reinstate a legible route where those remains no longer exist.

Policy ENV 3 Local Landscape Character. The character and local distinctiveness of [...] villages and rural area will be protected and improved by (A.1) retaining the openness and green infrastructure functions of rural gaps, and (B.2) retaining and enhancing the length, continuity, biodiversity, amenity and heritage value of the **historic route of the Darlington/Middleton St George/A66/A67/Stockton Corridor**.

Policy ENV 4 Green and Blue Infrastructure. Will be protected, and where appropriate, improved and extended to provide a quality, safe and accessible network of well-connected, multi-functional open spaces for recreation and play and to enhance visual amenity, biodiversity, landscape and productivity.

Policy ENV 6 Local Green Space. Development will not be permitted within a Local Green Space, designated either within the Darlington Borough Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan, unless it is consistent with the National Policy approach for Green Belts. Sites LGS16 (Middleton St George Playing Field) and LSG17 (Water Park, Middleton St George) are identified within the assessment area.

Policy ENV 7 Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Development: (D.ii) Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites (the Whinnies). Development likely to result in significant harm should be avoided by being relocated to an alternative site of less harmful impacts. Where this is not possible, and it is demonstrated development is required in that location, it will only be permitted if the significant harm can be overcome by adequate mitigation or, as a last resort, appropriate compensation measures.

In addition, if the appraisal results in conservation area designation, the following policies will also apply – please refer to the Local Plan for the full wording:

Policy ENV 1 Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Darlington's Historic Environment (A) Designated Heritage Assets. Proposals should conserve those elements which contribute to such asset's significance, including any contribution made by their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm.

Policy ENV 1 Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Darlington's Historic Environment (B) Conservation Areas. Proposals affecting a conservation area should preserve and enhance those elements identified in any conservation area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the significance of that area. Development will not be permitted that would lead to the loss of public or private open spaces within or adjacent to conservation areas where the existing openness makes a positive

contribution to the character or appearance of the area or its setting unless the public benefit demonstrably outweighs the harm.

The *Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan (2022-2036)*⁸ is compliant with the Darlington Local Plan and was 'made' (adopted) by Darlington Borough Council in line with the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The plan area comprises of the parish of Middleton St George except for land at Teesside International Airport, covering the central, southern and eastern parts of the assessment area. Decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Objective 1 (quality of life) sets out that new development should maintain and enhance local distinctiveness and contribute positively to the built, historic and natural environment. The following policies are relevant to the historical environment – please refer to the Neighbourhood Plan for the full wording:

Policy MSG1: Sustainable development (d) It will be necessary to demonstrate how development would protect or enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings.

Policy MSG2: Design (c) Development will be supported where it conserves and, where possible, enhances the significance of heritage assets and their setting.

Policy MSG3: Embedding energy efficiency and renewable energy (f) Consideration should be given to how development reduces energy demands of historic buildings, subject to compliance with other relevant policies on historic assets.

Policy MSG4: Green Infrastructure. New development should seek to protect and, where practical, improve and extend green infrastructure of the historic route of the Stockton Darlington Railway.

Policy MSG8: Heritage assets. Where development may impact on a heritage asset, applicants should provide information that describes the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting. In the determination of development proposals: (a) Great weight will be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset and any harm or loss to its significance will require clear and convincing justification in accordance with national policy. (b) A balanced judgment will be required to fully consider the effects of any development proposals affecting a non-designated heritage asset, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Policy MSG13: Tourism and leisure (a) Development will be supported where the siting, scale, materials and design respect the character of the surrounding area and conserve and, where possible, enhance heritage assets and their setting.

⁸ Middleton St George Parish Council 2022

2.1 Conservation Area Designation

Under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended), “the Act”, conservation areas are ***areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance***. They are designated heritage assets. Their boundaries are not the same as any development limits boundaries (policy H 3) shown on the Darlington Local Plan Policies Maps⁹ and have a different function, although in places they may coincide.

Section 69 of the Act requires the Council to determine which parts of the borough are areas of special interest and designate them as conservation areas. When considering designation, the Council should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack interest¹⁰. The courts have held it legitimate to include within a conservation area the setting of buildings that form the heart of that area¹¹. Examples of types of special architectural and historic interest which justify designation include areas¹²:

- with a high number of nationally or locally designated heritage assets and a variety of architectural styles and historic associations
- which are linked to a particular individual, industry, custom or pastime with a particular local interest
- where an earlier, historically significant layout is visible in the modern street pattern
- where a particular style of architecture or traditional building materials predominate
- with a quality of the public realm or a spatial element, such as a design form or settlement pattern, greenspaces which are an essential component of a wider historic area, and historic parks and gardens and other designed landscapes, including those on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest

Conservation area designation (as well as the reassessment of an existing area) is generally carried out by providing a draft appraisal which will go out to public consultation, although there is no legal requirement to do so. In light of any comments received, the document will then be amended, finalised and formally adopted by the Council (see sections 1.3 & 1.4). All adopted appraisals can be found on our website (see section 7.3).

2.2 Implications for the Council

Following designation, the Council has a **duty to review** Darlington’s conservation area boundaries from time to time and make amendments where necessary¹³. In addition, section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) requires us from time to time to **formulate proposals for the preservation and enhancement of our conservation areas and consult the public on**

⁹ Darlington Borough Council 2022

¹⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024, paragraph 204

¹¹ Historic England 2017b, page 4

¹² Historic England 2019, page 27

¹³ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 69

them. The duty to prepare and review appraisals and management plans, which may set out a variety of measures to help safeguard and improve a conservation area, is also reflected in the Darlington Local Plan ([see chapter 2.0](#)), forming part of our proactive approach towards protecting the borough’s heritage assets.

In the exercise of planning functions, the Council shall pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the significance¹⁴ as well as the character or appearance of our conservation areas¹⁵. Planning functions include both the formulation of robust conservation policies (Local Plan) and the determination of applications for planning permission or advertisement consent, helping us manage change within an area and its setting. The Council should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and their setting to enhance or better reveal their significance¹⁶. Although character appraisals will inform planning decisions, they alone do not determine whether development would be acceptable or not. The impact of proposed development upon a conservation area, or its setting, will also be weighed against other material considerations when reaching a decision.

National planning policy requires us to have up-to-date evidence about our historical environment and assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment and make this information publicly available¹⁷. The *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George Conservation Area Appraisal* provides such assessment ([see chapter 3.0](#)) and is published on our website ([see section 7.3](#)).

Finally, the Council is also required to regularly assess Darlington’s conservation areas with regards to their condition ([see section 4.1](#)). Character appraisals or shorter surveys identifying threats and opportunities can be developed into management plans specific to an area’s needs¹⁸. If a conservation area is considered to be ‘at risk’, the Council will liaise with Historic England. If confirmed to be in poor condition, the area will be put on the national Heritage at Risk Register¹⁹. We will then work with Historic England to find solutions to remove the conservation area from the register.

2.3 Implications for the Public

Conservation area status results in additional planning controls:

Demolition. Under section 196D of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), it is an offence to carry out, cause or permit demolition of unlisted etc. buildings inside conservation areas without planning permission.

Permitted development rights. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), “the Order”, defines conservation areas as **article 2(3) land**. Schedule 2 of the Order outlines which permitted development rights have been removed from article 2(3) land. This means that planning permission will be required to carry out those types of development, affecting:

¹⁴ Darlington Borough Council 2022, paragraph 9.1.18

¹⁵ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 72

¹⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024, paragraph 219

¹⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2024, paragraphs 205-206

¹⁸ Historic England 2019, page 29

¹⁹ Available on Historic England’s website

- Part 1, Class A – enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwellinghouse
- Part 1, Class AA - enlargement of a dwellinghouse by construction of additional storeys
- Part 1, Class B – additions etc. to the roof of a dwellinghouse
- Part 1, Class E – buildings etc. incidental to the enjoyment of a dwellinghouse
- Part 1, Class G – chimneys, flues etc. on a dwellinghouse
- Part 1, Class H – microwave antenna on a dwellinghouse
- Part 3, Class M – certain uses to dwellinghouses
- Part 3, Class Q – buildings on agricultural units and former agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses
- Part 7, Class A – extensions etc. of commercial, business or service premises
- Part 7, Class C – click and collect facilities
- Part 7, Class D – modification of shop loading bays
- Part 7, Class H – extensions etc. of industrial and warehouse
- Part 7, Class L – development at waste management facilities
- Part 7, Class M – extensions etc. for schools, colleges, universities and hospitals
- Part 9, Class D – toll road facilities
- Part 14, Class A – installation or alteration etc. of solar equipment on domestic premises
- Part 14, Class J – installation or alteration etc. of solar equipment on non-domestic premises
- Part 14, Class K – installation or alteration etc. of stand-alone solar equipment on non-domestic premises
- Part 14, Class N – installation etc. of flue for biomass heating system on non-domestic premises
- Part 14, Class O – installation etc. of flue for combined heat and power on non-domestic premises
- Part 15, Class B – electricity undertakings
- Part 16, Class A – electronic communications code operators
- Part 16, Class B – other electronic communications development
- Part 15, Class C – other electronic communications development: microwave antenna
- Part 19, Class B – extension or alteration of an operational Crown building
- Part 19, Class T – electronic communication apparatus etc for national security purposes
- Part 19, Class TA – development by the Crown on a closed defence site
- Part 20, Class ZA - demolition of buildings and construction of new dwellinghouses in their place
- Part 20, Class A – new dwellinghouses on detached blocks of flats
- Part 20, Class AA – new dwellinghouses on detached buildings in commercial or mixed use

- Part 20, Class AB – new dwellinghouses on terrace buildings in commercial or mixed use
- Part 20, Class AC – new dwellinghouses on terrace buildings in use as dwellinghouses
- Part 20, Class AD - new dwellinghouses on detached buildings in use as dwellinghouses

Further permitted development rights can be removed by the Council imposing **directions under article 4(1)** of the Order. Consequently, planning permission will be required for the types of development specified in that direction. Article 4 directions can be useful tools, as they can prevent further decline of an area or even revert harm that has already been caused.

Works to trees. Section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires that anyone intending to carry out works to a tree – with a stem diameter greater than 75mm (3 inches) when measured at 1.5 metres (5 feet) above ground level²⁰ – in a conservation area must give at least six weeks notice to the Council. This gives us the opportunity to consider whether to make a Tree Preservation Order. The work may go ahead before the end of the six-week period if the Council gives consent. With regard to works to a dead or dangerous tree, unless there is an immediate risk of serious harm, a notice of five days must be given before carrying out the works.

The additional planning controls as well as improvement measures set out in a management plan (see section 2.2) help to ensure that existing and future generations can enjoy the benefits a conservation area can offer. Conservation areas that are well preserved can enhance economic well-being and quality of life, as well as offer a certain amount of continuity and stability. Likewise, conservation-led change based on informed decisions can make a positive contribution enabling communities to regenerate. The value of a conservation area can be beneficial to both property owners/occupiers and developers, and estate agents may put increasing emphasis on such a location when advertising properties.

2.4 Other Designated Heritage Assets within the Area

At the time of review, the northernmost tip of the Middleton One Row Conservation Area²¹, as designated in 1972, was included within the assessment area.

²⁰ The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012, section 15

²¹ <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/1959/middleton-web-map.pdf>

3.0 Assessing Significance

When appraising an existing or proposed new conservation area, we need to look at the detailed as well as wider interests (or values) of a place in order to better understand its dynamics. It is helpful to use the cultural and natural heritage values provided in *Conservation Principles. Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* for such assessment²²:

- **Evidential value:** the physical remains of past human activity (e.g. surviving structures and features) (see sections 3.2 to 3.5)
- **Historical value:** the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected to a place; this tends to be illustrative or associative (see sections 3.2 & 3.3)
- **Aesthetic value:** the sensory and intellectual stimulation people draw from a place; it can be the result of the design of a place or its development over time (see sections 3.4 & 3.5)
- **Communal value:** the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it (e.g. residents and other stakeholders) (see section 3.6)

Note that elements can possess more than one heritage value.

The sum of all heritage values/interests defines the significance of a place. Only by defining the significance of an area is it possible to assess how its character and appearance is vulnerable to harm or loss. This also helps reduce potential uncertainty for owners and others when investment or development in the area is considered. Moreover, the understanding of significance provides the basis for developing and implementing local policies (see chapter 2.0) and management strategies that will sustain the heritage values of a place in its setting²³.

Conservation areas are designated for their **special architectural and historic interest** (see section 2.1). Most such areas have both, although one may be considered more prominent than the other. Key elements in defining the special interest are²⁴:

- the still-visible effects/impact of the area's historic development on its planform, townscape, character and architectural style and social/historic associations and the importance of that history
- architectural quality and built form, including any particular architectural interest resulting from a past use, planning or design, important phases of development, the integrity or group value of buildings or provision of a record of development over time through the architectural record
- the contribution to the special interest made by the setting on the area, that is what the setting can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset, and how it can allow that significance to be appreciated
- local distinctiveness and a sense of place which make the area unique, including the influence of sources of building materials and historic industries that have come to contribute significantly to the area's present identity

²² English Heritage 2008, page 27ff

²³ English Heritage 2008, page 14

²⁴ Historic England 2019, 15

- how the places within it are experienced by the people who live and work there and visitors to the area (including both daily and seasonal variations if possible)
- the design, planting or past use of open spaces, green areas, parks and gardens, and trees, including the representation of particular species or varieties that reflect key periods of horticultural interest, collecting or design
- designated and other heritage assets, their intrinsic importance and the contribution they make to the townscape – this will normally provide an indication of past recognition of special interest, whilst a focus of assets of a similar type may suggest the area as a whole has a particular special interest

3.1 Summary of Special Interest

At the time of assessment, the proposed Middleton St George Conservation Area (see section 5.1) comprised the following elements of special interest, in chronological order:

Roman route: Cade’s Road was supposedly built by the Romans between 138 and 161 AD. It continued to be an important route northward until the fifteenth century and marked the parish boundary between Middleton St George and Dinsdale until January 2016. Today, the line of the former route is still retained in boundary lines, the northern stretch of Station Road, and the full length of Sadberge Road.

The Cocks family: In the nineteenth century, the Cocks were the last holders of the manor of Middleton St George, which had been passed down through various families from the mid-twelfth century on. Their name appears in ‘Fighting Cocks’ (see below) and ‘Cocks Memorial Homes’. The latter are alms-houses that were constructed in an Arts and Crafts style from money that Henry Cocks, the final owner of the manor, had left behind on his death in 1894. Henry Cocks also built the Fighting Cocks Inn in 1832-4, which remained in his ownership until he died.

Fighting Cocks: It is plausible that ‘Fighting Cocks’ had first been applied to the area around the ancient road junction where the lane from Darlington joined the former Roman route sometime between 1801 – i.e. the year that the Cocks family inherited the manor – and 1822/3 – i.e. the survey of the proposed Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR)²⁵. The name also appears in Fighting Cocks Inn, Fighting Cocks Mill, Fighting Cocks Station, Fighting Cocks Branch, and had been applied as far south as the Fighting Cocks Reservoirs (see below). Today, the name is still used for the area at the northern road junction. Here the grouping of the former inn, station buildings, railway corridor, and the remains of the coal depot and later goods station presents an important ensemble associated with its origins in the pioneering days of the railway²⁶ (see below). Notable buildings at Fighting Cocks are faced in buff-coloured Pease brick, which was manufactured by the company of Darlington-

²⁵ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

²⁶ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 2 & 30

born Joseph Pease, son of S&DR founder Edward Pease²⁷, and had become popular for the use on public buildings by the 1860s²⁸.

Stockton & Darlington Railway: The birth of the village of Middleton St George was triggered by the opening of the S&DR on 27 September 1825, the world's first public railway on which a locomotive hauled passengers. The original 26-mile line, which passed to the north of the Fighting Cocks road junction, is now regarded as the prototype for all modern railways²⁹. In 1887, the stretch between Albert Hill Junction (Darlington) and Oak Tree Junction (Middleton St George) was bypassed by a new passenger line, turning the original route of the S&DR into the Fighting Cocks Branch. It mainly concentrated on transporting freight until 1988, when the branch line was shut down. Today, the former track bed and railway-associated earthworks survive as a lush green corridor which is of high public/communal value.

Part of original mineral network along S&DR: In order to deliver the region's natural produce from mines, quarries and lime kilns for local sale or export efficiently, the S&DR developed a system of depots along the mainline (as well as at the termini of the branch lines) where freight could be weighed, sorted, stored and sold³⁰. The original coal depot at Middleton St George was the first structure the S&DR built at Fighting Cocks, shortly after the opening of the railway in 1825. Evidence of it survives in the form of the remains of possibly original boundary walling and later-phase coal cells. The surviving loading platform and crane base are linked to the later operation of the site as a goods station.

Early railway station: One of the many ways the S&DR influenced the development of the worldwide railway network was in the provision of station facilities³¹. Whilst only fragments of walling of the original Railway Lodge of 1830/1 survive in the rebuilt station building, it is significant that Fighting Cocks, being not much more than a road junction in a rural setting at the time, did have a station building that dealt with passengers, parcels, coal, etc.

Fighting Cocks Reservoirs: This site is directly linked to the nineteenth-century growth of the Teesside towns and industries, having supplied Stockton, Middlesbrough and Yarm with water. The first basin was constructed in 1852, extracting water from the Darlington Waterworks at Tees Cottage (1850) on Coniscliffe Road, which is now a scheduled monument, before the historical village of Middleton St George had taken its shape yet. It was the second service reservoir constructed to serve the Tees Cottage Waterworks and is now the only one that still survives within Darlington Borough. Whilst many villages depended on pumped water until well into the twentieth century, Fighting Cocks was already connected to piped water in 1853. Today, the site includes the water park (comprising the three slightly later service reservoirs), Parish Council's meeting room (a small Victorian Board Room building),

²⁷ <http://www.solwaypast.co.uk/index.php/bricks/2-uncategorised/30-h-co-brick>

²⁸ Cookson (ed) 2003, page 129

²⁹ Flynn 1987, pages 39-40

³⁰ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 5

³¹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 1

Community Centre (the former Pumping Station, built in a modernist style) with outdoor sports court (the original basin), and a nature trail along the bottom of the northwestern reservoir embankment. The site has a distinct character and is of high public/communal value.

Industrial village: Whilst Fighting Cocks was an original S&DR stopping point (1825) and had an early passenger station building (1830/1), it was not until the Middleton Iron Works had set up near the southern road junction in 1864 that the village began to take its shape. Middleton St George would not be the same today without the S&DR that enabled the establishment of the iron works (with direct rail access) which, in turn, triggered the development of the historical settlement. The result was a dispersed linear village with two centres, one at each road junction, setting it apart from the other settlements that had formed along the route of the (former) S&DR – New Shildon, Middlesbrough, Hopetown, Eaglescliffe and Busselton³² – which were generally more compact and/or clustered in planform. The rows of workers houses and commercial properties around the Square (southern road junction) that were constructed to accommodate and serve the large workforce still line the main roads. Now that the industries have completely gone, these buildings are the most prominent survivors/reminders of the village's industrial past.

Details of the above are provided in the following sections.

3.2 Layout, Planform and Setting

This section provides some of the evidential value (i.e. the existing layout, etc.) of the assessment area at the time of review, as well as some of its historical value (i.e. former building locations).

Middleton St George lies to the east of Darlington, just beyond the outer ring road (A66). The assessment area comprises a plateau-like area to the north above the steep banks of the river Tees, with a generally flat or very gently undulating topography³³. The underlying bedrock is mainly made of the Sherwood sandstone group overlaid by glacial till, although there are also pockets containing clay and silt sediments. To the west of the village is an area of calcareous mudstone bedrock with superficial glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits³⁴.

Its setting of the village is largely agricultural land – both arable and pastoral – with isolated farmsteads. The fields are of medium size, irregularly shaped and often lined by hedges, shrubs and/or trees. It also includes three nature reserves – the Whinnies, Entreprenante Wood and South Burdon Community Woodland – as well as the Middleton St George Water Park comprising three former service reservoir basins. There is a good network of public rights of way in the countryside, with several of them originating in the village³⁵. A series of minor streams crosses through fields or defines their boundaries, particularly in the western part of the assessment area. The remains of historical drainage ditches can be found along the southern side of the

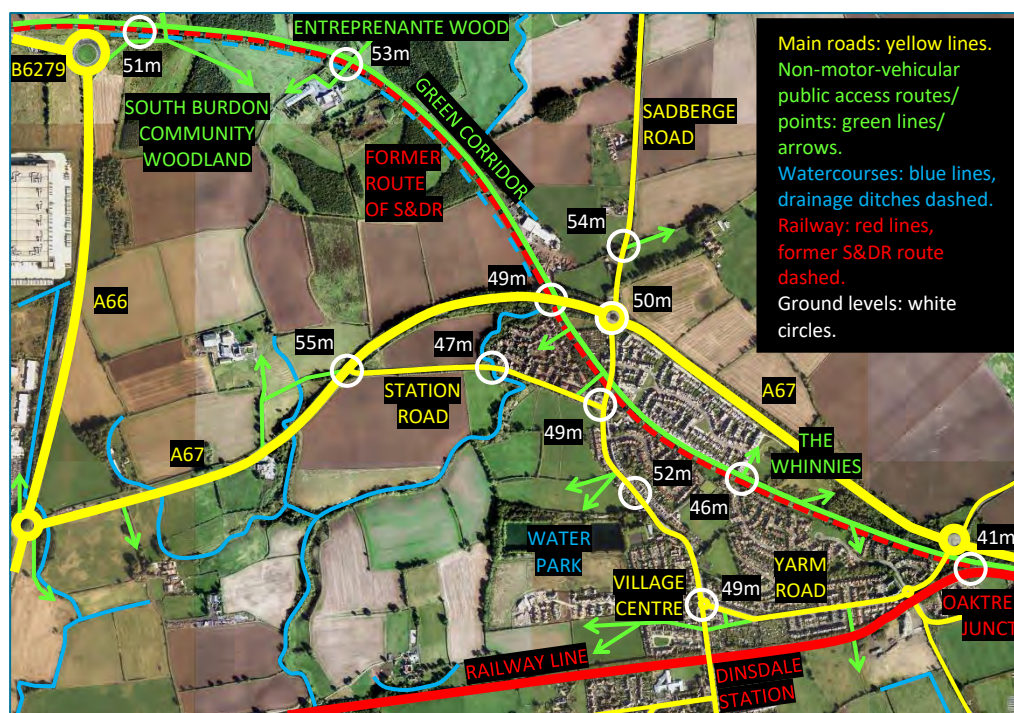
³² Hardie, C. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 20 February

³³ Land Use Consultants 2015, pages 45 & 47

³⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/building-stones-england>

³⁵ <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/rights-of-way/where-are-rights-of-way/>

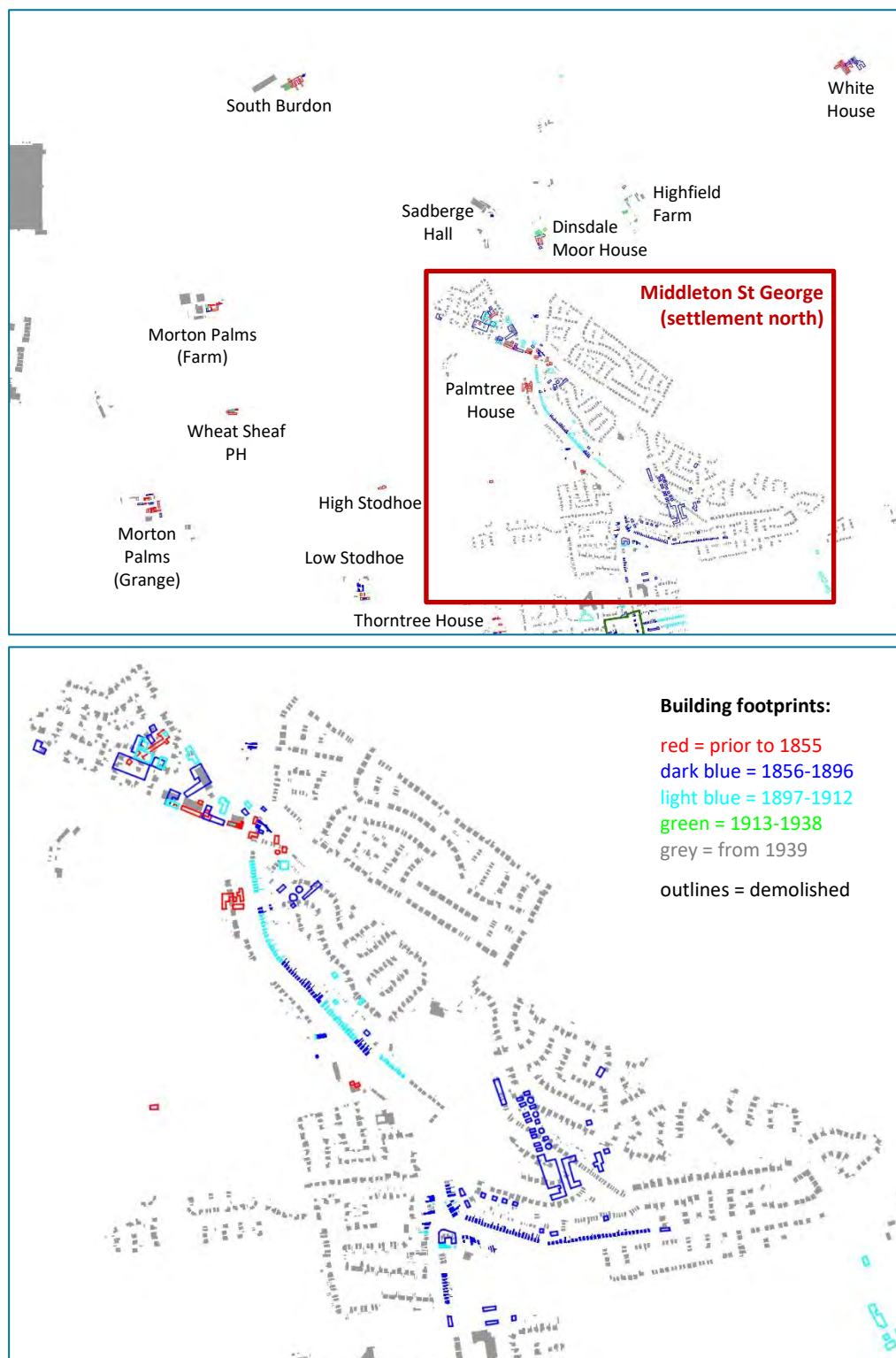
former route of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) between the A66 and A67, which is now a bridleway and part of National Cycle Route 14 connecting Darlington with South Shields.



Layout of Middleton St George assessment area at time of review. (Graphics by Gaby Rose)

The A66 frames the western side of the assessment area, confining the outskirts of Darlington, with the B6279 (Tornado Way) roundabout being in the northwestern corner of the area. The A67 sweeps to the north of the village of Middleton St George linking Yarm and Darlington. Both are busy main roads emitting an almost constant noise level that can be heard from a distance. This is most noticeable in tranquil areas just outside the village, such as at the water park and the bridleway mentioned above, the latter passing under the A67 through a short concrete tunnel in an embankment that carries the road. A live railway line frames the southern side of the assessment area, connecting Bank Top (Darlington) and Saltburn via Middlesborough, with (the misleadingly named) Dinsdale Station located on the eastern side of the main road (Middleton Lane). The eastern-most point of the area is the former location of Oaktree Junction, where the railway line from Bank Top used to join the route of the S&DR, with the former track bed to the (north)west of the historic junction now being part of National Cycle Route 14.

A spine road meanders through the length of the village/assessment area in a roughly north-south direction. To the north of the railway station is the village centre around a three-road junction, historically known as the Square, with Yarm Road heading east and eventually exiting the settlement. At this junction, one part of the spine road (Middleton Lane) crosses the railway line into the southern part of Middleton St George which is mostly outside the assessment area. The other part (Station Road) heads to the north of the village where there is another three-road junction, known as Fighting Cocks. Whilst the main road turns west to Darlington, the spine road continues north (Sadberge Road), with both shortly exiting the village.



Planform – map regression. *Top:* Assessment area. (Former) farmsteads are annotated. Existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary line in dark green. *Bottom:* Middleton St George settlement north. (Graphics by Gaby Rose)

The line of the historic S&DR used to pass to the north of the village on a gentle curve, with a level crossing over Sadberge Road, but the rails are long gone. The former track bed has however been retained as a green corridor³⁶, including a stretch of National Cycle Route 14 and, to the west of Sadberge Road, there is also a bridleway. The disused railway corridor leads from what used to be Oaktree Junction

³⁶ Also see Darlington Policies Map 'Key Diagram' of *Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036*

at the eastern end of the village to the A66/B6279 roundabout, and beyond to Darlington North Road outside the assessment area. In Middleton St George, the land rises steadily from 41m at the former junction to around 49m at the northern and northwestern ends of the settlement. There are however variations around the former S&DR route which mostly lies in cutting but is embanked when approaching the location of Oaktree Junction. Yarm Road cuts through this embankment. As the green corridor exits the village in a northwestern direction, the ground levels remain fairly constant, with the highest point being 53m near the entrance to Entreprenante Wood. The levels then drop down to 51m³⁷ just before the bridleway slopes up on a modern embankment to cross the A66 over a green metal bridge to the north of the B6279 roundabout.

The live railway line is embanked at the former Oaktree Junction, and in cutting at Dinsdale Station and to the west. There are two original railway bridges between the station and former junction. The road bridge over the line carrying Middleton Lane is a modern replacement. To the west of the station there is another minor road bridge, as well as two level crossings with public footpaths crossing the live line.

The map regression (above) shows the northern part of the village of Middleton St George and its surrounding farmsteads. Most of the latter have pre-1855 origins (red building footprints). Historical rows of houses still line the main roads of the village (now Station Road, Middleton Lane and Yarm Road). There used to be more loosely configured industrial sites away from the main roads, but these have all been demolished. Since the mid-1990s, considerable amounts of housing development (grey footprints) have not only increased the size of the village significantly but also changed it from a dispersed linear layout into a suburban sprawl.

3.3 Historical Development

This section describes the historical value of the assessment area using information retrieved from secondary sources (see chapter 7.0). Surviving structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

Early human activity involved the construction and use of what is now known as Cade's Road from the Humber Estuary northwards to the River Tyne by the Romans, which is believed to have been built between 138 and 161 AD. The road crossed the river Tees emerging up the steep bank just west of what would become the village of Middleton One Row. It is conceivable that there would have been a Roman control point at such a commanding position. The route then headed north into the assessment area, following boundary lines and then the northern-most stretch of today's Station Road and the full length of Sadberge Road, and beyond to Sedgfield (outside the assessment area) where there was a Roman settlement^{38 39}.

³⁷ <https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/map-kb57/England/>

³⁸ <https://www.roman-britain.co.uk/places/cades-road/>

³⁹ The Durham County Council Historic Environment Record entry for H3821 : Roman Road, Cade's Road, Margary RR80a, Tees crossing to Wear Crossing states that *[w]hile some have difficulty in accepting the Pountey's Bridge crossing as a Roman route through lack of evidence of Roman construction – in 1996, the remains of an abutment and pier of a stone bridge construction including iron cramps of unknown origin were recorded by divers of the Northern Archaeological Group in the Tees at Middleton One Row, in alignment with Church Lane (Source S22267) – it remains that Pountey's Bridge is the only evidence of a historic river crossing in this area. In addition, the clear alignment of the Roman road on the Yorkshire side is towards Pountey's Bridge.*

It is possible that the church of St George, which lies around two miles to the southeast outside the assessment area, marks an Anglo-Saxon site. A pre-Conquest sundial used to be incorporated in the former outer chancel wall until its Victorian rebuilding when it was relocated to the newly constructed church at Middleton One Row. Moreover, a historical record suggests an earlier dedication to Saint Gregory, which would coincide with time of the saint's popularity⁴⁰.

Being located to the north of the river Tees, Middleton St George was not subject to the Domesday survey of 1086, a record made at the behest of King William I of the value and extent of each settlement within his recently conquered realm. This remote area was considered a buffer zone against the inroads of the Scots, so viceregal powers had been conferred to the bishops of Durham, which gave them the authority to levy taxes, coin money, grant markets and fairs, and raise an army⁴¹. Nevertheless, the Wapentake of Sadberge, which Middleton St George lay in, was still under the jurisdiction of the king. This changed in 1189 when Richard I (the Lionheart) sold it to the bishop of Durham, Hugh Puiset, to help finance his crusades.

The first occurrence of the parish of Middleton St George, which was in two moieties (parts), is in the return of 1166. One moiety was the manor of **Over Middleton (Middleton One Row)** (partially within the assessment area), which lay to the east of the former Roman road, held by William son of Siward who was also lord of the neighbouring Dinsdale manor (partially within the assessment area) to the west of Cade's Road. The other was the manor of **Nether or Low Middleton (Middleton St George)** (also partially within the assessment area) to the east and southeast comprising two unequal moieties held by Roland and Godfrey Baard. In 1416, John Killinghall held the main, 'Roland Baard' portion of the manor of Low Middleton in socage, i.e. by payment of rent to the bishop. In 1569, it was sold by the Killinghall family to Ralph Tailbois who sold it to the Johnson family in 1573. After other changes in ownership, it passed back into the Killinghall family in c.1606, when the former two moieties of the manor of Low Middleton were united as one estate, albeit without the West Hartburn land (see below). At John Killinghall's death in 1762, he passed it on to his cousin William Pemberton whose son bequeathed it to his maternal aunts, Elizabeth and Sally Cocks of Plymouth Dock, on his death in 1801. The Cocks moved here to live on the estate and were succeeded by their brother Elisha. His son Henry inherited the estate in 1833 and held it until 1895. The tithe entries show that by 1837 the parish of Middleton St George had split into nine ownerships, with Henry Cocks owning a third of land^{42 43}.

A medieval manor was a self-contained administrative unit granted by the sovereign to a nobleman (lord) in exchange for military and other forms of service. It typically consisted of a manor house, village, church, mill, as well as arable and common lands. Despite its potentially earlier origins mentioned above, the present building of the church of St George⁴⁴ originates from the thirteenth century, although the font basin is from c.1160, when the Baards were first recorded to hold the manor. The church lies in a very prominent location on raised ground overlooking a large dip in the landscape including the manor house and (now deserted) village of Low Middleton, which are around half a mile to the south of it, near the banks of the river

⁴⁰ Pallister 2007a, pages 22-24 & 42

⁴¹ Flynn 1987, page 15

⁴² <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/durham/vol3/pp293-299#fnn11>

⁴³ Pallister 2007a, pages 25-26, 32-34, 40, 52-53, 70, 109 & 115

⁴⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1299460>

Tees. The manor house was Low Middleton Hall⁴⁵, the present building first constructed by Cuthbert Johnson in 1587, replacing a medieval manor house on or near the site. The house has a keystone over the former main entrance bearing the Killinghall coat of arms and the date of 1670 when the house was remodelled and re-fronted, and a rainwater head dated 1721 commemorating Robert and Jane Killinghall⁴⁶. In 1963, earthworks of the medieval village were still visible and thought to represent two or three toft enclosures in a row⁴⁷. Today only a longitudinal, indented area to the northeast of Low Middleton Hall can be seen on LiDAR imagery⁴⁸ suggesting the location of the former village.

A reconstructed map of the parish of Middleton St George at c.1200 (not reproduced here) shows the manor of Over Middleton stretching from the river Tees northwards along the eastern side of the former Roman road (apart from a minor deviation), the manor of Low Middleton to the southeast and West Hartburn to the east. The latter was a subordinate unit of the manor of Low Middleton and also split into the two moieties. The map indicates the village locations of Low Middleton, Over Middleton (now Middleton One Row) and West Hartburn, all outside the assessment area. Although the two manors were quite separate, their contiguous location in the parish led to a good deal of cross leasing of lands. Moreover, tenants of Over Middleton were entitled to use land at Stodhoe (within the assessment area) in the neighbouring parish of Dinsdale, which may have already been a separate, self-contained farmstead at the time⁴⁹.

Physical evidence of early habitation closest to the assessment area are the now deserted medieval village of West Hartburn⁵⁰ to the east of the present settlement of Middleton St George, and Middleton One Row to the south. Remains of West Hartburn are visible as earthworks, surrounded by remnants of a ridge-and-furrow field system. Middleton One Row still retains the mound of a Norman motte-and-bailey defensive castle⁵¹, possibly built by William son of Siward who held the manors of Over Middleton and Dinsdale in the mid-twelfth century, overlooking the bridge across the river Tees, which was still part of a main route (Cade's Road) northwards and an important point of entry into the bishopric until the fifteenth century⁵². Judging from the partial survival of a ridge-and-furrow field system in the eastern part of Middleton One Row behind the old houses facing south to the river⁵³, the existing settlement appears to directly overlie the medieval village.

Whilst there is no clear evidence of early settlements in the assessment area, the 'Keys to the Past' website, a basic version of the historic environment records for County Durham and Northumberland, has entries of crop marks that may indicate buried remains of Roman, Iron Age and even Neolithic or Bronze Age structures within the area, most of them to the west of the former Roman road. In addition, LiDAR imagery⁵⁴ shows earthworks of ridge-and-furrow field systems indicating medieval farming activities. Prominent examples survive in fields that have not been overploughed, such near the A67/Sadberge Road roundabout.

⁴⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185935>

⁴⁶ Ryder 2016, pages 1, 5-6 & 15-16

⁴⁷ Durham County Council Historic Environment Record: DCC PRN H7818

⁴⁸ <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map?ref=NZ3658810981>

⁴⁹ Pallister 2007a, pages 26, 29, 38, 40 & 56

⁵⁰ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1011257>

⁵¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1011072>

⁵² Pallister 2007a, pages 39 & 47-48

⁵³ <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map?ref=NZ3523012415>

⁵⁴ <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map?ref=NZ3420014392>

Over the centuries, changes in agrarian practises contributed to the undermining of the feudal system and its manorial structure. By c.1630, all the formerly open arable fields of the parish had been enclosed and converted from growing corn to mainly cattle grazing; only in the second half of the eighteenth century would the balance between cattle and corn become more even, due to the need to feed the rapidly growing urban populations. **Enclosure** often contributed to depopulation and desertion of villages, such as those at Low Middleton and West Hartburn, which had been abandoned around 1550. At Middleton One Row, the substantial crofts (strips of land) behind each tenement must have contributed significantly to the livelihood of the tenants, making it less necessary from them to move out to the new self-contained farms that had been established with enclosure. This new pattern of dispersed farmsteads is still very prominent within the assessment area. White House Farm, in the northeast corner of the assessment area, is an early example of the move out of West Hartburn village into the new farms created with enclosure.

The hearth tax return of 1666 for the parish shows that William Killinghall, lord of the manor of Low Middleton, possessed the grandest house (Low Middleton Hall) with ten hearths, and that the lord of the manor of Over Middleton, James Askew, 'only' had five. Although the loss of the feudal element in their role as lords of the manor had an impact on the Killinghalls, they remained the major landowner in the parish and retained a position of authority as well as the patronage of the church including a share of the tithes. In contrast, the lords of the manor of Over Middleton, who never had a part in the control of the church, had lost far more power when the medieval manor was transformed into commercial farms and estates. Little more than the title remained, and that seems to have disappeared after 1720.

By 1700, Middleton One Row was the only substantial assemblage of buildings in Middleton St George parish, although a few cottages had sprung up at Oak Tree, to the east outside the assessment area; it would become a sizeable hamlet in the second half of the eighteenth century⁵⁵.

A map of John Rontree's Farm⁵⁶ (not reproduced here), which was surveyed as part of the Killinghall estate in 1757⁵⁷, depicts the northern road junction in the location of the present village of Middleton St George, with the routes going north, south and west, like today. Only four structures are shown on the map; none of them have survived. On the north side of the junction was a small single-storey structure next to an access point to a footpath through Mr Rontree's fields to the west of Sadberge Road, in Dinsdale parish. Some distance to the north, between the footpath and road, was what would become known as Dinsdale Moor House, presumably Mr Rontree's home, judging from its detailed depiction. To the south of the junction was Palmtree House, also along the western side of the road (now Station Road). Further to the south along the eastern side of the road was the Killinghall farm, in Middleton St George parish.

In 1789, a sulphurous spring was discovered about half a mile to the west of Middleton One Row, in Dinsdale parish outside the assessment area, marking the birth of the Dinsdale Spa. When in 1797 better facilities were provided, visitors started arriving from a wider area. This also had an increasing impact on Middleton St George parish. For example, the church of St George was partially rebuilt in 1805 to accommodate the growing numbers of residents and spa visitors. By 1828, three

⁵⁵ Pallister 2007a, pages 56-58, 62-63, 70, 79, 83, 87, 127 & 140

⁵⁶ <https://archiveshop.northyorks.gov.uk/historic-maps/ZDG-A-IV1-9-2.html>

⁵⁷ Pallister 2007a, pages 7, 79 & 81

quarters of Middleton One Row had been rebuilt and new houses constructed so that the village could provide improved and increased visitor accommodation. A year later, a large hotel opened adjacent to the spa⁵⁸; this had been designed by architect Ignatius Bonomi⁵⁹, who had conceived the iconic Skerne Bridge in Darlington for the **Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR)** just a few years earlier.

In 1818, Edward Pease, a Quaker and retired wool merchant from Darlington who would later become known as the ‘father of the railways’, and a group of businessmen formed the S&DR company⁶⁰. In May 1821, a new committee was formed with Reverend William Addison Fountaine, rector of Middleton St George since 1798, being one of the members. The reverend owned Forster Field Farm, which partially lay on the southeastern fringe of the assessment area. He would later profit significantly from his railway interests, enabling him to expand his estate so that he would become the second most extensive landowner in the parish, also owning White House Farm in the northeastern corner of the assessment area⁶¹.

A survey map of 1822/3 for the proposed route of the railway line (not reproduced here) mainly shows dispersed ‘buildings’ within the assessment area, which are also identified on the map regression (see section 3.2): Ripon House (later South Burdon Farm), Morton Palms (farm), Wheat Sheaf (inn), Morton (Palms Grange – here three buildings are depicted, so this may have been a small hamlet by that time) and Stodda (High Stodhoe Farm, no longer extant). In the location of the present village of Middleton St George, Palmtree House (farm) and Dinsdale Moor House (farm) are the only buildings shown. Besides the northern road junction there is also a southern three-road junction in the location of the present village-centre roundabout, with the main route turning east. On the map, the northern road junction is marked as ‘**Fighting Cocks**’. Whilst the name may be associated with the now illegal sport of cock fighting, which was popular in the area from at least the eighteenth century⁶², there is no evidence for this⁶³. It is plausible that it rather refers to the major landowning Cocks family who inherited the manor in 1801 (see above).

The 1822/3 map also shows that the originally proposed route of the S&DR by Welsh engineer George Overton in 1821 would have bypassed Fighting Cocks some distance to the south, along the fringe of the assessment area. This proposal was however superseded by the new route put forward by English engineer George Stephenson in 1823 which was eventually built, passing just north of the Fighting Cocks road junction. The land that the new railway would go through in the eastern half of the assessment area belonged to Elisha Cocks (Dinsdale Moor House and Palmtree farms) and Reverend W A Fountaine (Forster Field Farm)^{64 65}.

The S&DR opened on 27 September 1825, with the 26-mile main line running from the coal mines near Witton Park to the river Tees at Stockton, via Darlington and Yarm where there were two branch lines⁶⁶. Early stopping places of the S&DR were mostly where the line crossed existing roads, such as at Fighting Cocks, although

⁵⁸ Pallister 2007a, pages 88-89, 112 & 120

⁵⁹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185930>

⁶⁰ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway 2021, page 8

⁶¹ Pallister 2007a, pages 109-110, 112-113, 115 & 121

⁶² Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, p. 3, 18-19

⁶³ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

⁶⁴ Pallister 2007a, page 116 Fig.21

⁶⁵ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, p. 3 & 42

⁶⁶ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway 2021, page 5

there were initially no platform or station facilities⁶⁷. In the first five years of railway use, the level crossing over Sadberge Road was a simple affair with the sleepers set into the ground to avoid obstructing road users. On approaching, the driver would sound a horn to warn traffic of the oncoming train⁶⁸.

After the railway had opened, the first development at Fighting Cocks provided by the S&DR was a [D] Coal Depot to the south of the line, as approved in the Committee's meeting of October 1825. Following another S&DR meeting in May 1827, a 'drop' was to be added. Thus, it seems that the original depot was developed in two stages: the first was a railway siding with an unloading area where coal would be shovelled from waggons into sacks for landsale (local sale), and the second was a raised rail track over cells where coal and other minerals could be dropped from bottom-opening waggons more efficiently. In the year 1829-30, over a thousand tons of coal and another thousand of lime and stones were delivered to the depot⁶⁹.



Remains of possibly original (1825) boundary walling of the [D] Coal Depot constructed in squared sandstone. *Left:* View looking north with Sadberge Road to the right. The end of the wall has been damaged, possibly by a wagon⁷⁰. *Right:* View from the disused railway corridor looking south. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

The location of the [D] Coal Depot was significant, being at the long-standing junction of the former Roman Road and the lane to Darlington. Moreover, it was just over two miles from the expanding Dinsdale Spa. Passenger coaches brought visitors along the railway to Fighting Cocks for the spa and guest accommodation at Dinsdale and Middleton One Row. In 1828 two coaches travelled daily in each direction. However, the spa and depot not only attracted passengers, depot workers and coal merchants to Fighting Cocks, but also farmers, builders and other tradespeople. Thus, there was a demand for more facilities in this location.

Consequently, the minutes of a S&DR meeting in April 1830 ordered the construction of a '*Cottage for the accommodation of Passengers and Parcels and the sale of Coals Lime etc*'. By the end of 1830 or early 1831, the first station building at Fighting Cocks, known as Railway Lodge, was completed to the east of Sadberge Road and south of the railway track. At that time, the station was in the same management as the [D] Coal Depot across the road. In December 1831, it was occupied by John Clayton and Elizabeth Bedford. John had earlier (1829) held the tenancy of the S&DR Company brewery at Darlington. He asked the S&DR in late 1830 if he could take over the new station being built at Fighting Cocks after losing his job at the brewery.

⁶⁷ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Historical Background' & map XXVIII

⁶⁸ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 18

⁶⁹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 8

⁷⁰ Chisholm, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 23 January

One of the tasks he would do at the station was selling coals from the depot. By 1832, John had given up his occupation as a coal dealer. At the end of 1839, the S&DR Company proposed to have the running of the depot being handed over to a third party, marking a departure of the combined depot/station functions⁷¹.

In June 1832, Henry Cocks inherited the Low Middleton estate of his father Elisha (see above). This included Palmtree House Farm and the plot to the north of the road junction (which was part of Dinsdale Moor House Farm) upon which he had the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn constructed shortly. It seems probable that the inn opened at some point between 1832 (inheritance of the manor) and May 1834 when it was listed in the trade directory under the management of Mary Woodhouse, wife of William, a farmer, who lived at Palmtree House. It is conceivable that its construction was triggered by the new railway station congregating potential customers in this location. The change from horse-drawn coaches along the railway track (there was a lack of locomotives in the beginning) to steam-hauled passenger trains and the S&DR Company taking all traffic into their own hands (rather than contracting it out) from 1833 on^{72 73} may have also contributed to its construction. Prior to the opening of the inn, William Woodhouse had already provided refreshments to the public since 1828 from his home at Palmtree House. Such 'open kitchen' operations were the origin of many public houses, particularly in rural areas⁷⁴.



Former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn looking northwest, with remnant of the [D] Coal Depot's southern boundary wall just visible in the background to the far right/north along Sadberge Road. The original inn comprises the three bays on the right-hand return, facing the station. It is possible that it was only single storey, as suggested by the right/northern-most bay, which seems to be original. The additional bays and lower wing facing the road junction (the latter's historical stable, cart house and hayloft functions no longer readable) are later extensions (see below). The large double window on the ground floor with leaded coloured glazing (partially concealed behind the telegraph pole) and porch are early-twentieth century insertions. The window opening above and the two small windows on the right-hand return are later replacements of former sashes⁷⁵. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

The [E] Fighting Cocks Inn was not just used by workers at the [D] Coal Depot. Passenger coaches, collecting and dropping off travellers, and coal trains stopped here in such numbers that a watchman was told to '*put an end to such loose practices*'. Consequently, Fighting Cocks became a regular stop⁷⁶. In 1840, the S&DR

⁷¹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 8-9 & 15

⁷² Pallister 2007a, page 125

⁷³ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 5

⁷⁴ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 13-17

⁷⁵ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 21 & 27-29

⁷⁶ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 21

made an agreement with Michael Walton the landlord of the inn which bound him to transport all first-class passengers between the railway and Dinsdale Spa⁷⁷.

The 1839 plan drawing of the Fighting Cocks Station area by T Dixon for the S&DR⁷⁸ (not reproduced here) shows the [D] Coal Depot consisting of six cells with a track over served by a siding branching off to the southeast. Across the main line is a small unknown building, approximately in the location of the later [B] DRDC Loading Dock (see below), and a milestone marking the eight-mile point on the opposite side of Sadberge Road; both are no longer extant. To the south of the depot is the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn fronting onto Sadberge Road, drawing its trade from the growing railway operation at the station (Railway Lodge). Further to the east is a mill with circular planform (a windmill) and a building of square footprint right next to it, both also served by a siding coming from the main railway line and no longer extant.

By 1839, between twenty and fifty coal trains were passing through Fighting Cocks on their way to Stockton each day⁷⁹. In April 1840, the average number of tickets sold per day to departing travellers at the station was 32. In February-March 1841, when there were three passenger trains a day in each direction, the average was just fifteen. Similar numbers of passengers would arrive at the station. This would suggest that the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn depended quite significantly for its trade on users of and workers at the [D] Coal Depot and some nearby businesses, besides the modest number of travellers⁸⁰. In November 1846, the station was recorded as Middleton and Dinsdale, named after the two nearest villages⁸¹.

In the 1840s, a George Stephenson (not the famous S&DR engineer mentioned earlier) was the S&DR's Passenger Manager. He lived in Middleton St George and commuted to his office in Darlington from Fighting Cocks each day. A strong churchgoer, he went on to bring pressure on the S&DR to stop using public houses as substitute stations⁸².

Following an act of parliament in 1851, the newly established Stockton, Middlesbrough and Yarm Water Company (SM&YWC) was authorised to raise money, lay water mains and buy water from the Darlington Waterworks at Tees Cottage on Coniscliffe Road, first built by the Darlington Gas and Water Company (DG&WC) in 1850 and now a scheduled monument⁸³, in order to meet the increasing demand for water from the growing towns and industries of Teesside. An extensive part of the Act is devoted entirely to protection of the S&DR, should it be necessary to lay mains near, under or across railway land. By June 1852, the Tees Cottage Waterworks was supplying both the DG&WC and SM&YWC. In July 1852, the half-yearly meeting of the latter noted that their service reservoir at Fighting Cocks (now an outdoor sports court behind the Community Centre), with a capacity of one million gallons of water, was nearing completion. This was the second service reservoir constructed to serve the Tees Cottage Waterworks. It incorporated a filter to remove atmospheric debris before the water exited, an apparently unique feature⁸⁴. From here, the water was fed by gravity through a single pipe to Yarm,

⁷⁷ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2019, page 40

⁷⁸ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 9-10

⁷⁹ Pallister 2007a, page 126

⁸⁰ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 18

⁸¹ Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXVIII

⁸² Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 24

⁸³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1002300>

⁸⁴ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2018, pages 38-41 & 134

Stockton and Middlesbrough. Whilst many villages depended on pumped water until well into the twentieth century⁸⁵, Fighting Cocks was already connected to piped water in 1853, following the installation of a second pipe⁸⁶.

Having experienced further increasing demand for water, the SY&MWC obtained another Stockton, Middlesbrough and Yarm Waterworks Act in 1854. The wording suggests that it also gave the company powers to construct a reservoir in the parish of Dinsdale, near the Middleton and Dinsdale Station of the S&DR, but without any specific indication of the location, type or size of this reservoir⁸⁷.

The 1855 six-inch OS map of the assessment area (see below) shows that the line of the former Roman road (see map at the beginning of this document) has been fully retained as field boundaries to the south of Palmtree House. The original SM&YWC service reservoir is depicted between that line and what would become the spine road through the village, with the locations of a draw pipe and waste pipe shown. There also seems to be a building to the east of the reservoir, which is no longer extant. The assessment area appears predominantly rural with dispersed farmsteads, as well as the Wheat Sheaf public house near the Morton Palms hamlet. The reverse S-shape of the S&DR cuts across the countryside and over Sadberge Road to the north of the Fighting Cocks road junction. At the [D] Coal Depot, the end of the coal drop seems to include a building, possibly a weigh house. Immediately to the south, the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn has been substantially extended to the west by expanding the pub and providing an attached lower-height three-stalled stable block with coach house and loft over. A historical photo⁸⁸ shows that these extensions are faced in Pease brick. On the map, the Railway Lodge is now named Middleton Station and the Fighting Cocks Mill identified to process corn. Further buildings have been constructed since the 1839 plan drawing along the lane to Darlington and near the wind mill, as well as the Brick and Tile Works to the northwest of Fighting Cocks. The works presumably supplied building materials for the new houses to be (re)built in the immediate area⁸⁹ and generated more traffic for the railway and a requirement for coal to fuel the kilns⁹⁰. In the southeastern corner of the assessment area, in the location of the later Oaktree Junction (see below), there is a coal and lime depot immediately to the south of the S&DR.

In 1858, the ‘Stockton and Middlesbrough Waterworks Act’ was passed. The preamble notes that the SM&YWC had been unable to complete all the works of the previous acts within the set limit. Because of this, and the increasing demand for water in the distribution area, the Act gave the company the power to construct additional pipelines from Tees Cottage to the supply area via the reservoir at Fighting Cocks. Schedule A of the Act gives a list of works and property already constructed or purchased by the company including⁹¹:

- Two reservoirs and other works at or near Fighting Cocks
- Two lines of main pipes from Tees Cottage to Fighting Cocks

⁸⁵ Historic England 2017a, page 3

⁸⁶ Pallister 2007a, page 139

⁸⁷ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2018, page 44

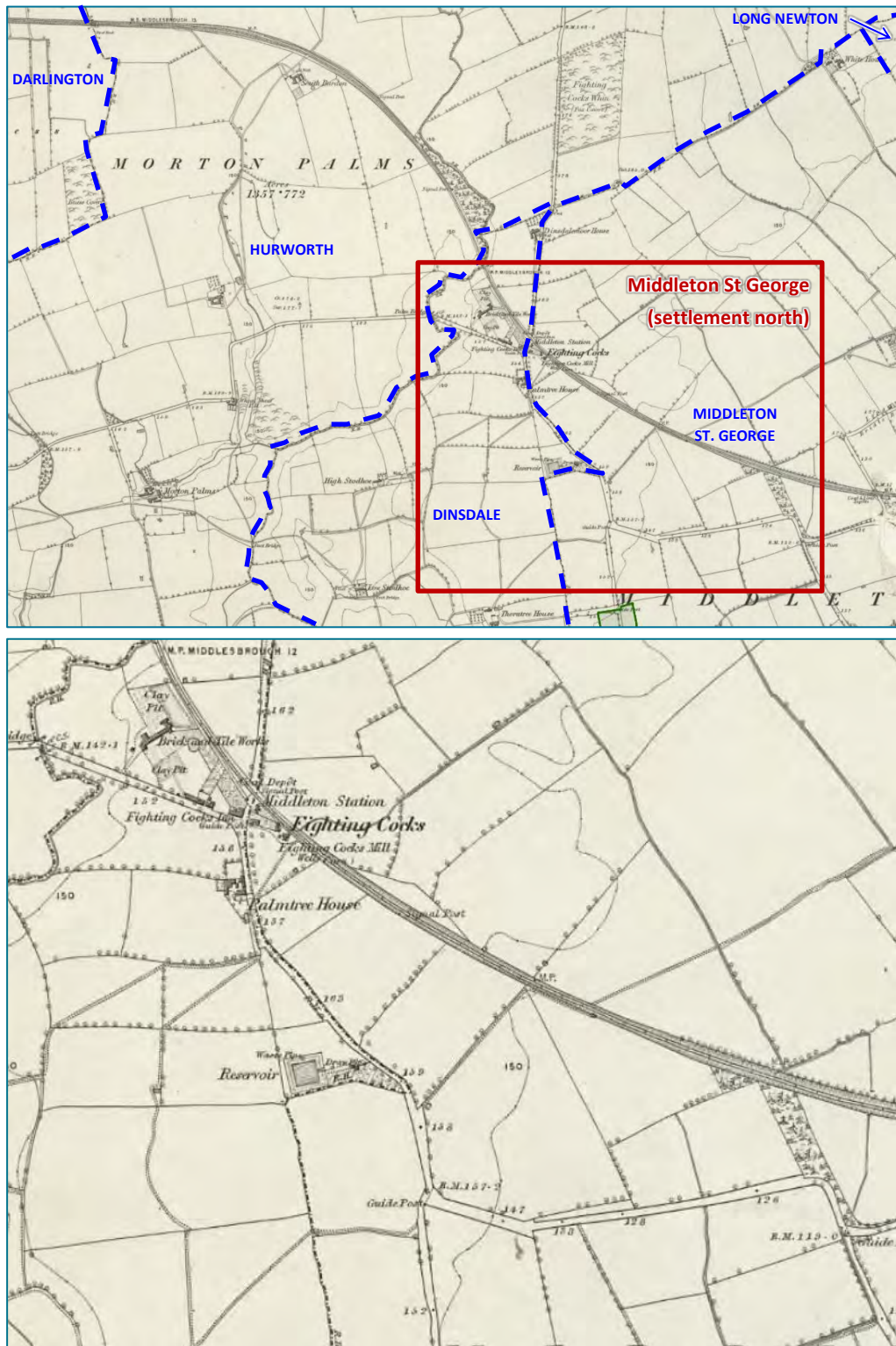
⁸⁸ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 11 & 18-19

⁸⁹ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 20

⁹⁰ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 10-11

⁹¹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2018, page 45

- One line of main pipe from Fighting Cocks to Middlesbrough and thence to Stockton, and various other unspecified pipes, etc., clearly for distribution purposes



1855 six-inch OS map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (maps.nls.uk). *Top*: Assessment area. Existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary in dark green. Parish names and boundaries at the time are shown in dark blue (**NB: these are not the current parish names/boundaries**). In the area of the reservoir, the boundary between the Dinsdale and Middleton St George parishes did not follow the line of the former Roman road. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north.

In 1860, the [F] Station Master's House and Station Building were constructed in the location of the old station to provide improved passenger services, retaining some of the stonework of the earlier building in the rear walling⁹². A Neo-Gothic arched sash window facing onto the Darlington-bound platform could be opened to serve customers across a counter. It is possible that the [C] Waiting Shed on the Stockton-bound platform across the railway track was built around the same time. Like the station buildings, it is constructed in buff-coloured Pease brick, although the stretchers to the rear are red bricks. The shed was originally open fronted⁹³.



Top: [F] Station Master's House (right) and Station Building at former Sadberge Road level crossing with disused railway corridor to the left/east. Both are faced in Pease brick although the former Station Building is now painted white. The Neo-Gothic window is behind the modern garage, which is in the location of the former Darlington-bound platform. *Bottom:* Remains of the rear wall of the [C] Waiting Shed constructed in English Garden Wall bond. The wall has since been partially rebuilt by the Friends of the S&DR. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

In the same year, the Dinsdale Moor Iron Works (no longer extant) opened to the west of the [D] Coal Depot. They were established by a group of businessmen including estate owner Henry Cocks, a Darlington colliery owner and representatives

⁹² Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 19

⁹³ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 24

of the Pease family. Iron ore first discovered in the Cleveland Hills in 1859 and coal from Shildon were brought here for the manufacture of iron and steel⁹⁴.

Also in 1860, Rakes Hall was built by Mr Rake as a village hall for non-Quaker workers. It now adjoins the southern end of Station Terrace. After becoming a boys school, it would later be turned into the [H] Lyric cinema⁹⁵ (see below).



Left: Former Rakes Hall which would later become [H] the Lyric, how a house (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024). Right: Sketch by J Richardson (not to scale) of what the building used to look like, kindly provided by Ross Willis.

In 1863, the S&DR and North Eastern Railway (NER) company amalgamated. The station was renamed 'Fighting Cocks' on 1 September 1866⁹⁶.

In 1864, the [Q] Middleton Iron Works were constructed to the east of the southern road junction on land that belonged to Henry Cocks (once part of Palmtree House Farm), served by a siding off the railway line. They produced pig iron and operated initially two, and from 1875⁹⁷ on four, blast furnaces powered by a stationary steam engine. They also had an internal narrow-gauge railway system for moving slag. Whilst their location was well suited to the availability of raw materials, there was no substantial source of labour in the locality to meet the demands of the industry. Therefore, workers needed to be brought in from elsewhere. Many came from Yorkshire but many others also from much further away. The first houses to be built for them were a long terrace along the southern boundary of the iron works, along the road to Yarm. Henry Cocks called it Killinghall Row, after his forebearers who held the manor of Low Middleton. The same principle was applied for the naming of Pemberton Terrace (with generous front gardens) to the west of it, close to the southern road junction which became to be known as the Square^{98 99}. Other houses in the vicinity built around that time bear their builders' names: Harts Buildings, Browns Buildings and Hansons Buildings [sic]¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁴ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 20

⁹⁵ Lombard-Earl, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 31 January

⁹⁶ Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXVIII

⁹⁷ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 20

⁹⁸ Pallister 2007a, pages 116 & 133-135

⁹⁹ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Historical Background' & point 75

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16302438.lawless-middleton-st-george-prison-deal-irish-drunks/>



Top: Remains of southern boundary wall of the [Q] Middleton Iron Works, bordering the back lane to Killinghall Row, Yarm Road, the first houses to be built for the increasing workforce. It is mainly constructed from slag with a few red brick pinnings in between. Smelting is the process of applying heat and a chemical reducing agent to an ore to extract a desired base metal product. As most ores are impure, it was necessary to use limestone, which was brought in from Weardale, to remove the accompanying rock gangue as slag¹⁰¹. This wall is now the only survivor of the iron works site (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024). Bottom: Details of slag pieces. (Photos © Gaby Rose, February 2025)

The construction of the new housing changed the centre of gravity within the parish in only one decade. The well-established nucleus of population at Middleton One Row was still there and remained the centre for visitors to the spa and some local services but was outweighed by the development around the [Q] Middleton Iron Works. The iron-works-centred housing was originally known as Killinghall, but with its continuing expansion that name was lost. Instead, the new village was taking on the name of the parish, Middleton St George¹⁰².



Former [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel with gable end fronting the road, now converted into residential use. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

¹⁰¹ Pallister 2007a, page 133

¹⁰² Pallister 2007a, pages 134 & 137

In 1869, the [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built halfway between the northern and southern road junctions along the west side of (now) Station Road, adjoining the northeast corner of the reservoir site.

In 1871, the Gas Works were built to the southeast of the Fighting Cocks Mill, served by a railway siding. They were owned by the Middleton and Dinsdale Gas Company and supplied gas for the lighting installed in the later part of the nineteenth century. By 1893, there were 32 public lamps in the parish¹⁰³. In addition, the local availability of gas allowed the NER to light railway signals, including those on the ground¹⁰⁴.

In spring 1871, the church of St Lawrence¹⁰⁵ was opened in Middleton One Row. By that time, the inconvenience and inadequacy of the small, remote church of St George had become too apparent, as it was unable to cater for the inhabitants of Middleton One Row, spa visitors and the growing, even more distant, industrial population at Middleton St George.

At the end of July 1871, following the Education Act of the previous year, a new National School (no longer extant) was provided on Chapel Street on the southern fringe of the assessment area, replacing the undersized school at Middleton One Row. The location was chosen due to its proximity to the [Q] Middleton Iron Works whilst minimising the distance to Middleton One Row. In addition, the management of the iron works had become alert to the educational and social needs of its workforce and provided a library and reading room on their site.

The 1871 census shows that the total population of the parish had suddenly exploded from roughly 220 people during the mid-seventeenth to mid-nineteenth centuries to 918. Out of this number, 470 people lived at Killinghall and Fighting Cocks. Further housing had been built on the eastern side of (now) Station Road and to the south of the Dinsdale Moor Iron Works, along the lane to Darlington. The population of Middleton One Row was 229, which also included workers employed in the industries (with the exemption of the Gas Works which were not included in that census). The railway also contributed to the expansion of the population and housing demand, requiring labourers, clerks, gate keepers, etc. The industrial community now made up over half of the population, with 133 men employed at the iron and brick works. As the housing demand could not keep up with the increasing workforce, families had to share houses with other families or boarders¹⁰⁶.

A print of 1875 (not reproduced here) shows Fighting Cocks Station from the level railway/road crossing looking southeast¹⁰⁷. In the foreground on the left is the [C] Waiting Shed facing onto the northern platform with two lamps, one of them mounted to the building, the other freestanding. Across the two railway tracks are the [F] Station Master's House and Station Building, the latter facing onto the southern platform with passengers waiting and a signal post to the right, close to the crossing. In the background are the windmill and, further beyond, the smoking chimneys of the [Q] Middleton Iron Works.

Because of the large number of 'thirsty' iron workers, two pubs were built at the Square: the [N] Havelock Arms Hotel and, opposite, the [O] Killinghall Arms. Soon the

¹⁰³ Pallister 2007a, page 157

¹⁰⁴ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 22

¹⁰⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185932>

¹⁰⁶ Pallister 2007a, pages 84, 134 & 137-143

¹⁰⁷ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 27

village became noted for its lawlessness due to drunken behaviour. In 1877, a seven-foot-long petition was delivered to Darlington magistrates demanding that the village be equipped with its own prison, the reason being that *‘[i]n order to convey a disorderly person to the lock-up in Darlington, the policeman is frequently compelled to leave the locality when his presence is most needed, and it is well known that, in his absence, deplorable scenes are but too common’*. Consequently, one or two houses of a terrace called Central Buildings (no longer extant) on the south side of the Square were converted into a police station with lock-up. It was ideally located, between the two pubs, where most of the drinking took place, and facing the Square, where most of the fighting took place¹⁰⁸. The police also used to be stationed in 8 Middleton Lane, now a private house just outside the assessment area, which may have been built in the 1880s or 1890s. It still contains evidence of cells¹⁰⁹.



Left: [N] Havelock Arms Hotel. Right: The former [O] Killinghall Arms; a historical photo shows the building without render and 2x2 sliding sashes¹¹⁰. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

By 1881, Pemberton Terrace had been extended to infill the space between it and Killinghall Row, which was also known as Old Row. Named New Row, it provided another nineteen houses for iron workers. More houses were built in Chapel Row and elsewhere in the Killinghall area, as well as in Middleton One Row and along Middleton Lane, to the south outside the assessment area. The larger houses along the latter were mainly the homes of prosperous families in commerce and industry, who were no longer constrained to live where they worked¹¹¹.

In 1882, the Dinsdale Wire and Steel Works opened¹¹² (no longer extant) between the Brick and Tile Works and Dinsdale Moor Iron Works along the lane to Darlington, using raw material from Sheffield and elsewhere.

In 1883, the [Q] Middleton Iron Works were closed down for the remainder of the century. Imports of better-quality ore from Spain and elsewhere were now used, so it was more economical to use blast furnaces closer to port facilities. The parish was hit hard by the loss of its main source of employment. By 1891, the population had fallen to 871 from its census peak of 1103 in 1881. Also, another side effect of the closure of the iron works was that the plans for a Roman Catholic chapel along Chapel Street, hence its name, came to a complete halt and was never built.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16302438.lawless-middleton-st-george-prison-deal-irish-drunks/>

¹⁰⁹ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

¹¹⁰ Chapman 1990, page 106

¹¹¹ Pallister 2007a, pages 147-148

¹¹² Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Haughton Road Industrial Area'

At around 1886, a signal box was provided along the southern track at Fighting Cocks Station, immediately to the west of the level crossing. It was a 'Type C1b' building, with panelled brickwork on the ground floor. The frame had 19 levers and a separate wheel was provided to operate the crossing gates¹¹³.

A photograph of 3 June 1887 shows the same view of Fighting Cocks Station as the 1875 print. By that time, however, the windmill no longer had sails, as they had apparently been destroyed in a storm, and was driven by an engine. Little else seems to have changed, with passengers still lining the platform¹¹⁴.



Left: [S] Metal Railway Bridge over the historical route to Yarm. Right: [R] Masonry Railway Bridge over access track. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

On 1 July 1887, less than one month after the photo was taken, the NER opened a new passenger line between Darlington's enlarged Bank Top Station and the resulting railway junction with the existing line at the eastern fringe of the assessment area. The junction was named Oaktree Junction, after the nearby hamlet, and formed the western end of the Darlington & Saltburn branch. The new line bypassed the original S&DR route through Fighting Cocks Station, which became known as the **Fighting Cocks branch or loop line**, running between Albert Hill Junction near Darlington's North Road Station and Oaktree Junction¹¹⁵. It required various bridges, including a [R] Masonry Railway Bridge over an access track to a farmstead and a [S] Metal Railway Bridge over the road to Yarm at the southeast end of the assessment area. The new line also resulted in the provision of a new passenger station for Middleton St George, misleadingly named Dinsdale Station, half a mile to the south of Fighting Cocks and close to Killinghall, where most of the recent development had taken place. Consequently, the bypassed, old line and station concentrated on moving and handling freight, including the serving of the [D] Coal Depot¹¹⁶, as well as excursion trains and diverted services. It is likely that the [C] Waiting Shed was enclosed with a timber front following the transfer of passenger traffic to Dinsdale Station. Its use changed to a paraffin lamp room, storage of pairs of metal ramps (required for pushing derailed waggons back on the track) and a toilet^{117 118}. Besides the new Dinsdale Station offering better passenger facilities, it was also much nearer to the centre of population and thus convenient for commuting to Darlington and Teesside. This opened up a much wider range of employment possibilities for the inhabitants in the parish. Moreover, the dwindling

¹¹³ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 15

¹¹⁴ Pallister 2007a, pages 103, 139 & 147-148

¹¹⁵ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 16

¹¹⁶ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 19

¹¹⁷ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 28

¹¹⁸ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Historical Background', 'Oak Tree Junction' & '6. Darlington South Junction to Oak Tree Junction via Dinsdale'

visitors to the spa had been replaced by day-trippers from the nearby towns, with Dinsdale Station being within easy walking distance to Middleton One Row.

Henry Cocks, the last lord of the manor of Middleton St George, died in November 1894. He was also the last person to be interred beneath the chancel of St George's church¹¹⁹. Much of his estate was auctioned off, including the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn in September 1895. Its sale represented the first change of ownership since it was built. The purchaser was the Victoria Brewery of Darlington, also known as Warwick's Brewery Co. They remained owners until 1926. The triangular field adjoining the inn to the west was developed to provide a red brick terrace comprising five houses (no longer extant) following the inn's sale in 1895¹²⁰.

The Local Government Act of 1894 introduced parish councils and brought the village level of government into the pattern we have today. Functions previously carried out by churchwardens and vestries were now taken over by elected councillors. On 4 December, the inaugural meeting of the Middleton St George Parish Council was held at the school on Chapel Street¹²¹.

The 1894 act also introduced rural district councils, establishing Darlington Rural District Council (DRDC) for the area. These inherited the functions of the earlier sanitary districts, but also had wider authority over matters such as local planning, council housing, playgrounds and cemeteries. The council had loading docks served by the old railway line¹²² of which the [B] DRDC Loading Dock at Fighting Cocks still survives. It would later be used to load slag tarmacadam for the use in road repair¹²³.



Remains of the [B] DRDC Loading Dock at Fighting Cocks Station, to northwest of the former level crossing. The Friends of the S&DR tidied up the area, cleared vegetation growth and added old railway sleeper blocks so that this feature can be better appreciated by the public. (Photo © Gaby Rose, February 2025)

The 1896 six-inch OS map of the assessment area (see below) identifies the line of the former Roman Road, although it is now disrupted by three further basins on the enlarged Fighting Cocks Reservoirs site which have been built to the west of the original, smaller basin. To the northeast of the oldest reservoir, the [K] Board Room building is shown, and the earlier building to the east (no longer extant) seems to have been enlarged or rebuilt. Bordering the reservoirs site to the northeast is the [J] (Wesleyan) Methodist Chapel. The terrace on the opposite side of the road includes a post office, with the building that would become [H] the Lyric cinema (originally Rakes Hall) immediately to the north of it.

¹¹⁹ Pallister 2007a, pages 148 & 153

¹²⁰ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 19

¹²¹ Pallister 2007a, page 153

¹²² Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Haughton Road Industrial Area'

¹²³ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), pages 15, 18 & 21



[K] Board Room (top) and Entrance Gates (bottom) belonging to the former Fighting Cocks Reservoirs site. *Top:* The building, now the Parish Council Meeting Room, has now all its openings except for the main entrance boarded up. *Bottom:* The curved layout of the gateway seems to imply a former turning circle for carts or coaches and would have provided a more notable sense of arrival for visitors. Note the survival of the original iron railings (in contrast to the **[M]** Cocks Memorial Homes (see below) on the opposite side of the road). There is a glimpse of the **[J]** Wesleyan Methodist Chapel to the right/north of the gateway. (Photos © Gaby Rose, February 2025)

On the 1896 map, further new buildings are shown along the lane to Darlington (these are no longer extant). Nearby, there is the semi-detached house along Sadberge Road a short distance north of the level railway crossing, and two houses opposite Palmtree House, now part of Station Terrace. The **[F]** Station Master's House and Station Building are no longer marked as a station. There has been some expansion of the industry at the northern road junction. However, the windmill is no longer annotated, either as it no longer performed a commercial function or was completely out of use by then. The name Fighting Cocks has been moved from the northern road junction to the south of Palmtree House. New development shown around the southern road junction comprises various buildings, including the **[N]** Havelock Arms Hotel, **[O]** Killinghall Arms and another post office. To the northeast is the large industrial site of the **[Q]** Middleton Iron Works, connected via sidings to the original railway line, which has become the Fighting Cocks Loop Line and was reserved for industrial activities. Along the iron works' western boundary is a triangular field, now the village's playing field, with an access lane from (now) Station Road to the industrial site along its northwestern border. The iron works are also linked via a rail track to a site to the south(east), across the road to Yarm and new passenger railway line. The area between the southern road junction and station is annotated Killinghall. The surrounding area of the village is still agricultural with dispersed farmsteads, the Morton Palms hamlet, and the Wheatsheaf Inn along the lane to Darlington.



1896 six-inch OS maps reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (maps.nls.uk). *Top*: Assessment area. Existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary in dark green. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north.

At Dinsdale station, the 1896 map shows an eastbound (north) and a westbound (south) waiting shed. The booking office was located adjacent to the road bridge, at street level above the railway tracks¹²⁴. To the east, there are two more bridges along the Darlington & Saltburn line: the [R] Masonry Railway Bridge over an access track to a farmstead and the [S] Metal Railway Bridge over the road to Yarm. At Oaktree

¹²⁴ Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXXIV & points 88-90

Junction, the passenger line joins onto the track of the former S&DR. To the south of the station, along Chapel Street, is the school and more housing.



Top: Remains of [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor in Pease brick laid in the English Garden Wall bond to the north of the former Gas Works and windmill sites; note the 'zigzag' line of wall (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024). *Middle:* Remains of later, southern coal drop walling of the [D] Coal Depot built in stone; the brick walling on top was added when the depot was no longer in use. The wall now forms the boundary to the carpark of the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn. *Bottom:* This feature, judging from its position near the [A] Crane Base and Platform just outside this view on the right/north (see below), seems to be related to the ramp carrying the siding track to the coal cells. (Photos © Gaby Rose, April 2024)

The 1896 25-inch OS map (not reproduced here) shows further detail which is of particular interest for the northern road junction. The [E] Fighting Cocks Inn is now referred to as a hotel, and one of the buildings to the west of it, along the Darlington lane, is marked as a smithy. There has been significant railway-related development with multiple tracks in the widened [G] Railway Corridor, which has been enclosed by tall brick walling to the north of the windmill and Gas Works sites. To the west of Sadberge Road opposite the [C] Waiting Shed (with a boundary stone to the west of

it), the [B] DRDC Loading Dock is served by a single siding which stops short of the road. Across the tracks, there is the signal box at which two sidings terminate. To the south of it, the [D] Coal Depot has been enlarged and 'shifted' slightly to the west, including former land to the rear of the inn. The number of coal cells has been increased to eleven and the working area widened to permit access on both sides of the cells. A new weighing machine and its office have also been added. This all suggests that the depot has been completely rebuilt and reorganised, perhaps by the NER after its amalgamation with the S&DR¹²⁵. Further to the southeast, at Oaktree Junction, there is another signal box to the south of the tracks, which opened on 1 July 1887 along with the new passenger railway line.

In 1898, Fighting Cocks was still a busy goods station. Traffic in coal, coke, lime and limestone amounted to 8,548 tons. Goods forwarded totalled 10,495 tons and goods received 12,677 tons. Traffic was handled in three sets of sidings¹²⁶.

Around the turn of the century, the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works were reopened after a certain amount of reconstruction by their new owners, the Linthorpe Dinsdale Smelting Company. The furnaces were progressively brought back into production over a number of years. The intention was to allow the use of foreign ore and yield a product more suitable for the making of steel. In 1901, there were complaints about the danger to health and the environment caused by the discharge of smoke and dirt from these operations. In 1904, the company agreed to pay for the erection of a drinking trough combined with a gas lamp in the middle of the Square (the southern road junction), to enhance the centre of the iron works village.



[M] Cocks Memorial Homes. The clock tower over the central part is a later replacement and is at odds with the Arts and Crafts style of the building. The original clock tower over the central unit was constructed of more elaborately designed masonry and had a flat roof¹²⁷. In the foreground, the metal boundary railings were likely cut off in the war effort in the 1940s. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

In 1903, seven alms-houses called the [M] Cocks Memorial Homes were built across the road from the reservoirs with some of the money left by the late Henry Cocks¹²⁸. Although originally the central unit was for a matron, it now has the same status as the others houses. The additional room in this cottage was intended for the use of the trustees but has long been incorporated into the living accommodation¹²⁹.

¹²⁵ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 11

¹²⁶ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 18

¹²⁷ https://www.francisfrith.com/middleton-st-george/middleton-st-george-the-old-people-s-homes-c1960_m421009#

¹²⁸ Pallister 2007a, pages 106 & 159-160

¹²⁹ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

In 1906, the [P] Co-op and Stable were built at the north end of Middleton Lane, forming a group with Central Buildings (which included the police station and prison) to the south of the Square. The stable building is to the rear of the site and comprised three stalls and a hayloft over, accommodating the horses and cart that were used by the shop for home deliveries¹³⁰.



Left: Former [P] Co-op along Middleton Lane with detached Stable building in the background. Right: Stable viewed from Yarm Road. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

In 1907, the Tees Valley Water (Consolidation) Act included a list of all the completed and uncompleted Tees Valley works. According to it, the Fighting Cocks Reservoirs had their works completed and were in use¹³¹.



Left: Former [I] Undenominational Mission Hall with 'Undenominational Mission Hall 1907' commemorated on the fence (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024). Right: Sketch by J Richardson (not to scale) of what the building used to look like in 1930, kindly provided by Ross Willis.

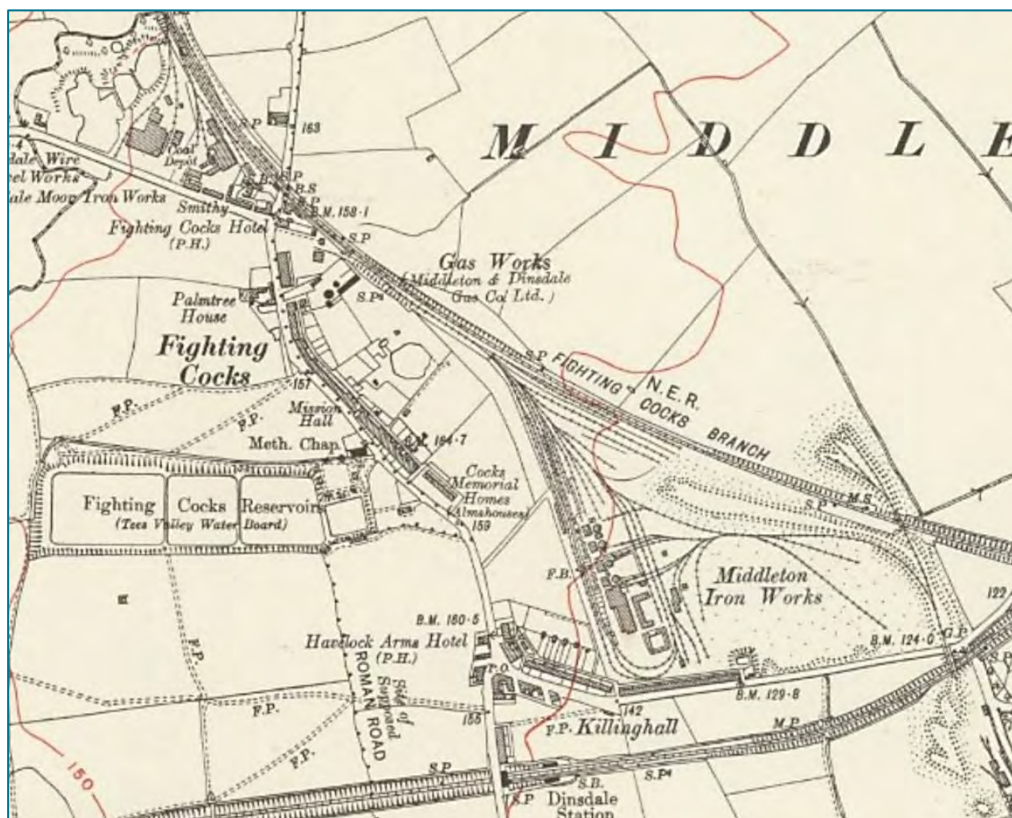
Also in 1907, the [I] Undenominational Mission Hall was built by George and Edith Graham along with other subscribers on the site of the building that is marked as a post office on (now) Station Road on the 1896 map. Their names were put on separate bricks in a panel built into the right-hand side of the front elevation. The mission hall was mainly used to help children at the north end of the village learn about Christianity Methodist style¹³². Before World War I, undenominationalism peaked. Undenominationalists were not attached to any denomination; they considered themselves 'just Christians'¹³³.

¹³⁰ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16388701.memories-middleton-st-george-co-op-ernie-hall-delivered-groceries-horse-cart/>

¹³¹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2018, page 99

¹³² Richardson, J. 2018. Notes on 'Undenomination Church Hall in M.S.G' dated August

¹³³ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16388701.memories-middleton-st-george-co-op-ernie-hall-delivered-groceries-horse-cart/>



1912-14 six-inch OS map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (maps.nls.uk). *Top*: Assessment area. Existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary in dark green. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north.

In 1911, a new school (no longer extant) opened along Neasham Road to the northwest of the old school. It provided modern premises with much increased accommodation and improved facilities, serving pupils from the age of five to leaving at the age of fourteen¹³⁴.

¹³⁴ Pallister 2007a, page 161

The 1912-14 six-inch OS map of the assessment area (see above) shows further expansion of the industrial areas at Fighting Cocks and the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works. The latter are no longer connected to the site to the south(east) across the road to Yarm and passenger railway line, which had become occupied by the Middleton St George Slag Works in the meantime. Instead, a new rail connection has been established from the iron works to a site across the Fighting Cocks branch line. Moreover, a new road to Long Newton has been constructed branching off the road to Yarm where it turns south towards the [S] Metal Railway Bridge, heading outside the settlement in a northeastern direction, cutting through the embankment of the Fighting Cocks branch to the west of Oaktree Junction. There has been further provision of terraced housing between the northern and southern road junctions, and along Chapel Street. The new school is shown to the south of the passenger railway line, bordering the line of the former Roman Road, which is still annotated. The map names a number of buildings in the settlement, including a smithy to the west of the northern road junction, the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn (still a hotel), [I] (Undenominational) Mission Hall, [M] Cocks Memorial Homes, the [N] Havelock Arms Hotel and [J] (Wesleyan) Methodist Chapel. It seems that the former [O] Killinghall Arms was not used as a pub at the time, as it is not mentioned. The Fighting Cocks Reservoirs are now owned by the Tees Valley Water Board. The surrounding area is still agricultural with dispersed farmsteads and the Morton Palms hamlet; the former Wheatsheaf Inn along the lane to Darlington is also no longer named and may have been a farmhouse at the time, as implied by its present name (Old Farmhouse).

The corresponding 1913 25-inch OS map (not reproduced here) shows further detail for the Fighting Cocks industrial sites. At the [D] Coal Depot, the former eleven coal drop cells have been increased to twelve, possibly by subdivision of one cell. At their northeastern end, between the track over the cells and the siding stopping short of the signal box, the [A] Crane Base is shown with a small building right next to it (the latter is no longer extant) and a line that seems to symbolise an adjoining Platform, which partially survives today. The weighing machine has been relocated slightly to the north to allow freer access in and out of the depot, presumably by larger vehicles. A new weighing office seems to have been built adjoining the signal box to the southeast, with the previous building demolished. To the west, the sites of the Dinsdale Wire & Steel Works and Dinsdale Moor Iron Works have received their own coal depots which are served by sidings from the main line. To the east across Sadberge Road, the former windmill seems to have been demolished.

In 1914, the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building at Fighting Cocks were sold for residential use¹³⁵.

In 1915 and, again, in 1923 there were further complaints about alleged smoke pollution emitted from the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works¹³⁶.

From 1921 to 1945, the Gas Works sidings were taken over by Charles Ingram, railway wagon builder and repairer¹³⁷.

In 1925, the stretch of line between Goosepool and Faverdale (Darlington), which included the Fighting Cocks branch, was used as part of the locomotive parade in the

¹³⁵ Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXXIV

¹³⁶ Pallister 2007a, pages 163-164

¹³⁷ Darsley, Lovett 2023, point 75

100th birthday celebrations of the opening of the S&DR where locomotives and waggons went on static display¹³⁸.



[A] Crane Base (top) and Platform (bottom). *Top*: Looking northwest, the platform is behind the crane base within the undergrowth; its alignment shown on the 1913 map is indicated by the yellow line. The rail tracks coming from the main railway line would have been to the righthand/northeast side. *Bottom*: Remnants of former platform viewed from the bridlepath looking southwest, with the walling stones now largely dislodged. The crane base is to the left/south just outside the view. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

In the same year, the former school building along Chapel Street was taken over by the parochial church council and became known as Parochial Hall. Apart from providing for the Sunday School, it was also used for dances and other community activities¹³⁹.

Around 1930, the [L] Pumping Station was built on the Fighting Cocks Reservoirs site, which, at the time, was owned and operated by the Tees Valley Water Board¹⁴⁰. The building is set at a distance and angle to the main road.

¹³⁸ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2019, page 43

¹³⁹ Pallister 2007a, page 165

¹⁴⁰ <https://msgcommunitycentre.co.uk/about-us/our-history/>



Former [L] Pumping Station, now Community Centre, built in a Modernist style. The original multi-pane windows have been replaced. (Photo © Gaby Rose, February 2025)

In 1931, the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works were closed down for good due to a wider depression in the country, and unemployment was rife in the parish. Consequently, the huge mountain of slag left over from the smelting process was partly used for road making¹⁴¹.

In the same year, the site of the former Dinsdale Wire & Steel Works along the road to Darlington was turned into a scrapyard with new rail sidings being provided. During the 1960s, many ex-British-Rail engines would be scrapped there¹⁴², marking this stretch of the original 1825 railway line as one that not only witnessed the birth but also the final demise of the public steam locomotive¹⁴³. First Arnott Young and then the Durham Tube Works undertook the scrapping of railway engines and carriages on this site before it was turned into the St George's Gate housing estate in the early 2000s¹⁴⁴.

A photo of the former Fighting Cocks Station of 1933¹⁴⁵ (not reproduced here), taken from a similar location as the 1875 print, shows the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building next to the live goods-traffic railway line, with the passenger platform now removed. A wooden barrier is on the level crossing to allow road traffic pass. The former [Q] Middleton Iron Works are in the far background.

In 1936, the former Rakes Hall was extended and converted into a 265-seater cinema called [H] the Lyric. It would later be used as a pigeon club and washing machine repair place, before being turned into a residential property in the 1980s¹⁴⁶.

In late 1938, with the prospect of war, construction of the Royal Air Force (RAF) aerodrome had begun in the southeast of the parish, extending right up to the church of St George. This transformed a large area of landscape outside the assessment area (and partly within the neighbouring Long Newton parish). It also brought about an interface and social intermingling with the local population. The slag heaps left from the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works contributed towards the base material for the runways. A large force of employment was required, which boosted the local economy¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴¹ Pallister 2007a, page 165

¹⁴² Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Haughton Road Industrial Area'

¹⁴³ Pallister 2007a, page 170

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/7102901.housing-estate-built-next-year/>

¹⁴⁵ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 19

¹⁴⁶ Lombard-Earl, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 31 January

¹⁴⁷ Pallister 2007a, page 165

The corresponding 25-inch OS map is one year later (not reproduced here), from 1939. It shows that within the last year the council houses which had already been planned for Middleton St George in the early 1920s have eventually been built to the west of the school along a new cul-de-sac called Thorntree Gardens, in the Dinsdale parish at the southern fringe of the assessment area. The delay in construction had been due to the alleged smoke nuisance associated with the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works, which had resulted in the originally planned site being rejected¹⁴⁸. Between 1938 and 1939, semi-detached houses were provided to the north of the [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, and another mission hall (now the site of a surface carpark) was built to the north of the [N] Havelock Arms Hotel. Immediately to the north of it, a large building is shown set back from the road, possibly the depot that had been used by the Water Board or Environment Agency before the High Stell housing development was built here in the late 1990s¹⁴⁹. The map also identifies the Parochial Hall, which used to be the old school building. At the top end of the village, the grounds of the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn (still a hotel) have been expanded to the rear (north), maybe to provide a car park. To the north of the railway line, the triangular agricultural field has been turned into allotment gardens, helping feed families through home food production during the depression, and again later during the rationing years of the Second World War. Further allotments are shown behind Station Terrace and to the north of Dinsdale Station.

After the Dunkirk evacuation (26 May – 4 June 1940), soldiers of the Suffolk Regiment were billeted at the [I] Undenominational Mission Hall, before they were transferred to Catterick Garrison a few months later¹⁵⁰.

The RAF Middleton St George officially opened on 15 January 1941. A wireless station was established in a field opposite the slag works in the southeastern corner of the assessment area, with a number of high, lattice-construction radio masts. From 1942 until the end of the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Air Force assumed duties providing most of the ground staff and aircrew flying bombers over Germany and occupied Europe. Bombs, armaments, and other equipment were delivered by rail to Fighting Cocks goods station, including the former [D] Coal Depot, and from there by road to the aerodrome. The [I] Undenominational Mission Hall received a new lease of life when evangelical services were organised by Canadian airmen, which were also well attended by people from the village and Darlington. In their spare time, staff often socialised outside the airfield, frequenting the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn, [N] Havelock Arms Hotel and [O] Killinghall Arms. Dances at the Parochial Hall were also well attended. Moreover, [H] the Lyric cinema proved hugely popular with airmen stationed at the airfield.

In 1947, demolition of the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works started. However, the blowing engine house remained and would later be adapted for other usage. Around the same time, the smithy at Fighting Cocks and the houses and cottages beyond it along the road to Darlington were also demolished¹⁵¹.

A photo of the former Fighting Cocks station of 1949¹⁵² (not reproduced here), taken from a similar location as the 1875 print, shows a residential hedge planted around the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building, next to the live goods-

¹⁴⁸ Pallister 2007a, page 164

¹⁴⁹ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

¹⁵⁰ Richardson, J. 2018. Notes on 'Undenomination Church Hall in M.S.G' dated August

¹⁵¹ Pallister 2007a, pages 100 & 165-170

¹⁵² Darsley, Lovett 2023, point 74

traffic railway line. A wooden barrier is on the level crossing to allow road traffic pass. The [C] Waiting Shed is still intact. The industrial buildings have disappeared from the background.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the Parochial Hall was the home of the Middleton St George Operatic and Dramatic Society. Their productions always played to full houses. In the late 1950s, [H] the Lyric closed due to falling attendances brought about by television and changing lifestyles.

In 1954, the Dinsdale Moor Iron Works, which had flourished during the war years and continued to be a major employer in the village, closed resulting in further loss of railway traffic along the Fighting Cocks branch line. As a result, the adjacent scrap yard on the site of the former Dinsdale Wire & Steel Works was then able to expand and fill the void¹⁵³.

In 1958 the Dinsdale Rail Welding Depot opened on part of the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works site as a British Railways facility for the production of long-welded rails for track renewals¹⁵⁴. In 1960, CN Hadley and Son, a firm of engineers and flange-makers from Darlington, started to occupy much of the remainder of the former iron works site including the blowing engine house, next to welding depot. They would stay here until 2003, when, faced by a severely declining manufacturing market, the company closed its business and sold the land to Wimpey housing¹⁵⁵.

A photo of the former Fighting Cocks passenger station of 1960¹⁵⁶ (not reproduced here), taken from the location of the former [D] Coal Depot shows the brick-built signal box, the former [B] DRDC Loading Dock, by then out of use and overgrown, as well as parts of the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building (still in facing Pease brick) and [C] Waiting Shed; the latter seems still intact.

After a public enquiry in 1962, most of the remaining gap between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row had been built over. The housing expansion and resulting population increase carried on regardless of the slow decline of the village's services¹⁵⁷.

In 1963, the Central Buildings terrace to the south of the Square, which included the old police station and lock-up, was replaced by a new pair of semi-detached police houses and a single-storey police hut (still extant but no longer in its original use)¹⁵⁸. They accommodated the police sergeant and constable before they would become private houses¹⁵⁹.

By 1964, both George and Edith Graham had died, and their niece sold the [I] Undenominational Mission Hall. It was then rented to an antiques dealer until 1967. Afterwards, the pigeon club took possession, and in 1969 they allowed a youth club

¹⁵³ Pallister 2007a, page 169

¹⁵⁴ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 26

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/7007010.losing-last-reminders-ironworks-industry/>

¹⁵⁶ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 26

¹⁵⁷ Pallister 2007a, page 170

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16302438.lawless-middleton-st-george-prison-deal-irish-drunks/>

¹⁵⁹ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

to use the building to accrue funds to buy their own building (i.e. old [P] Co-op¹⁶⁰, which had closed in the late 1960s¹⁶¹).

In March 1964, the former [D] Coal Depot, which had continued as the Fighting Cocks goods station, closed¹⁶². In the same year, following a change in defence requirements, the RAF aerodrome closed too. The airfield was then converted into a civil airport, with flights to Heathrow commencing at the end of the same year¹⁶³.

The Fighting Cocks branch line closed as a through route in May 1967. One track was lifted, but the other remained in place so that traffic could still be worked from Oaktree Junction to the Patons & Baldwins factory just outside Darlington and the Dinsdale Rail Welding Depot. The line to the west of the factory was severed, and the Fighting Cocks signal box was demolished in November that year.

In 1972, the Oaktree Junction signal box was abolished¹⁶⁴. Around 1973, the historical Dinsdale station buildings were also demolished, although the station has remained in use until today.

When the Fighting Cocks Reservoirs were no longer needed to supply water to the iron works and the village, they were taken over by Northumbrian Water and decommissioned. The former reservoirs were converted into a water park for leisure activities, and the [L] Pumping Station became a new village hall, filling a void which had existed since the demolition of the Parochial Hall for the building of houses along Chapel Street. In 1980, the freehold of the Pumping Station was sold to the Middleton St George Community Association by the Parish Council, for the sum of £15,000. The Parish Council and community members put £5,000 into a bank account to cover necessary improvements¹⁶⁵.

In 1983, metal manufacture on the former site of Dinsdale Wire & Steel Works ceased, resulting in another loss of employment within the village¹⁶⁶.

In 1988, the Dinsdale Rail Welding Depot closed, following the closure of Patons & Baldwins in the early 1970s. The Fighting Cocks branch line had now shut down completely. The part of the route to the west outside the assessment area was subsequently built on to form the B6279, whilst the part within the assessment area, to the east of the A66, became a public right of way¹⁶⁷.

In the mid-1990s, Middleton St George had a population of approximately 1,800. Due to the demise of the industry and the availability of brownfield sites for new housing, the population grew rapidly to the current level of approximately 4,600¹⁶⁸.

By the end of twentieth century, a by-pass (A67) had been provided around the northern end of the village, removing the disturbance of the ever-increasing through-

¹⁶⁰ Richardson, J. 2018. Notes on 'Undenomination Church Hall in M.S.G' dated August

¹⁶¹ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16388701.memories-middleton-st-george-co-op-ernie-hall-delivered-groceries-horse-cart/>

¹⁶² Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXVIII

¹⁶³ Pallister 2007a, pages 170-171

¹⁶⁴ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 31

¹⁶⁵ <https://msgcommunitycentre.co.uk/about-us/our-history/>

¹⁶⁶ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Haughton Road Industrial Area' & point 89

¹⁶⁷ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 31

¹⁶⁸ <https://middleton-st-george.org.uk/about-the-village/village-profile/>

traffic and affording much better access to the airport. At the same time, the opportunity was taken to provide a direct link from the main road to Long Newton, cutting out the previous route via West Hartburn, which became a dead-end farm access only.

In 2003, the school on Neasham Road survived a destructive fire, but was replaced by a modern school building in 2006. In 2004, the blowing engine house of the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works was demolished¹⁶⁹, making way for further new housing. The building was surveyed before demolition and written up in the Cleveland Industrial Archaeologist. At the time, it was, however, not possible to examine any below-ground remains and these have now completely been removed¹⁷⁰.

3.4 Spatial Analysis

This section provides some of the evidential (and historical) value of the assessment area at the time of review. Note that planform, road and railway line layouts, watercourses, topography, and all structures of interest are described in the previous sections (see sections 3.2 & 3.3). Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

The assessment area is experienced by members of the public from the A66 and A67, footpaths, main and side roads and communal spaces within the settlement, and from several public rights of way over private farmland, nature reserves and the former railway corridor.

The area includes a number of focal points which feature within the key views, see below. Whilst South Burdon Farmhouse, the pipeline bridge, underpass below the A67, [O] Killinghall Arms and [S] Metal Railway Bridge can only be seen from shorter distances, the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn, [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and 2 Middleton Lane are also visible over longer distances. The area's most prominent landmark, in terms of its size and exposure, is the metal bridlepath bridge across the A66, linking the outskirts of Darlington via the green corridor with Middleton St George, along the route of the former Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR).

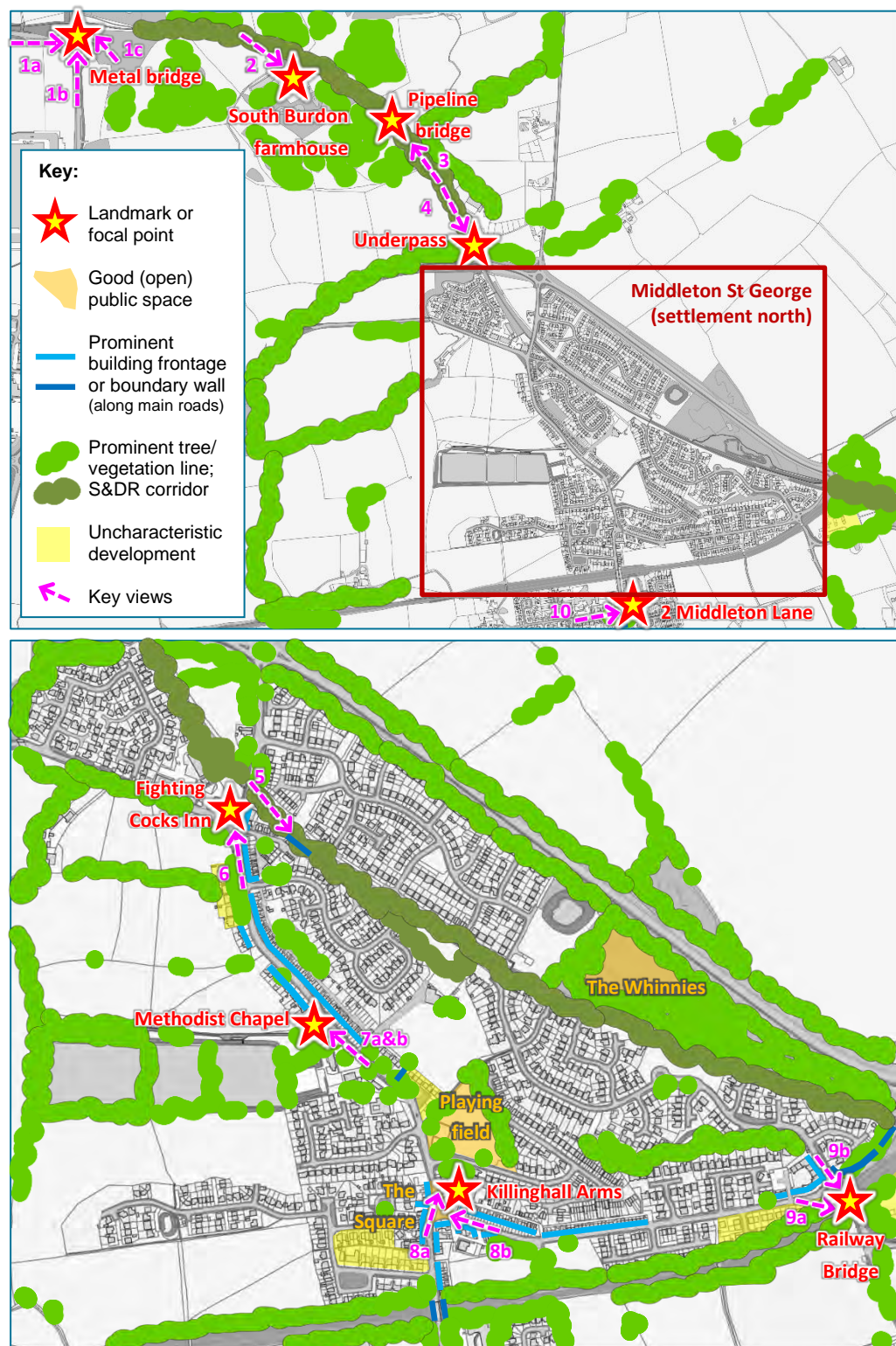
The analysis of the character zones within the assessment area (see section 3.5) shows that the spatial experience between the zones differs notably, ranging from lush open countryside (Zone A) to a well-enclosed green corridor (zone B), loosely arranged modern housing estates (Zone C), high-density historical building rows lining the main roads (Zone D), an embanked water park of rectangular footprint (Zone E), allotments concealed behind dense vegetation (Zone F), open communal green spaces (Zone G), and a modern school compound (Zone H). The A66, A67 and live railway line create noticeable barriers within the assessment area and between/within character zones, with the railway line dividing the village into two separate parts. The large amount of lush vegetation, often along boundary lines and adding to the definition of space, provides an element of cohesion throughout the area.

Buildings are generally of two-storey height, although there are also a number of bungalows and a new housing site including three-storey houses, which are marked in yellow on the maps below as they do not fit in with the remainder of the development pattern of the village. The 'urban' enclosure and cohesion established

¹⁶⁹ Pallister 2007a, pages 100, 161 & 171

¹⁷⁰ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

by the nineteenth-century layouts have been undermined by later housing where these do not line and face onto the main roads. Whilst modern residential development was initially provided on the brownfield sites of the former industry such as the [Q] Middleton Iron Works, the more recent and ongoing housing schemes are (being) built on greenfield sites in the village's immediate setting.



Spatial analysis. Top: Assessment area. Bottom: Middleton St George settlement north (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024. Graphics by Gaby Rose)

The settlement includes three good (open) public spaces, as shown in orange on the map above. The Square, i.e. the southern road junction which is confined by buildings, also features in two key views. In contrast, the Playing Field and the clearing inside the Whinnies are (partially) enclosed by mature trees and not within any of the key views.

The **key views** within the assessment area are as follows; all photos were taken in May 2024 unless mentioned otherwise:

View 1a has been taken from the B6279 (Tornado Way) approaching the roundabout junction with the A66 from the western, Darlington direction, in the northwestern-most corner of the assessment area. It is only experienced by vehicle users of the B6279. The focal point is the green metal bridge to the centre left/north. It carries a bridlepath into the green corridor along the former route of the S&DR which leads to the village of Middleton St George. In the background, beyond the grassed roundabout to the right/east, the trees of South Burdon Community Woodland can be seen. A number of galvanised streetlamps are very prominent in this view.



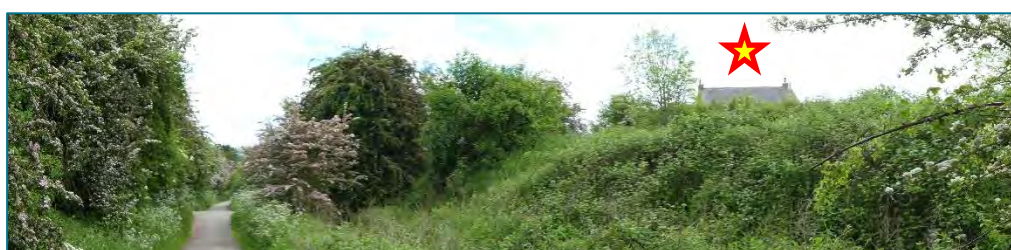
View 1b has been taken from the cycle path to the south of the roundabout looking north along the A66 towards the landmark of the green metal bridge which carries the bridlepath into the green corridor along the former route of the S&DR to the village of Middleton St George. This view is experienced by vehicle users of the A66 and cyclists. In the background to the right/northeast, the tree line in the location of the former railway corridor can be seen. A number of galvanised streetlamps are very prominent in this view.



View 1c has been taken from the cycle path to the southeast of the roundabout looking northwest towards the landmark green metal bridge which carries the bridlepath into the green corridor along the former route of the S&DR to the village of Middleton St George. It is experienced by cyclists as well as pedestrians who park their vehicle in this location and then head off into the countryside to the far right/northeast. The blue sign in the background to the right/north shows the average minutes required for cyclists to reach Darlington town centre (20), Middleton St George (13), Sadberge (13) and Great Burdon (9) from here. A number of galvanised streetlamps are very prominent in this view.



View 2 has been taken from the former track bed of the S&DR which is now a public bridleway, looking southeast down the green corridor. It is experienced by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. South Burdon farmhouse is a focal point to the right/southeast, beyond the overgrown railway embankment. The two photos reveal the difference vegetation can make in only two months, with the top image taken in May and the bottom in March 2024, the latter showing the house far more prominently. Moreover, the farmhouse was also very prominent from the former level crossing just slightly further on in March, but completely concealed by leafy vegetation in May, which is why that viewpoint has not been included.



View 3 has been taken from the bridleway looking northwest with the focal point of a pipeline bridge overhead. It is experienced by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Again, the pipes had been much more prominent due to less foliage two months earlier in March. At that time, they also had been very visible from the opposite direction but were much concealed by vegetation in May, which is why that viewpoint has not been included. This photo is a good example of how enclosed and dark the green corridor can be once the vegetation growing on the sloped sides of the railway embankments has taken over.



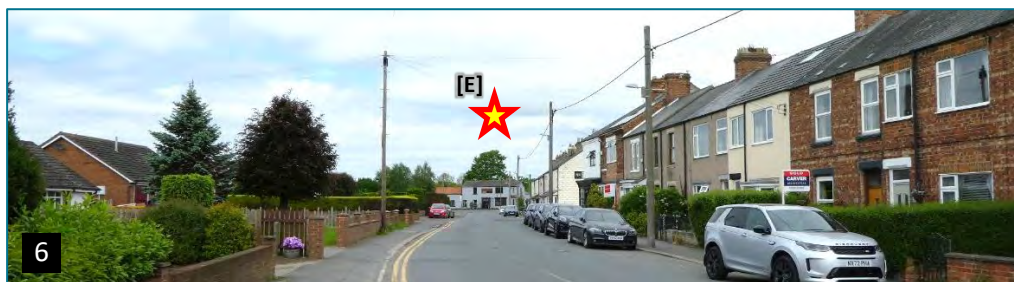
View 4 has been taken from the green corridor looking southeast towards the underpass carrying the A67, which cannot be seen but can be heard from here. It is experienced by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Again, the underpass had been much more prominent two months earlier in March. It also had been very visible from the opposite direction then but much concealed by leafy vegetation in May, which is why that viewpoint has not been included. In front of the underpass, there is a metal barrier, followed by a large rock and a public litter bin.



View 5 has been taken from the former level crossing of the S&DR with Sadberge Road (route of the former Roman road) looking southeast. It is experienced by all users of the public highway. In the foreground to the left/southeast are the remains of the [C] Waiting Shed built in Pease brick, behind which a recently constructed housing estate can be glimpsed. Down the green corridor, which at this point is only available for pedestrians and cyclists, are the remains of [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor walling within the trees. In the centre right/southeast of the photo are the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building, both also constructed in Pease brick and now in residential use. In the background to the far right/south is the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn which has recently been converted into a supermarket. In the far background beyond Sadberge Road is a row of modern bungalows facing Station Road. Wooden and metal telegraph poles (painted green) and a galvanised streetlamp are prominent in this view.



View 6 has been taken from Station Road looking north towards the historic Fighting Cocks road junction with the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn, now a supermarket, being a distant focal point. To the left/northwest is the row of modern bungalows mentioned above, fairly concealed behind established front gardens. To the right/northeast, nineteenth-century terraces, now much modified, enclose the road on this side. The rhythm created by their chimney stacks is an important feature. Wooden (and metal) telegraph poles are prominent in this view.



View 7a has been taken from about midpoint of Station Road looking northwest with the former [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, now in residential use, being a focal point to the centre left/west, set at an angle to the road. In front of it is the lush vegetation belonging to the Middleton St George Community Centre and Parish Council premises. To the right/north, nineteenth-century terraces, now much modified, enclose the road on that side. The rhythm created by their chimney stacks is an important feature. Wooden (and metal) telegraph poles are prominent in this view. A large number of wall-mounted satellite dishes faces onto the road.



View 7b has been taken from slightly further south along Station Road looking northwest with the former [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel still being a focal point in the distance, set at an angle to the road. In the foreground is the lush vegetation belonging to a domestic garden and the Middleton St George Community Centre and Parish Council premises. On the right/north side of the road, set back behind a well-cared-for front garden, are the [M] Cocks Memorial Homes, designed in an Arts and Crafts style, which seems unique for the assessment area. The entrance piers within the low brick boundary wall can be seen to the left/northwest of a mature tree in the centre of the photo. The clock tower (no longer the original one) is not much of a landmark as the building is not prominent from the road. Due to the large trees, the wooden (and metal) telegraph poles are slightly less obvious in this view.



View 8a has been taken from Middleton Lane looking northeast at the roundabout of the southern road junction (the Square) with the former [O] Killinghall Arms, now an Indian restaurant, being the focal point. Hipped roofs are notable in this location. The route to the left/north is Station Road and to the right/east is Yarm Road. The latter is lined with a row of terraced housing along its north side, originally built for workers of the [Q] Middleton Iron Works, which used to be located behind the houses. The

rhythm created by their chimney stacks is an important feature. A large number of satellite dishes on the terraces faces onto Yarm Road. At the right/southeast edge of the photo, the modern semi-detached houses which replaced Central Buildings (including former police station and lock-up) can be glimpsed. They accommodated the police sergeant and constable in the later-twentieth century but are now in private houses. A modern police hut is to the left/east of them, now presumably also in residential use. Metal (and wooden) telegraph poles are prominent in this view.



View 8b has been taken from Yarm Road looking northwest at the Square. Again, hipped roofs are notable in this location. Whilst the [N] Havelock Arms Hotel and former [O] Killinghall Arms can be spotted to the right/north facing onto Station Road, there are no focal points in this view. At the left/south edge of the photo, part of the semi-detached houses which replaced Central Buildings can be glimpsed behind a well-established front garden. The corner building in the centre has a convenience store on the ground floor. Metal (and wooden) telegraph poles are less prominent. A large number of wall-mounted satellite dishes faces onto the Square.



View 9a has been taken from near the other (eastern) end of Yarm Road within the village, looking southeast at the roundabout with the [S] Metal Railway Bridge over the old road to Yarm being the focal point to the centre right/southeast. To the left/east of the bridge, dense vegetation encloses the live railway line, merging with the green corridor in the location of the former Oaktree Junction beyond. In the background underneath the bridge, a recently constructed housing estate can be glimpsed, comprising buildings of locally untypical designs. Galvanised streetlamps are prominent in this view.



View 9b has been taken from Woolsington Drive looking south at the roundabout with the [S] Metal Railway Bridge over the old road to Yarm being the focal point to the centre right/south. To the left/east of it, dense vegetation encloses the live railway line, merging with the green corridor in the location of the former Oaktree Junction beyond. At the right/southwestern edge of the photo, part of a row of bungalows can be glimpsed behind a vertically boarded timber fence. Galvanised streetlamps are prominent in this view.



View 10 has been taken from Neasham Road looking east at the junction with Middleton Lane, on the southern fringe of the assessment area, which is largely within the existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area. 2 Middleton Lane with its prominent two gables fronting onto the junction is a focal point and can also be seen from further down the road. To the left/northeast is a modern housing block (outside the existing Conservation Area), its architectural design being out of character with the surrounding historical precedents. To the right/southeast are some of the detached villas built for prosperous families in commerce and industry in the late-nineteenth century. To the far right/south, the mature trees and gated boundary wall used to belong to the grounds of Thorntree House, which is contemporary with the comparatively more modest villas across the road. Whilst the mansion still survives, much of its former plot has been built over by modern houses. In this view metal telegraph poles with multiple lines of wire detract from the focal point.

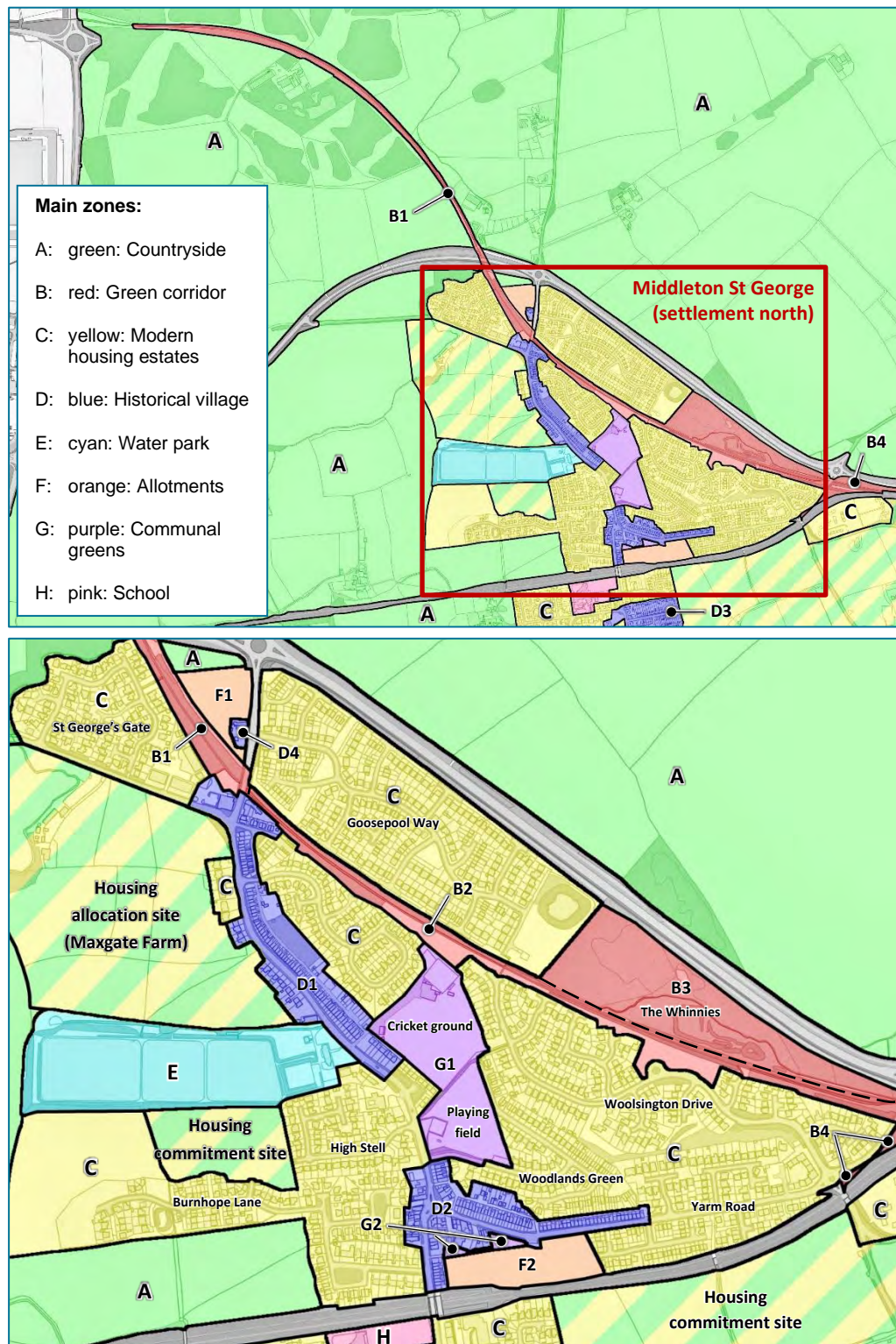


3.5 Character Analysis

This section provides some of the evidential (and historical) value of the assessment area at the time of review. It should be read in conjunction with the descriptions of the area's layout, planform and setting (see section 3.2), its historical development including structures of interest (see section 3.3) and the spatial analysis including key views (see section 3.4). Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document. Key views are referred to as (View 1, 2, ...) in the text below.

Despite the large size of the assessment area, only nine character zones were identified at the time of review, which are shown on the map above. These are

primarily based on development/use types and layouts which define their general appearance. Many zones (A, C, D, F, G) are made of a number of dispersed, separate areas, whilst others (B, E, H) are one continuous area. The A66, A67 and live railway line have not been allocated any zones, as these are transport corridors which create barriers within and between zones.



The character zones have been used to inform the proposed conservation area boundary (see chapter 5.0), based on their special architectural or historic interest.



The significance ratings provided below are within the Darlington Borough context and only concern elements that are still extant.

Zone A – green: Countryside. At the time of review, this was the largest zone in the assessment area. It comprised five separate areas of varying size and is of **moderate heritage interest**. This zone mainly consists of arable and pastoral farmland, including a few horse paddocks, and two nature reserves in the northwestern part of the assessment area. The land is the result of enclosure since the sixteenth century, which has established a patchwork of medium-size fields and dispersed farmstead. It also contains archaeological evidence of preceding medieval open field systems (ridge and furrow) and possible earlier structures. There is good recreational access with a network of public footpaths and bridleways crisscrossing the countryside, contributing to its public enjoyment. Zone A is not only experienced from within it but can also be seen from other zones – although increasingly less so due to new housing construction on (former) Zone A land, see below – the A66 and A67, and the live railway line.



Zone A: South Burdon Community Woodland viewed from the green corridor near its western end (Subzone B1), looking south. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

Lush vegetation is a key characteristic of this zone with trees (e.g. ash and horse chestnut), shrubs and hedges (hawthorn and blackthorn) often defining boundary lines, following watercourses or forming small woodlands such as the South Burdon Community Woodland. The latter comprises a predominantly native broadleaved forest with areas of managed grassland and open-water habitats¹⁷¹. Zone A provides habitats for a range of farmland bird species such as yellowhammers and linnets that will nest and forage in the hedgerows; skylarks and grey partridge that will nest on the ground in the longer vegetation; and species such as barn owl, kestrel and bats that will hunt across the fields and field margins for prey. Barn owls and kestrels will nest in veteran trees and agricultural buildings in this zone. The trees and buildings also offer roosting potential for bat species such as common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat. Mammal species recorded include badger, fox, rabbit, and hedgehog.

Whilst the countryside had a key role in the setting of the historic village, in particular to the west of it, it has been and is significantly being encroached upon by modern housing schemes (Zone C). Areas that are currently under construction or have been earmarked for housing under policy H 2 of the Local Plan (see chapter 2.0) are hatched in green and yellow on the map above.

¹⁷¹ Land Use Consultants 2015, pages 46 & 48



Zone A: Agricultural fields just north of live railway line with new houses along Burnhope Lane (Zone C) being constructed in the adjoining field behind. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Zone B – red: Green corridor. This is the longest character zone stretching from the northwestern to the southeastern corners of the assessment area. It is of **very high heritage interest**. Whilst Zone B is mainly linear in shape following the former track bed of the original route of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) which later became the Fighting Cocks branch line, it also includes the Whinnies nature reserve as well as the location of the former Oaktree Junction at the meeting point with the live line, both in the eastern end of the assessment area. The main character of this zone is being one continuous woodland, apart from the roads which cut across and create small breaks. There are no buildings but a few remnant structures and other features relating to former industrial sites, which were key to the historical development of the village, including the following surviving structures of interest:

- [A] Crane Base and Platform
- [B] DRDC Loading Dock
- [C] Waiting Shed (remains)
- [D] Coal Depot (remains)
- [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor (remains)

Zone B also includes the spoil heaps and bridge abutments which are associated with the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works site, see Subzone B3.

Although this character zone is one continuous area, it can, from a pedestrian's perspective, be subdivided into four 'subzones':

- B1. the green corridor to the northwest of Sadberge Road
- B2. the green corridor between Sadberge Road and Yarm Road
- B3. the Whinnies nature reserve
- B4. the green corridor and 'woodland' to the east of Yarm Road

Subzone B1. This stretch of the green corridor is of recreational value being fully accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It provides important connectivity not only for people but also wildlife, with direct links into Zones A, C and D. The track is enclosed by dense vegetation (**View 3**), which changes with the seasons, growing on the slopes of the railway cutting embankments to both sides. The predominant habitat comprises hawthorn and brambles, offering suitable nesting habitats for species such as blackcap and whitethroat warblers.



Subzone B1: *Top:* Concrete post halfway up the railway cutting embankment viewed from the former level crossing at South Burdon farmhouse (the latter in Zone A). *Middle:* View from the green corridor onto farmland to the southwest (Zone A), with historical drainage channel in the foreground, and a low embankment behind. *Bottom:* View from the green corridor onto the modern housing estate along St George's Gate (Zone C) behind an overgrown cutting embankment, looking southwest. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

The overall sense of enclosure is very prominent in this subzone's western stretch, where the railway bed lies in cutting. There are the remains of a historical ditch along the southwestern side within the corridor, which was designed to keep the line drained. A number of early stone sleeper blocks had been found discarded here before the rapidly growing undergrowth started to conceal them¹⁷². There is also a ditch at the top of the cutting on both sides (in places) which collected run off from the adjoining fields. Rabbits have been digging out cinders (not seen by the author) from the old track surface on the northern cutting embankment. In this part of the subzone, views into the adjoining countryside (Zone A) can only be had in a few

¹⁷² Chisholm, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 23 January

locations near South Burdon farmhouse (Zone A) (**View 2**), where there used to be a level railway crossing for the farm. Whilst no particular evidence survives, there is a later concrete post and base at the location of the former crossing which must have carried some sort of signal. Along this stretch there are a number of concrete bases left from the later use as a branch line which presumably supported signals¹⁷³.

When approaching the underpass carrying the noisy A67 the sense of enclosure diminishes, with the vegetation becoming less dense and the embankments lower or even disappearing, enabling views onto farmland and farm buildings, although this can also depend on the amount of foliage at the time of the year. The underpass marks the northern entrance into (or exit from) the village of Middleton St George (**View 4**) along the green corridor from the Darlington direction. Immediately to the north of it, a modern access lane comes off to the east of the bridleway. To the south of the underpass, recently constructed houses along St George's Gate (Zone C) can be glimpsed from a few locations. Along the northern side of the green corridor, allotments (Zone F) and a historical semi-detached house beyond (Zone D) can be spotted when there is no or little foliage. When approaching Sadberge Road, the remains of a [A] Crane Base and Platform and other small-scale industrial fragments can be seen in the undergrowth to the right/south. In the area leading to the former level crossing, the green corridor widens where it used to include various sidings branching off the main railway tracks as well as a signal box to the south of the line, adjacent to Sadberge Road. In this location, only the two phases of [D] Coal Depot walling survive. On the opposite/north side of the corridor is the former [B] DRDC Loading Dock.

Subzone B2. This stretch of the green corridor is of recreational value being fully accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. It provides important connectivity not only for people but also wildlife, with direct links into Zones C and D. There are thin strips of woodland and scrub which comprise ash, willow, sycamore, oak, hawthorn and blackthorn, providing a habitat for nesting birds and roosting bats. The understory supports species such as common toads, hedgehogs, and small mammals.

To the east of the level crossing, the corridor is narrow again as it used to accommodate the two tracks of the main line only. On a shallow embankment to the north are the remains of the Stockton-bound [C] Waiting Shed, with some of the new houses off Goosepool Way (Zone C) visible behind. On the opposite side, the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building (Zone D) are not part of this character zone as, although functionally directly linked to the railway corridor, they have physically been separated by a timber fence and long, modern garage now forming a barrier on top of a shallow embankment where the Darlington-bound platform used to be (**View 5**). In this location, the green corridor has benefited from improvement works carried out by residents, the Friends of the S&DR and a local artist (see section 3.6), re-establishing a sense of arrival at the former station. Carrying on eastwards, trees and shrubs line both sides, with the remains of [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor walling appearing on the southern railway cutting embankment. In the location where the sidings used to branch off into the [Q] Middleton Iron Works, the vegetation opens up exposing a grassed-over embankment with a greenspace behind, enabling glimpses onto the modern housing off Woolsington Drive (Zone C) where the iron works were located. Shortly further on, an access path branches off to the north giving a clear view onto the other end of the Goosepool Way housing estate. The Whinnies (Subzone B3) start after a greenspace including a pond to the east of the houses, providing a continuous dense woodland along the northern side

¹⁷³ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 17

of the corridor up to Yarm Road. Opposite the entrance into the nature reserve, to the southern side of the corridor, the vegetation begins to open up again, exposing a larger greenspace beyond the railway cutting embankment, which enables further views onto the modern housing off Woolsington Drive. Further east, the corridor becomes fully enclosed by vegetation again, with the former track bed of the railway now elevated on top of an embankment. Just before Yarm Road, it slopes down relatively steeply to meet the road, which had been cut into the historical railway embankment.



Subzone B2: *Top:* View along the green corridor looking east, with entrance into the Whinnies local nature reserve (subzone B3) to the left/north and the grassed-over railway cutting embankment to the right/south, with houses off Woolsington Drive (Zone C) in the far background (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024). *Bottom:* View from Yarm Road looking southwest at the embankment of the raised former track bed (as opposed to when the railway lay in cutting as seen on the photo above) with another entrance into the nature reserve to the far right/northwest. In this location, there used to be a railway bridge over Yarm Road. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

Subzone B3. The Whinnies is a five-hectare Local Nature Reserve (LNR) currently managed by Durham Wildlife Trust. It is of recreational value being fully accessible to pedestrians. There is a secluded atmosphere throughout the nature reserve, crisscrossed by earthen paths. Whilst most of this subzone is a dense woodland, there is a large clearing at its western end including a medium-size pond and timber benches. The bumpy topography of the woodland area to the east implies the presence of slag spoil heaps created by the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works, as depicted on the 1912-14 six-inch OS map. In this area, there are also drainage ditches as well as the remains of bridge abutments made of stone (not seen by the author due to heavy vegetation growth) associated with the transport of slag from the former iron works, as shown on the 1912-14 map. The bridge was locally called the Red Bridge, presumably because it was covered in red iron ore dust¹⁷⁴. Along the border with the former railway corridor (Subzone B2) is a chasm including some dead trees.

¹⁷⁴ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 30



Subzone B3: *Top:* View from the clearing looking east with pond and seating in the foreground and woodland behind. *Middle:* Woodland with bumpy topography created by the former iron works' slag spoil heaps. *Bottom:* Chasm with dead tree and green corridor (subzone B2) behind the fence line. (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

The LNR comprises a series of species-rich grasslands with small ponds, deciduous woodland, and scrub habitats. The meadow to the west is a species-rich calcareous grassland containing species such as quaking-grass, yellow-wort, birds-foot trefoil, agrimony, zig-zag clover, marsh thistle, and meadowsweet. It supports an assemblage of invertebrates including ringlet butterfly, dingy skipper, common and large blue butterfly, and many other butterfly species, as well as a host of other species of invertebrates. The grasslands to the east are dominated by wetter-tolerant species such as ragged robin, yellow flag iris, and devil's bit scabious. The woodland and scrub contain tree species such as elm, wych elm, elder, field maple, oaks, willows, and ash; and shrub species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, and dogwood. The

ponds onsite provide habitat for a range of species including smooth newt, common toad, water scorpions, dragonflies, and fish such as roach, perch, and European eels. There are also historical water vole records for the ponds and ditches onsite.

Subzone B4. This subzone has some recreational value as the path parallel to the live railway line is accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. The woodland to the north is part of the Whinnies LNR. The woodland to the south of the path is largely within the live railway corridor, fenced off to the public by metal mesh panels; it can also be seen from Yarm Road (Zone C) (**Views 9a & b**) and the live railway line (outside this character zone). Within this enclosure is the location of the former Oaktree Junction, where the former line of the S&DR and the 1887 railway line from Bank Top station met. The overall woodland character of this subzone feels less tranquil than in subzones B1-B3 due to the proximity of Yarm Road, the A67 and the live railway line.



Subzone B4: View looking east along the path between the A67 (to the left/north, out of view) and embanked former route of the S&DR on the right/south which is still part of the live railway corridor, hence fenced off. The approximate location of the former Oaktree Junction is in line with the righthand tree. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

Zone C – yellow: Modern housing estates. This character zone comprises the largest number of separate areas, eight in total at the time of assessment, which come in various shapes and sizes. It is only of **very limited heritage interest**. Its character is residential, with the houses being of non-local and ‘suburban’ designs, generally arranged along winding cul-de-sacs. The buildings are often two storeys high, although there are also bungalows and a few houses comprising three storeys. Some of the housing estates were built onto the former industrial sites that had been set up following the advent of the railway, most notably the [Q] Middleton Iron Works, but no historical evidence seems to survive in these areas. Others were built onto greenfield sites, formerly belonging to Zone A. Due to the inward-looking nature of these areas, the surrounding character zones often contribute only little to their setting. One exception would be the modern houses that face onto Station Road and Yarm Road in the vicinity of roadside, traditional brick terracing (Zone D), although the new designs generally do not harmonise with the historical precedents.

This zone contains limited ecology interest. However, the urban setting does offer potential for species such as hedgehog, which will use gardens for foraging and commuting. The older buildings may offer roosting potential for bats such as common and soprano pipistrelle, as well as nesting opportunities for swift, starlings, house sparrows, house martins, and swallows. The vegetated gardens offer pollinating plants for bees, butterflies and moths, and hover flies.



Zone C: *Top:* Some of the more typical houses, with their design not being location specific but to a good standard. *Bottom:* A modern attempt of housing design which is visually less successful. (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Zone D – blue: Historical village. This zone consists of four separate areas of various shapes and sizes and is of **medium-to-high heritage interest**. Its general character comprises traditional buildings, often in the form of terraced housing built in red brick, densely lining and facing onto the main roads. Subzones D1 and D2 form the historical cores of the village of Middleton St George and include the largest number of surviving structures of interest of any of the character zones:

- [E] Fighting Cocks Inn
- [F] Station Master’s House and Station Building
- [H] The Lyric
- [I] Undenominational Mission Hall
- [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel
- [M] Cocks Memorial Homes
- [N] Havelock Arms Hotel
- [O] Killinghall Arms
- [P] Co-op and Stable
- [Q] Middleton Iron Works (remains)

Zone D can be subdivided into the following subzones:

- D1. Fighting Cocks road junction and Station Road
- D2. The Square and Yarm Road
- D3. Middleton Lane and Chapel Street (this subzone is partly within the existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area)
- D4. 1 & 2 Orient Villas, Sadberge Road

This character zone has a similar (limited) ecological interest as Zone C (modern housing estates). The main difference is that subzone D1 links the water park (Zone E) to the green corridor (Zone B). However, as it is poorly vegetated it does not provide an effective wildlife corridor.

Subzone D1. In this key location where the 1825 S&DR crossed the line of the Roman Road (**View 5**), the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn is not only the oldest surviving building in the village but also a long-distance focal point at the historic Fighting Cocks road junction (**View 6**), where the development of this settlement first started. It forms a group with the former [F] Station Master’s House and Station Building on the opposite side of the road, and together they contribute significantly to the setting of the former railway corridor (Zone B) in this location. Along Haxby Road, a cul-de-sac to the east of the junction, traditionally constructed semi-detached brick houses of possible 1930s date continue the historical layout by lining the road.



Subzone D1: *Top left:* Harpers Terrace faced in cast stone, with shallow front gardens. Later canopies spanning between bay windows cut into and obscure the decorative string courses at Nos. 1-4. Whilst the window frames have been changed to different designs, the opening pattern has been well preserved. The decorative lintel design to Nos. 1 and 2 (right) can also be found on window openings to the rear of Station Terrace (Photo © Gaby Rose, February 2025). *Top right:* Entrance pier with carved stone cockerel, which was brought here from Low Middleton Hall¹⁷⁵, and two commemoration plaques on the gable wall in the background, [M] Cocks Memorial Homes. *Middle:* The long Station Terrace with three well preserved houses, although window frames have been changed to different designs. The unit on the left, which would have looked the same, has been changed significantly, like many other houses in this row (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024). *Bottom:* Back lane to rear of Station Terrace with overgrown former allotment gardens to the left/east. (Photo © Gaby Rose, February 2025)

To the south of the junction, traditional terraces enclose the winding Station Road along its eastern side. The northern-most row, called Harpers Terrace, which is first

¹⁷⁵ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

shown on the 1913 OS map, appears, unusually, to be faced in cast/artificial stone which has been painted white, with the original roadside opening pattern seemingly intact. It features later canopies spanning between the ground-floor bay windows. Many of the red brick houses of the next, much longer Station Terrace had their original openings changed in size and/or are now rendered. Behind this terrace, adjoining the back lane, is a large, enclosed greenspace which used to be allotment gardens shown on the 1939 map. It is currently very overgrown but still full of fruit trees and wildlife¹⁷⁶. Further south are various gable-fronted properties including the former [I] Undenominational Mission Hall and [H] the Lyric which face onto the spine road through the village. Next, there is another terrace, called Water View, with more generous front gardens than the preceding properties, and again with canopies spanning between the bay windows on some of the houses. Despite the many changes to the buildings, historic features can still be found, such as prominent chimney stacks, ornate eaves detailing, shaped lintels and traditional boundary treatments.



Water View, the southern terrace, of which parts have been rendered. There is a continuous ground-floor canopy and the original opening pattern has been preserved. The front garden in the middle has an unusual stone boundary wall with metal railings and distinct carved piers, which are in poor condition. Note the eaves detailing on the right-hand, earlier house. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

To the south of the terraced houses, set back from the road behind a generous front garden including mature trees, are the [M] Cocks Memorial Homes. They are designed in an Arts and Craft style, which seems unique for the assessment area. The houses have modern rear extensions and appear to be well preserved. On the opposite (west) side of Station Road, semi-detached houses of possible 1930s date behind front gardens have been included in this zone as they contribute to the enclosure of space. Gaps between the buildings still enable views into the countryside, although for not much longer, as construction on the Maxgate Farm housing site behind has started. To the south, the former [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, with round-arched openings, is set at an angle to the road, providing another long-distance focal point (**Views 7a & b**).

Subzone D2. This area centres around the Square (**Views 8a & b**), the southern road junction along the spine route through the village, which includes a roundabout. Development started here in the second half of the nineteenth century to provide workers of the [Q] Middleton Iron Works with housing and amenity facilities. Today a

¹⁷⁶ Lombard-Earl, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 31 January

short section of boundary walling to the east of Killinghall Row is all that survives of the former iron works, which were crucial to the historical development of the village. Killinghall Row faces directly onto the pavement along Yarm Road and has a stepped roofscape reflecting the sloping topography. Many of the houses have undergone significant changes with regards to their openings and/or received a modern render, although the rhythm created by the chimney stacks has largely survived. The next building row to the north (New Row and Pemberton Terrace) is quite similar but set back behind generous front gardens. Only one house stands out as positive with its original opening pattern intact and brick façade on display.



Subzone D2: *Top left:* Two well-preserved houses at Killinghall Row, the first terrace built for the iron workers, which face directly onto the pavement. *Top right:* Former stationmaster's house for Dinsdale Station at the south end of Belle Vue Terrace (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024). *Bottom:* Harts Buildings at the southern end of Station Road with polychromatic brickwork. Whilst Nos. 1-4 appear to be built around the same time, there is a clear change in construction between Nos. 2 and 3, including different eaves and window surround designs, and the use of a different type of red brick. The once continuous roof surface has now been broken up by using different materials. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Around the Square, individual buildings are grouped more organically. The former [O] Killinghall Arms has been extended with an additional unit to either side under one roof. The [N] Havelock Arms Hotel across the road still reads as a detached building. On the east side of Station Road is a short red brick terrace called Harts Buildings behind front gardens. Detailing in Pease brick is of interest and there are also canopies spanning from the ground-floor bay windows, as already seen further up the street. Whilst Nos. 1-4 were constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century, the northern-most property (No. 5) was built by Hadleys, the company that occupied the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works site from 1960 to 2003¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁷ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

Down Middleton Lane is the former [P] Co-op and Stable with some modern buildings to the opposite side of the road, which generally fit in well. Bellevue Court to the south of the former Co-op appears less successful. Following a gap, there is a traditional row called Belle Vue Terrace set back from the road behind a shallow front garden. A distinctly different house is attached to the southern end of this row, which was built as a stationmaster's house for Dinsdale Station¹⁷⁸. Again, there have been the typical alterations to individual properties, although the continuous decorative eaves brick band and rhythm created by the chimneys remain.

Subzone D3. This fragment of an area to the south of Dinsdale Station was first developed in the second half of the nineteenth century with better-class housing for prosperous families in commerce and industry (**View 10**), who were not constrained to live in close proximity to the [Q] Middleton Iron Works. At the time of assessment, the plots along Middleton Lane and Thorntree House were within the Middleton One Row Conservation Area.

Subzone D4. This small, isolated plot comprises a semi-detached house along Sadberge Road, which was built in the second half of the nineteenth century. Nellie Hawkins who worked in the signal box during the war lived in one of them¹⁷⁹. The building makes a strong contribution along this stretch of the road.



Subzone D4: Semidetached house, surrounded by allotments (Zone F) and lush roadside vegetation. It is unusual that bay windows are on the gable end, although this seems to be the main elevation. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Zone E – cyan: Water park. This single area comprises the water park, including boating and fishing ponds, a nature trail and the premises of the Middleton St George Community Centre and Parish Council. The former reservoirs, in particular the outdoor sports court, are of **high heritage interest** being directly linked to the nineteenth-century growth of the Teesside towns and industries and the Darlington Waterworks at Tees Cottage and providing the village with early piped water. Most of the site is accessible to the public and of high recreational/communal value. It also contributes to the setting of the adjoining character zones (A, A/C, C and D).

Zone E includes the following surviving structures of interest:

- [K] Board Room & Entrance Gate
- [L] Pumping Station

¹⁷⁸ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

¹⁷⁹ Hugill, N. 2023. Email to Peter Bainbridge, 15 November

Both the former [L] Pumping Station and [K] Board Room are set back at an angle to Station Road and align with the orientation of the [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in the adjoining plot (Zone D). Whilst the former is an unusual modernist building for Middleton St George and visible from the main road, the latter is traditionally designed and largely concealed by lush vegetation, although its curved [K] Entrance Gate provides a notable roadside presence. The most dominant feature in this zone is the embanked three former reservoirs which now form the water park. They have trees growing on their embankments as well as a public footpath on top and are quite visible from the surroundings. The ongoing construction of the housing estates (Zone C) around Burnhope Lane (to the south) and Maxgate Farm (to the north) is starting to have a negative impact on the setting of this recreational landscape, with the new housing being visible from the elevated water park, spoiling what were until recently natural surroundings (Zone A) (see section 4.1).

The ponds are vegetated with flag iris and bulrush to the borders, and the angling ponds are stocked with species such as carp, perch, and roach. They support water birds such as mallard, moorhen, and coot, with herons using the ponds for hunting. Occasional otters use the reservoir within their commuting route through the area. The reservoirs also support foraging Daubenton's bats on an evening, which catch insects over the water. The areas around the basins comprise amenity grassland and woodland. The former is predominant to the south and adjacent to the car parking areas. Trees present within the latter include ash, rowan, field maple, elm, willow, crab apple, and cherry. The trees are mature and will support a wide range of nesting birds as well as roosting bats.



Zone E: *Top:* View along the southern embankment of the former reservoirs which form the water park, looking east. *Bottom:* Former original reservoir turned into a sports court, looking northeast, with Middleton St George Community Centre in the background and metal artwork in the foreground. (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

To the northwest and west at the bottom of the embanked water park, there is a small woodland including a nature trail. From here, there are views and glimpses north as well as footpaths into what was until recently pasture and is now being

developed into a large housing estate (Maxgate Farm). The nature trail includes various metal artworks, way markers, interpretation boards, benches and old reservoir walling (see section 4.1), which add interest to Zone E.

The woodland contains ground cover which support an assemblage of invertebrates, small mammals, amphibians, and larger mammals such as roe deer. It also contains plant species which are indicative of ancient woodland, such as dogs' mercury, red campion, wood avens, herb-robert, guelder rose, wood sedge, and hairy brome. These indicators demonstrate that the woodland has been present for a long time and is in generally good condition. Bird species observed included chiffchaff, blackcap, bullfinch, chaffinch, goldfinch, robin, and wren.



Zone E: Small woodland with nature trail including a bench and view into the landscape prior to construction start of the Maxgate Farm housing estate (left) and an old brick wall boundary with stone copings to the bottom of the western reservoir embankment (right). (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

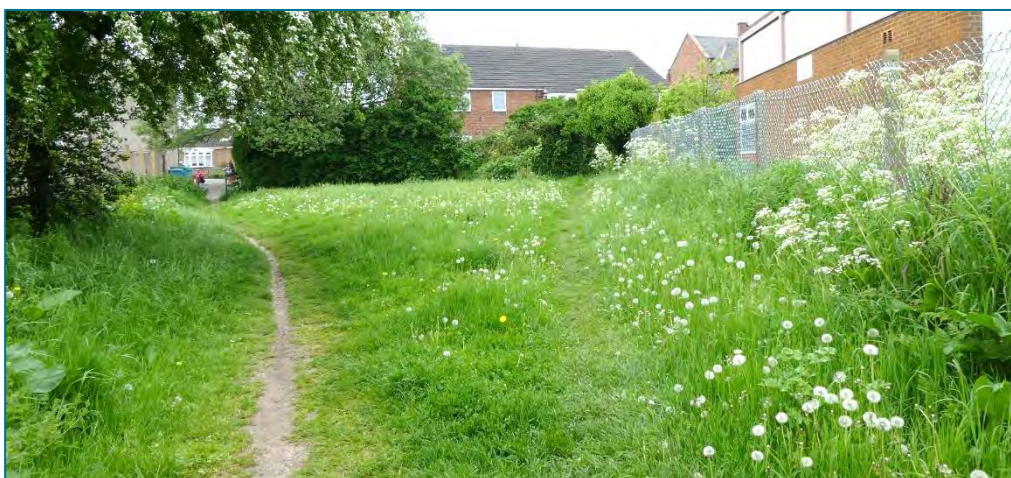
Zone F – orange: Allotments. This zone is made of two separate areas and is of **medium heritage interest**. The allotment gardens were created to help feed families through home food production during the depression and during the rationing years of the Second World War. This zone is very private with public views much concealed by dense vegetation, which contributes to the setting of Zones B, C, D and G.



Zone F: Allotment gardens to the south of Yarm Road, looking south from the triangular greenspace in Zone G. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Allotments can offer some biodiversity interest, and often function as green corridors and habitats for wildlife. The northernmost allotments along Sadberge Road (F1) are bounded by mature hawthorn and elder hedgerows with trees such as ash within the hedgerows. The southernmost allotment along Killinghall Row (F2) contains hedgerows which are more heavily managed and shorter in height and width but would still offer some limited interest from birds and other wildlife. The boundary hedges and trees offer nest habitat for birds such as chaffinch, goldfinch, blackbird, and dunnoek; as well as offering foraging and pollinating opportunities. The linear hedgerows also create green corridors for hedgehogs to shelter and commute, and for bats such as whiskered bat to commute and forage along.

Zone G – purple: Communal greens. This zone comprises various open greenspaces and is of **medium heritage interest**. It includes the cricket ground and playing field (G1) which adjoin and contain some mature trees to the borders. The latter is a roughly triangular shaped field. Its eastern side used to be the boundary to the [Q] Middleton Iron Works and the path along its northwestern side represents the line of a former access route from the spine road to the iron works. In addition, there are two much smaller triangular public spaces (G2) to the south and southeast of the Square, which are first shown on the 1912-14 OS map. They are connected by a narrow earthen footpath enclosed by tall hedges to either side. Most of this zone is accessible to the public and of high recreational/communal value.



Zone G: *Top:* Playing field to the left/southeast with a line of mature trees along the path next to the adjoining cricket ground on the right/northwest, behind a tall metal fence. *Middle:* Greenspace to the southeast of the Square, with footpath to the left/west leading to a smaller triangular greenspace, looking west. *Bottom:* Smaller greenspace to the south of the Square, also looking west. (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

This zone predominantly consists of areas of amenity grassland, with trees and hedges to the borders. The grassland comprises typical managed grassland species such as perennial rye grass, red fescue, cockfoot, and Yorkshire fog. Other plant species within the grassland are daisy, creeping buttercup, self-heal, white clover, and dandelions. Trees present to the borders of the grassland include ash, poplar, copper beech, black locust, crab apple, elm, willow and black oak. The hedges to the borders are predominantly hawthorn. Due to the heavily managed nature of the grassland, it offers little interest to pollinators but may provide some foraging opportunities to hedgehogs. The trees and hedgerows offer more potential, with some fruiting and flowering trees providing foraging and pollination interest to a range of species.

Zone H – pink: School. This is one single area which adjoins the live railway line to the south. It comprises the premises of the St George’s Church of England Primary School including a grassed playing field to the northeast, the Women’s Institute and scouts’ building. It is of **low heritage interest**. The dwarf boundary wall is possibly the sole surviving remnant of the 1911 school. Prior to that, this zone was part of a field along the line of the former Roman Road, a line which has been retained in the current school’s western boundary. The three existing buildings are of very different architectural styles, with the large modern school complex including curved elements, the institute being a traditional timber-boarded ‘hut’, and the more recently constructed scouts’ building having an unconventional, functional appearance. None of them harmonise together or with the surrounding buildings. Overall, this is not really a proper character zone but an assemblage of structures which do not belong into any of the adjoining zones (C and D). The ecological value of this area is similar to Zone G (communal greens).



Zone H: *Top:* St George’s Church of England Primary School with historical dwarf boundary wall in the foreground, which would have been topped by vertical metal railings. *Bottom:* Women’s Institute and new scouts’ building (right). (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

3.6 Value Attributed by the Local Community and Other Stakeholders

Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

During the public consultation period, people from inside and outside the assessment area responded that they most value the area's (see appendix 2):

- Nature (reserves), trees, greenspaces and surrounding countryside
- Historical structures/features/assets
- Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR)/Fighting Cocks Station and former railway corridor
- History including agricultural and industrial heritage, and its undeniable links to the S&DR
- Great community and Middleton St George being a lovely place to live
- Cricket Club, water park, the [M] Havelock Arms and village centre
- Excellent transport links

Middleton St George is a pleasant village and desirable place to live, hence its continuing significant growth in housing. It is well connected by automobile (A67), train (Dinsdale Station) and plane (Teesside Airport to the east outside the assessment area) and has good access links into the countryside and nature reserves via public foot-, bridle- and cycle paths (see section 3.2). The assessment area includes various amenities for residents and visitors such as a number of shops, a post office, a pub (the [M] Havelock Arms), a restaurant (the former [O] Killinghall Arms), cafes, takeaways, a pharmacy, a veterinary practice, a primary school and other services, as well as leisure facilities including a playing field, cricket club, history group, women's institute, water park including model boat and fishing clubs, and scouts. In the past, there were also two garages/petrol stations in the village¹⁸⁰. At the water park, the Community Centre (former [L] Pumping Station) is a thriving hub, managed by trustees as a charitable body. The trustees, together with a growing membership, form the Middleton St George Community Association and are responsible for the maintenance of the buildings and the activities provided by multiple hirers for the benefit of all residents of the village and beyond¹⁸¹.

At the time of consultation (see section 1.3), Middleton St George was a well-to-do place with houses prices being at an average of £250,047 over the last year (Darlington, by comparison, was £163,307). The majority of sales were detached properties selling for an average price of £323,700 (by comparison, the majority of sales in Darlington were semi-detached houses at an average price of £169,130¹⁸²; in County Durham, the majority of sales during the last year were terraced properties at an average price of £109,762¹⁸³). Moreover, sold prices in Middleton St. George over the last year were 5% up on the previous year and 12% down on the 2022 peak of £283,019¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸⁰ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

¹⁸¹ <https://msgcommunitycentre.co.uk/about-us/our-history/>

¹⁸² <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/darlington.html>

¹⁸³ <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices-in-County-Durham.html>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/middleton-st-george.html>

The communal value of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) as a whole, including the former section that goes through the assessment area, is of considerable significance to the heritage sector locally, nationally and internationally, and there is a growing interest in early railway infrastructure from the wider public. Those who appreciate or actively promote it are in effect an international community, including the following regional groups¹⁸⁵:

- Darlington Model Railway Club
- Darlington Railway Museum Trust
- Darlington Railway Preservation Society
- Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway
- the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust
- the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Society
- the North Eastern Railway Association

In addition, the parish has two local groups, the **Middleton St George Local History Group** and **Middletons in Bloom**, who deserve recognition for their interest in and work on the former S&DR line and elsewhere¹⁸⁶. The Local History Group former was at first informally set up in 2003 with the desire to bring people in the village together in a social setting and to use the former [L] Pumping Station, which at that time had very nearly been closed down. They also wanted to try to give residents more knowledge of the village and the surrounding area, hoping that they would contribute their memories or do some documentary research into the local history. Middletons in Bloom is a volunteer-led group that works with other organisations and businesses across the community entering the Northumbria in Bloom each year, which is a campaign that recognises, encourages and rewards community groups who work together to transform their village, town or city through gardening, environmental awareness and community support. They also create a month-by-month calendar annually with photos of nature imagery (e.g. wildlife, flowers, trees, scenery and gardens) taken by residents.

In 2017, Historic England accepted the whole 26-mile route of the former S&DR as a **Heritage Action Zone** (HAZ), following an application by the Stockton & Darlington Railway Heritage Board, which included Darlington Borough Council. The overall HAZ initiative is working with local people and partners to breathe new life into places that are rich in heritage, to unlock their potential and make them more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors. Launched in May 2018 and running for five years, the S&DR HAZ aimed to better manage, preserve and utilise heritage assets with a view to stimulating economic growth through various projects in the build-up to the railway's bicentenary in 2025¹⁸⁷ (see below). HAZ programme outputs which directly affect Middleton St George include improvement works to the level crossing and the provision of information and interpretation (Projects 6 and 13 of the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub (see section 4.3)).

In early 2020, the Parish Council and Friends of the S&DR responded to local interest by establishing the **Middleton St George S&DR Heritage Steering Group** with the mission of delivering the **Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub**. This involves a number of projects to enhance the historic station site. The following tasks have commenced or already been completed¹⁸⁸:

¹⁸⁵ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2013, pages 33-34

¹⁸⁶ Chisholm, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 23 January

¹⁸⁷ Knight 2019, page 4

¹⁸⁸ Chisholm (2022)



New Fighting Cocks name board (project 2b) fixed to the left/southeast of the mural (project 4) on the recently installed fence (project 2a), which is of a railway station design. The mural has since been slightly amended with the addition of a carriage. Also note the colourful flower border on the embankment created by the owner of the former [F] Station Building. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

- Project 1 'Waiting Shed': Work on the consolidation of the remains of the [C] Waiting Shed started in July 2024. The Friends of the S&DR provided funding for stone copings and labour to carry out the works. One of the members did the brick laying and supplied lime mortar. Later, an information board and seating will be installed, and the area will be suitably landscaped and made wheelchair accessible.
- Project 2a 'Railway Fence': The current owner of the former [F] Station Building replaced some 25 metres of the previous domestic-style boundary fence with a traditional North Eastern Railway station type with diagonal palings facing the former track. The Friends of the S&DR contributed towards the cost of the new fence.
- Project 2b 'Station Name Board': Friends of the S&DR member Peter Bainbridge crafted a traditionally designed Fighting Cocks board in timber and fixed it onto the new fence in April 2024.
- Project 3 'Track Installation': Old concrete railway sleepers have been installed in front of the former [B] DRDC Loading Dock.
- Project 4 'Railway Mural': The current owner of the former [F] Station Building kindly permitted the painting of a mural on their garage facing the former track. Artist Lewis Hobson of Durham Spray Paints depicted the old station with a train. The costs of the spray paints (£1,500) received a 50% grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, whilst the other half was paid for by the Friends of the S&DR. At the end of April 2024, local school children attended the painting of the mural. They were also allowed to sow wildflowers on a prepared patch of soil between the garage and Sadberge Road. The official unveiling of the mural was on 4 May 2024, alongside activities for children.
- Project 7 'Coal Depot': Vegetation clearance by volunteers has exposed the (brick and) stone retaining boundary wall of the former [D] Coal Depot. Outstanding works include an archaeological investigation of the walling. Visible remains will be secured/made

good and the area properly landscaped, with interpretation. The proposed picnic table area could become a public garden.

- Project 8 'Loading Dock Wall': Vegetation and earth build up were removed by volunteers to bring the former [B] DRDC Loading Dock better into view and allow the wall to be inspected and repaired as necessary.
- Project 16 'Conservation Volunteers': A team of volunteers has been established by the Friends of the S&DR who clear vegetation and recover bricks and other re-useable materials. They meet on a Friday every two weeks to carry out maintenance works at Fighting Cocks.
- Project 17 'Conservation Area': An investigation to create a new conservation area has been carried out by conservation officers at Darlington Borough Council and, previously, Durham County Council.

In April 2020, the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn was listed as an Asset of Community Value with Darlington Borough Council, giving the local community an increased chance to buy the asset when it came up for sale, which in this case however did not happen. The former inn was removed from the list in November 2021 following relevant disposal (transfer of the freehold)¹⁸⁹.

In 2021, the **Beamish Museum**, an open-air museum to the south of Newcastle-upon-Tyne which brings the history of the Northeast of England to life, recreated Middleton St George's 1950s fish and chip shop which used to adjoin the [O] Killinghall Arms to the left/north. The building was constructed within the museum's 1950s Town as part of the Remaking Beamish project, grant aided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and forms the end property of a row with three other building replicas from elsewhere in the Northeast. The community of Middleton St George had been involved during the creation of the project¹⁹⁰. Today, the premises of the original fish and chip shop are occupied by a takeaway.

For 2025, various activities are being planned for the **Bicentenary of the S&DR** by the local community. There will be a week full of events in Middleton St George from 14 to 22 June 2025, including an exhibition of railway-related photographs at the Women's Institute, a railway-related song organised by St. George's CE Academy, bunting and yarn bombing to decorate the village, and many other activities. The Summer Fair in August and Middletons in Bloom (see above) will also have railway-related themes in 2025. Moreover, there is a proposal for a permanent heritage trail identifying locations of historical interest (not just railway related)¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁹ <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/communities/assets-of-community-value>

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.beamish.org.uk/news/chip-in-with-beamishs-1950s-town-at-middleton-st-george-event/>

¹⁹¹ <https://www.sdr1825.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/MSG-Stockton-and-Darlington-Railway-Bicentenary-Organising-Group-Report-to-Friends-03.10.2024.pdf>

4.0 Condition, Threats and Opportunities

This chapter is intended to inform future management plans if a conservation area was to be designated. These would be subject to public consultation.

4.1 Condition and Current Issues

This section should be read in conjunction with the historical development of the assessment area (see section 3.3), its spatial analysis (see section 3.4), character analysis (see section 3.5) and the value attributed by the community and other stakeholders (see section 3.6), which provide further information or examples on most of the issues raised below.

During the public consultation period, people from inside and outside the assessment area voiced concerns about (see appendix 2):

- Too much and unsuitable new housing
- Lack of new infrastructure/amenities improvements following housing expansions, increase in traffic and parking issues
- Loss of village 'feel' and community spirit
- Loss of the village's heritage and greenspaces
- Insensitive 'upgrading' of old properties by landlords
- There being very limited resources for children of school age or late teens to do activities
- Vegetation removal and vandalism at the water park

At the time of review, the assessment area was overall in good condition in terms of its maintenance status. There were, however, a number of issues which have degraded the built/historical/natural environment:

Until quite recently, the western parish boundary coincided with the line of the former **Roman Road**, following field boundaries and what is now Sadberge Road. Due to the relentless expansion of the village, this ancient parish line was abandoned and a new line drawn further west in 2016. In addition, the new housing estate off Burnhope Lane, which is currently under construction, cuts across the line of Cade's Road, diluting its readability.

It is very obvious that **modern housing schemes** have been swallowing up the historical village. Initially, these were built on the old industrial sites, regrettably also leading to the demolition of the last surviving buildings of the Middleton Iron Works, including the blowing engine house¹⁹². With the old industrial sites now built over, new housing is being provided in the adjacent countryside to the west which used to form the setting of the village until very recently, also resulting in the loss of existing trees, hedgerows and wildlife habitat. Public footpaths which used to lead through agricultural fields now go through housing estates, taking away from their recreational value. Overall, Middleton St George is increasingly being developed into a suburban sprawl, which is not how the place set out to be (linear village). The designs and layouts of the new residences do not harmonise with the higher-density old houses (terraces) which face onto the main roads. The new buildings employ a

¹⁹² <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/7007010.losing-last-reminders-ironworks-industry/>

generic architectural language which is not location-specific to Middleton St George and are loosely arranged around long, winding cul-de-sacs with multiple short cul-de-sacs branching off. Such layouts can lead to problems like emergency accessibility and crime, the latter especially presenting opportunities where escape routes exist, such as footpaths leading from the estates¹⁹³. In addition, residents have mentioned traffic and car parking problems arising from the increase in housing and lack of appropriate infrastructure improvements (see appendix 2). Finally, it needs to be mentioned that the naming of the streets for such new developments never acknowledges the industrial antecedents of Middleton St George¹⁹⁴.

When the railway line was operational, there were no or only a few trees besides it. Today, excessive vegetation growth within the **green corridor** is a maintenance issue. There is a need to keep the path clear for public access and enjoyment, including key views, balanced against the need to protect wildlife habitats and ecology value. The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway carry out regular trimming and weeding works in the corridor at the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub. Their volunteers often find it 'impossible' to keep on top of things due to the lack of sufficient manpower, larger-scale equipment and seasonal restrictions to carry out works. However, recent cooperation between the Friends and Darlington Borough Council officers has resulted in successful clearance along the path¹⁹⁵. The Friends own a small patch of land to the north of the former inn (location of former coal depot), whilst the remainder of the corridor is owned by the Council.



View from northern embankment across the western-most basin of the water park, with new housing estate visible in the background. The buildings are more prominent when there is no direct blinding sunlight. (Photo © Gaby Rose, February 2025)

In the beginning of 2021, there was upheaval amongst residents about the removal of vegetation from the southern embankment of the three former reservoirs which now form the **water park**¹⁹⁶, opening up the view onto a large new housing scheme under construction. The parish council had commissioned a Reservoir Engineer to inspect the structural stability of the embankments in 2019, due to the imminent construction of the houses in the adjoining field. The survey report contained a strong recommendation for the clearance of all vegetation from the top to the

¹⁹³ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004) pages 20 & 88

¹⁹⁴ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

¹⁹⁵ Chisholm, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 23 January

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/19087108.fury-hedges-removed-middleton-st-georges-water-park/>

bottom of the southern bank and its replacement with grass, as this would enable easier visual monitoring of the bank with regard to any dam leakages which might occur¹⁹⁷. The most recent engineer's report of 2023 reiterates that *there should be no trees, coarse vegetation (brambles/shrubs etc) and that the embankments have good grass cover to resist erosion by rainfall, animals, people etc and in the extreme to protect the embankment should the reservoirs overflow*¹⁹⁸. Although there were originally no trees on the reservoir embankments, the site has become a nature spot of communal value, which is now being surrounded by new housing estates along its northern and southern sides. Whilst dense vegetation would help conceal unsightly views and protect wildlife habitats and tranquillity, it will also need to be balanced against potential risks to public health and safety.

Another issue at the water park concerns an old reservoirs boundary wall along the bottom of the western embankment, which is accessible from the nature trail. It is built in red brick and has sandstone capping (see section 3.5/E). Whilst there is some structural movement evident, probably due to pressures from the sloping embankment behind, the main concern is acts of vandalism that have resulted in the destruction of a long stretch of the walling¹⁹⁹. A quantity of discarded brick and stone, along with rubbish, can be found near the destroyed section, which includes the wall's former southern terminal pillar. In contrast, a curved brick wall at the western corner of the northern embankment survives in good condition.



Top: End section and terminal pier (right) of former reservoir embankment walling that has been destroyed by vandals. Bottom: Discarded rubbish, bricks and stone cappings opposite the dismantled walling. (Photos © Gaby Rose, February 2025)

¹⁹⁷ <https://middleton-st-george.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Extraordinary-Parish-Council-Meeting-15.02.2021-Signed-Minutes.pdf>

¹⁹⁸ Dams & Reservoirs Ltd (2023) page 10

¹⁹⁹ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

Inside the village, **traditional buildings** have suffered the following harmful interventions, with those in bold having had the most detrimental impact:

- Loss of historical features
- Lowering of original chimney stacks
- Introduction of new roofing materials (including on existing canopies), roof lights and solar PV panels on road-facing elevations
- Plastic rainwater goods, especially those in a light colour
- **Change of original opening patterns including changes to opening sizes/proportions** and introduction of Juliet balcony
- **Change of original window frame layouts**
- **Non-traditional window and door replacements**, often using off-the-shelf uPVC products
- **Use of paint/render, including poorly chosen colours, on facing brick or stonework**
- **Use of incompatible building materials on external solid walling**, such as cement pointing and modern renders and paints, which have a high risk of causing long-term damp problems resulting in cold, unhealthy interiors
- Modern canopy and porch designs
- Unsympathetic rear extensions including flat roofs



Extensions to rear of traditional terrace with flat roofs, modern renders and inappropriate window proportions, viewed from public footpath. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

The **public realm** within the village includes the following detractors which have a negative impact on the historical environment:

- Loss of historical front gardens
- Change of original boundary treatments with modern designs
- Large number of wall-mounted satellite dishes facing the main roads
- Prominent wooden and metal telegraph poles with overhead wires
- Unsympathetic galvanised streetlights and traffic/bus-stop sign posts
- Lack of coordination in the design of lighting columns and other street furniture
- Utilitarian bus shelter (although painted to blend in) squeezed onto a narrow stretch of pavement in front of the former methodist chapel
- Plastic bollards and advertisement on the forecourt of the former inn
- Blistered and tarmacked pavements, the latter sometimes poorly patched
- Untidy back lanes



Back lane behind one of the traditional terraces with dumped rubbish. Saplings and other vegetation taking hold on the last remnant of the former iron works site. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

4.2 Threats and Potential Future Issues

During the public consultation period, people from inside and outside the assessment area identified the following threats to Middleton St George (see appendix 2):

- New housing and its impact on historical assets, nature/trees/greenspaces/habitats/farmland and tranquillity
- New housing designs
- New housing being unaffordable for first-time buyers, possibly forcing people born and raised in the village to leave
- Closure of shops and businesses
- Middleton St George losing its identity as a village and becoming a small town with few extra amenities
- Possible future loss of the water park

One of the main threats to the historical village is the **continued housing expansion**. Landowners may be enticed to sell their agricultural fields, especially if it yields a better profit than farming them. In particular, the countryside to the west of the settlement and the gap between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row should be (have been) retained as open fields due to their strong contribution as setting and readability of the villages' historical planforms. There are less sensitive areas which could be developed instead. Moreover, the continued supply of housing schemes incorporating generic building designs along cul-de-sacs does dilutes the local distinctiveness and heritage interest of Middleton St George. There needs to be a masterplan (see section 4.3) setting out how the village can be sustainably expanded so that it can fully support its residents whilst retaining or enhancing its sense of place. Further expansion will also necessitate the provision of an adequate road network (not dead ends) and appropriate services within the village.

During the public consultation, further concern about the **water park** was raised (in addition to the removed embankment vegetation and vandalised boundary walling, see section 4.1). Apparently, it would *not [be] impossible that at some time in the future there will be pressure to remove the water altogether and flatten the*

reservoirs²⁰⁰. Such development will require planning permission. Whilst the heritage significance and communal value of the site, particularly if included in a conservation area designation, would be in favour of the water park's retention, other material considerations will also need to be weighed in the decision-making process.

Old buildings and other structures (e.g. boundary walling) remain at risk of being lost or further disfigured, possibly to make existing plots more economically viable. Moreover, salespeople and building contractors often lead property owners to believe that elements of their old buildings need a modern makeover, for example, to make them more energy efficient by replacing traditional windows and doors with uPVC substitutes or applying modern renders to solid walling. Property owners are often unaware that impermeable materials such as cement renders, insulation, gypsum plasters, cement pointing, and certain exterior and interior paints are incompatible with traditional construction which relies on moisture movement. Consequently, such applications are likely to trap water in solid walling and create long-term damp problems, resulting in cold and mouldy indoor environments. In addition, the negative visual impact of such interventions can be significant, as already evident throughout the historical village. Removing, damaging or concealing traditional fabric and features from an old property can also reduce its market value.

4.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

This section should be revisited when formulating a conservation area management plan in the future. Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

During the public consultation period, people from inside and outside the assessment area made the following suggestions for preventing further harm or implementing positive change in Middleton St George (see appendix 2):

- Stop or decrease building more houses
- Provide more wildlife, trees and flowers (grass verges), and preserve existing green areas
- Designate conservation area with Article 4 Direction to control/monitor future development including alterations
- Provide a planning process whereby decisions for new buildings are both rigorously scrutinised and sanctioned by the parish council
- Preserve the village identity that is left
- Enhance and bring back the lost character of unsympathetically upgraded old properties
- Provide a list of products suitable for renovating old houses and other key information to residents within the conservation area
- Provide additional community resources and invest into community projects and local security (e.g. CCTV and static cameras)

It is hoped that this appraisal document will help residents, local businesses, investors, planners and highways/utility authorities understand how heritage significance is embodied within the assessment area and provide them with the knowledge to prevent future harm and enable positive change.

²⁰⁰ Wheeler, J.S. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 21 January

The Middleton St George **Neighbourhood Plan** has identified a number of community actions to improve the parish, which could be delivered by the parish council in conjunction with other local organisations²⁰¹:

1. Create wildflower areas, e.g. along Sadberge Road
2. Support the delivery of the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub (see below)
3. Install interpretation boards at water park and in the green corridor
4. Better control dog fouling
5. Remove overhead cables thought the village
6. Identify community wildlife projects
7. Seek a net-zero carbon future for the parish
8. Improve current play area
9. Improve the water park, e.g. lighting, trails
10. Provide more facilities for young people
11. Provide more facilities for older people
12. Improve multi-use games area
13. Create a community garden
14. Work with Darlington Borough Council to tackle anti-social behaviour more efficiently
15. Work with the Council to improve highway safety
16. Provide an integrated approach to bus service provision
17. Work with the Council to deliver paths improvements
18. Make improvements to unadopted road leading to the cricket club
19. Ensure that development provides appropriate path and cycleway links from estate roads to the existing footpath/cycleway network

With regards to community action 2 above, outstanding works of the **Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub** include²⁰²:

- Project 5 'Old Mill Wall': Repair and partially reinstate the remains of the [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor walling.
- Project 6 'Level Crossing': Replace existing gates with a more railway-crossing themed design. Possibly create traffic calming features at all former level crossings along the line, with setts replicating early sleeper blocks or with metal rails inserted into the carriageway.
- Project 9 'Crane Base': Some of the brickwork of the [A] Crane Base requires repointing. Its surroundings could be cleared of vegetation and a feature created with the other remains nearby.
- Project 10 'Highway Artwork': Install a railway-heritage-themed village sign on Sadberge Road.
- Project 11 'New Hedge': Housing developers are required to plant 30 metres hedge behind the [C] Waiting Shed following completion of project 1 (see section 3.6).
- Project 12 'Fighting Cocks Inn': The developer of the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn is required to affix an information panel to the building describing its origin and heritage importance.
- Project 13 'Information and Interpretation': Details TBC
- Project 14 'Car and Cycle Parking': Parking bays or a lay-by for visitors could be created on Sadberge Road. Cycle parking rails or stands should be provided in a secure location.

²⁰¹ Middleton St George Parish Council 2022, pages 32-34 (annex 2)

²⁰² Chisholm (2022)

- Project 15 ‘Publicity’: Updates on the Heritage Hub will be circulated. Guided tours and explanations of the projects will again be given in order to encourage local people and business to become involved.

The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway have some funding reserved for the remaining projects of the Heritage Hub. External sources must however be found to complete the works. Having a conservation area designated **would be** of great help for the Friends²⁰³.

Besides project 5 of the Heritage Hub, the author of this appraisal suggests that further structures of significance outside the project area would also benefit from **restoration or consolidation works**:

- The western wall at the bottom of the embankment of the water park (see section 4.1)
- The surviving boundary wall of the [Q] Middleton Iron Works behind Killinghall Row

With regards to project 13, the author suggests that the following locations may be suitable for **on-site interpretation**, including some outside the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub project area:

- Within green corridor: former crossing at South Burdon Farmhouse, [A] Crane Base & Platform, [B] DRDC Loading Dock, [C] Waiting Shed, [D] Coal Depot, [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor walling, [Q] Middleton Iron Works, and Oaktree Junction
- Within the Whinnies: spoil heaps and former bridge linking to [Q] Middleton Iron Works site
- In the water park: former service reservoirs (including embankment walling), [K] Board Room and [L] Pumping Station
- In the playfield: old boundary line of the [Q] Middleton Iron Works
- At the surviving boundary wall of the [Q] Middleton Iron Works

Besides interpretation boards, a **digital heritage trail** could be created on Darlington Borough Council’s existing *Darlington Town Centre Trails* app.

If Middleton St George is designated as a conservation area, it will be easier to obtain **grant money** from external sources for interpretation and restoration/consolidation works.

In addition to the existing Neighbourhood Plan, a **strategic masterplan including location-specific design guide** could be produced, providing clear guidelines for sensitive development within the assessment area. It could be adopted as a supplementary planning document and be a helpful tool for applicants, agents and planners, as well as homeowners, businesses and highways/utility authorities who wish to carry out works under permitted development rights. Whilst it would not create instant change the masterplan could enable smaller steps in the right direction at a time and therefore be a beneficial long-term tool. It should include:

- Existing/proposed road and other transport networks incl. carparks
- Existing/proposed building orientations, types, massings and designs

²⁰³ Chisholm, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 23 January

- Existing/proposed green and communal spaces
- Existing/proposed zones of different use types, how they interact (e.g. residential – commercial – leisure) and how they are served by the transport system
- General guidelines for sympathetic improvement and maintenance works to traditional buildings
- Opportunities for improvements within the public realm

With regards to the penultimate point, **traditional buildings** that have been disfigured or otherwise altered can, for example, be visually improved by reinstating their original opening pattern including appropriate fenestration and removing any modern renders, external paints and insulation. Besides their negative visual impact, the latter are likely to have also resulted in long-term damp problems (see section 4.2). It is *essential* that the *entire* wall allows the movement of water (in liquid form, not vapour) so that it can dry out, thus restoring its maximum insulating properties. Materials that are compatible with solid-wall buildings are often referred to as ‘breathable’ (i.e. water permeable). Traditional lime mortars and (internal) plasters were originally used to build these properties and are still best suited to maintain and improve them. With regards to the latter, an external wall could, for example, be safely upgraded by applying an insulating lime plaster of a maximum thickness of five centimetres to its interior face. Any further insulation carries a risk of cooling the wall down which means that it will not be able to dry out. Works with building limes should always be carried out by an experienced heritage contractor who has the specialist skills and knowledge in working with them²⁰⁴.



Left: The northern end house of Killinghall Row shows that, despite the insertion of larger openings, the original lintels have been retained (circled in yellow). This is likely to be the case with many of the other properties that have been altered. The reinstatement of the original openings here should therefore be fairly straightforward (Photo © Gaby Rose, February 2025). *Right:* Cross references can be made by looking at properties within the row that have been well preserved. Here, the replacement frames using a 2x2 sash type seems appropriate for the construction date of the row (c.1864). Note that these are uPVC windows which is not evident unless you look in detail! Their slim frames and glazing bars as well as them being set back in the masonry allow them to fit in almost perfectly (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024).

Using traditional timber windows and doors has – besides being a significant visual enhancement – the advantage of (re-)using a more eco-friendly and sustainable material. However, sourcing good-quality timber frames can be an issue, and there

²⁰⁴ See Building Conservation Directory website

are now high-end uPVC products on the market which mimic traditional windows very well, as seen in the photo above. In the long-term, the costs of maintaining timber window frames will often be cheaper because they can be repaired – contrary to uPVC products which normally need replacing as a whole – thus reducing the amount of building materials, energy and waste. The thermal performance of old windows, where these survive, can be improved by employing relatively simple methods (e.g. heavy curtains, blinds and shutters) or by installing secondary glazing²⁰⁵, which is preferable to replacing them as they are becoming a rare resource.

With regards to potential **improvements within the public realm**, there are various opportunities such as by providing heritage-style streetlights and painting galvanised poles in matt black or another dark colour. Darlington Borough Council and utility companies should coordinate the designs and locations of highway signs, lighting columns and other street furniture, and highway maintenance to reduce clutter and unsympathetic materials/designs²⁰⁶.

During the public consultation on the draft appraisal (see section 1.3), the **Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway** kindly offered to help Darlington Borough Council address a range of issues and opportunities in the future (see chapter 4.0)²⁰⁷:

- Assist with the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan and its implementation
- Assist the Council in the management and day-to-day upkeep of the track bed path and its green corridor
- Continue the delivery of the projects of the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub (see above) and managing its features
- Arrange guided walks for local residents and the general public
- Revise the self-guided walk book *Darlington to Goosepool* (see section 7.2)
- Work with the Parish Council, voluntary groups and individual volunteers in the local community
- Help the 2025 Bicentenary Group with their programme of events for this summer
- Develop awareness of the village's rail heritage with residents, businesses and the public generally
- Provide the Council and developers specialist advice on planning applications which may affect the fabric or setting of the S&DR
- Access grants from funds not available to the Council

The author would like to thank the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway for their continuing support and assistance.

Finally, if Middleton St George is designated as a conservation area, it will be beneficial to impose an **article 4 direction** on it, to restrict further permitted development rights (see section 2.3). It should be applied to dwellinghouses as well as other use classes. This would control the design and quality of development and therefore help prevent further harmful alterations and gradually introduce positive change. By doing so, Darlington Borough Council would also meet its legal obligation

²⁰⁵ Wood, Bordass, Baker 2009, page vii

²⁰⁶ Chisholm, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 23 January

²⁰⁷ Chisholm, R. 2025. Email to Gaby Rose, 7 February

to *formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement*²⁰⁸ of Middleton St George ([see section 2.2](#)). Conservation-led change such as by introducing article 4 directions can add value to an area and consequently enable communities to regenerate.

²⁰⁸ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 71

5.0 Proposed Conservation Area Boundary

At the time of assessment, there was no conservation area at Middleton St George to the north of the live railway line, although parts of the village to the south of the line were inside the Middleton One Row Conservation Area²⁰⁹.

In July 2022, Durham County Council (DCC) came up with a proposed conservation area boundary for Middleton St George, but this proposal was taken no further. It had followed an assessment whether any areas in Darlington borough associated with the route of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) had the potential to be newly designated. In fact, DCC had initially investigated whether the entire 26 miles of the former S&DR was worthy of designation. They concluded that the level of special interest varied along the route so that it would not be appropriate for a single continuous conservation area. Therefore, individual areas were identified.



Durham County Council's proposal of 2022 for creating a new conservation area at Middleton St George. **NB: This boundary line was not proposed at the time of assessment of the draft appraisal.** (Map © Crown Copyright and database right 2022. Ordnance Survey LA 100049055. Landmark Information Group Copyright © 2022)

The conservation area boundary that DCC proposed for Middleton St George would have covered the former railway corridor from near the A66/Tornado Way roundabout at the west end to Yarm Road at the east end, also including the former Fighting Cocks Inn, remnants of S&DR infrastructure, the station buildings and small areas of open space. It was a shortcoming that DCC proposed their boundary without providing a conservation area appraisal including a detailed description and analysis of the wider area which would ultimately justify the setting of a boundary.

²⁰⁹ <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/1959/middleton-web-map.pdf>

In 2023, DCC drafted a list of potentially ‘locally listable’ heritage assets associated with the S&DR along its full former route as part of a pilot project. For Middleton St George, such heritage assets comprised the former Fighting Cocks Inn, waiting shed remains, station buildings and remains of the coal depot, which all would have been included in their previously proposed conservation area.

Whilst the boundary that DCC suggested was never contested and has been fully included in the proposed (see section 5.1), amended/finalised (see section 5.2) and adopted (see chapter 6.0) conservation area lines, further areas were identified that justify inclusion.

5.1 Public Consultation Draft: Proposed Boundary

This section offered suggestions at the time of assessment for how boundary lines for a Middleton St George Conservation Area could be drawn, based on the findings of significance within the assessment area (see chapter 3.0). Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

In order to qualify for conservation area designation, any proposed areas need to meet the following tests²¹⁰:

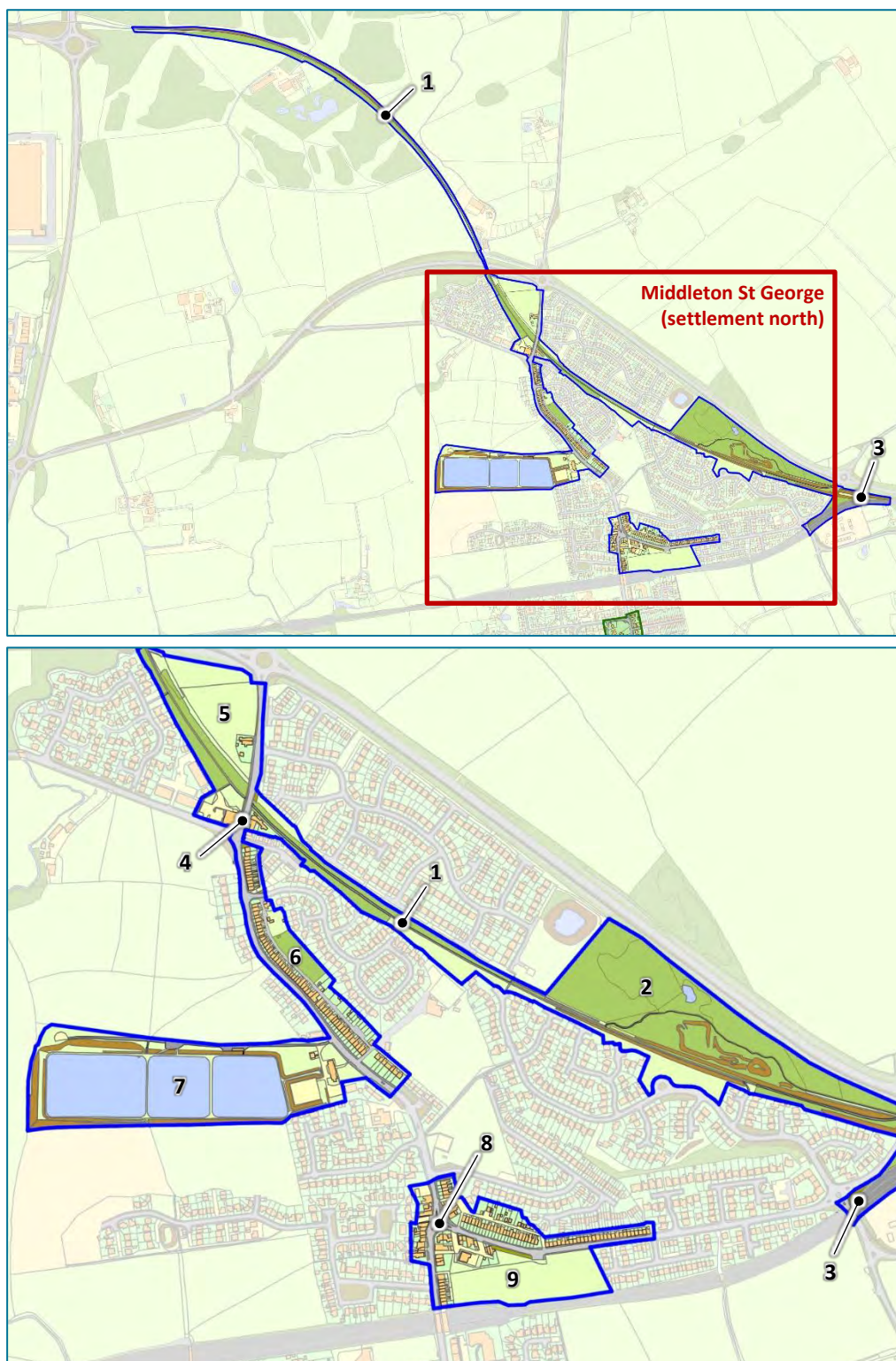
- a) The proposed areas have sufficient architectural or historic interest to be considered ‘special’.
- b) That special interest is experienced through the areas’ character or appearance.
- c) It is desirable for that character or appearance to be preserved or enhanced, also considering any problems that designation may help solve.

The map below shows the proposed draft boundaries for a Middleton St George Conservation Area which had been drawn up for public consultation. Members of the public and other stakeholders were invited to submit their comments (see section 1.3). **Whilst eleven respondents supported the proposed designation of these boundaries, including the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway and Middleton St George Parish Council, there were also two objections, including from Historic England (see appendix 2).**

The proposed draft Middleton St George Conservation Area comprised a number of smaller character areas which are numbered 1 to 9. These have basically been derived from character zones B (Green corridor), D (Historical village), E (Water park) and F (Allotments) (see section 3.5), although a few amendments have been made. In the following text (i.e. the justification for the proposed designation), the identification letter of the relevant character zone and any amendment to it, if applicable, is given in brackets. Following the consultation period, the justification for the proposed designation of these areas was expanded for further clarification.

Please note that these boundary lines will not be adopted (see chapter 6.0).

²¹⁰ Historic England 2019, page 5



Proposed draft Middleton St George Conservation Area in blue, which was available for public consultation – **these boundary lines will not be adopted**. *Top*: The assessment area. Existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary in dark green. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north. (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024. Graphics by Gaby Rose)

1 – Green corridor (B1 & B2). This matches the boundary line suggested by DCC (see chapter 5.0). The area is of high heritage interest and of high public/communal value. It comprises part of the former track bed of the original line of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) – later the Fighting Cocks branch – which is still clearly readable as such, including its original cuttings/embankments and drainage ditches.

Surviving structures of interest include the [A] Crane Base and Platform, [B] DRDC Loading Dock, [C] Waiting Shed (remains), [D] Coal Depot (remains), [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor (remains) and other small-scale industrial fragments.

- a) Area 1 has sufficient historic interest to be considered ‘special’ due to its direct links to the internationally significant S&DR and surviving structures/features of local interest.
- b) Whilst much of the character/appearance of that special interest has been lost or diluted through removal of the tracks and establishment of heavy vegetation, the route of the former S&DR is still discernible in planform and related structures/features do survive.
- c) It is desirable for the former railway corridor and its related structures/features to be preserved or enhanced, e.g. by providing on-site interpretation and restoring the [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor remains (see section 4.3).

2 – The Whinnies (B3). This area was not proposed by DCC, but the author of this document believes that its links to the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works, which used to be of such high importance to the historical development of the village, clearly justify designation. The topography created by the underlying spoil heaps, which originated from the iron works site, give such a distinct character to the woodland, and there is also surviving evidence of the bridge which spanned to the former iron works site. In addition, the local nature reserve is of high public/communal value.

- a) Area 2 has sufficient historic interest to be considered ‘special’ due to its direct links to the locally highly significant iron works.
- b) Whilst much of the character/appearance of that special interest has been lost or diluted through removal of the bridge (although remnants do survive) and establishment of heavy vegetation, the ‘bumpy’ topography created by the spoil heaps is clearly discernible.
- c) It is desirable for the local nature reserve to be preserved or enhanced, e.g. by providing on-site interpretation (see section 4.3).

3 – Oaktree Junction (B4, amended). This area was not proposed by DCC, but the author believes that it is important to include the location where the former line of the 1825 S&DR and the 1887 NER passenger line to Bank Top Station met, due to the implications it had on the original route. As a result, the line from Oaktree Junction towards North Road Station became the Fighting Cocks branch, which was mainly reserved for goods traffic, with passenger services generally abandoned. Later, the branch was served from Oaktree Junction only, once its western connection had been severed. Ultimately, this stretch of the original S&DR was lost completely as a consequence of the 1887 passenger line. The area also includes the public footpath immediately to the north of the live railway corridor and the [R] Metal Railway Bridge over the old road to Yarm, which is a focal point from the public highway.

- a) Area 3 has sufficient historic interest to be considered ‘special’ due to its direct links to the creation of the Fighting Cocks branch line and the ultimate demise of that section of the original route of the S&DR.
- b) Whilst some of the character/appearance of that special interest has been lost or diluted through removal of the tracks on the former S&DR route (only) and establishment of heavy vegetation, the former junction is still discernible in planform and located within the existing railway corridor.

- c) It is desirable for the (former) railway corridor to be preserved or enhanced, e.g. by providing on-site interpretation (see section 4.3).

4 – Fighting Cocks (part of D1). This matches the boundary line suggested by DCC. The area has been identified as being of high heritage interest and is located at the ancient road junction where the lane from Darlington joined the former Roman route. Moreover, it is directly linked to the arrival of the S&DR where, consequently, the development of the village started. The area contains the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn which was built sometime between 1832-4 by the last owner of the manor, Henry Cocks, and is now the oldest surviving building in the village. It is a long-distance focal point from the public highway and forms a distinct group with the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building, both of them built in Pease brick. The latter includes extant fabric of an early S&DR station building (1830/1).

- a) Area 4 has sufficient architectural and historic interest to be considered 'special' due to being at the location of an ancient road junction and the arrival of the S&DR which triggered the historical development of the village, the survival of the S&DR station buildings including remnants of an early station building, the former inn's locally important association with Henry Cocks, and the group value of these buildings.
- b) Whilst the original inn has been modified considerably (including historically), the character/appearance of that special interest survives in the existing road junction, the historical layout and spatial contribution of the three old buildings, and design of the station buildings, which appear little altered.
- c) It is desirable for the road junction and three buildings to be preserved or enhanced, e.g. by providing on-site interpretation (including the reinstatement of the inn's board) and removal of unsympathetic more recent alterations at the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn (paint finishes, window frames, etc.) (see section 4.3).

5 – Roman Road & northern allotments (F1 & D4, extended, & part of C). This area was not proposed by DCC, but the author thinks that there is a case for including this stretch of Cade's Road with the more unusually designed nineteenth-century semi-detached building making a visual contribution along the public highway. The historical allotments are in the immediate setting of the former track bed of the S&DR, with its distinct triangular-shaped plot first shown on the first-edition six-inch OS map (1855). The small field to the north (which is currently grazed by ponies) seems to include remnants of a ridge-and-furrow field system and also forms part of the setting.

- a) Whilst the architectural and historic interest of Area 5 is not sufficient to be considered 'special' enough on its own, it does form part of the immediate setting of a section of Area 1, and as such contributes to the special interest.
- b) The character/appearance of the architectural and historic interest largely survives.
- c) It is desirable for the greenspaces and landmark building to be preserved.

6 – Station Road (part of D1, amended). This area was not proposed by DCC, but the author believes that the early linear development along the main road, which had sprung up due to the establishment of industrial sites served by the main railway line,

most notably the [Q] Middleton Iron Works, justifies inclusion. Surviving structures of interest include the former [I] Udenominational Mission Hall, [H] the former Lyric, the former [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, a focal point along the main road, and the [M] Cocks Memorial Homes. The latter are of high local significance due to their Arts and Crafts style and connotation with Henry Cocks' (and, as such, the former manor's) final contribution to the area. The short artificial/cast-stone-faced terrace at the northern end seems unusual for Middleton St George.

- a) Area 6 has sufficient architectural and historic interest to be considered 'special' due to representing the early development of the village, its links to the locally highly significant iron works and its industrial past (most of which has disappeared) in general, the group value of the buildings and including locally important buildings.
- b) Whilst much of the character/appearance of that special interest has been lost or diluted through unsympathetic alterations to many of the terraced properties, the overall built form has been retained in the surviving historical platform and spatial contribution.
- c) It is desirable for these buildings to be preserved and the terraced properties to be enhanced by removal of unsympathetic more recent alterations (see section 4.3).

7 – Fighting Cocks Reservoirs (E). This area was not proposed by DCC, but the author believes that it clearly justifies inclusion. The former service reservoirs are directly linked to the growth of the Teesside towns and industries and therefore of regional significance. The first basin was constructed before the historical village of Middleton St George had started to take its shape, extracting water from the Darlington Waterworks at Tees Cottage, now a scheduled monument. It was the second reservoir to service the Tees Cottage Waterworks, out of a total of eleven, and is now the only surviving one within Darlington Borough. Whilst many villages depended on pumped water until well into the twentieth century, Fighting Cocks was connected to piped water in 1853. The reservoirs' former [K] Board Room & Entrance Gate are traditionally designed, with the latter making a roadside contribution. The former [L] Pumping Station is an unusual, modernist building for Middleton St George. Today, the site's water park, outdoor sports court community centre and nature trail are recreational assets of distinct character and high public/community value.

- a) Area 7 has sufficient architectural and historic interest to be considered 'special' due to its direct link to a scheduled monument, the Teesside industrial growth in general, providing early piped water to Fighting Cocks and including locally important buildings.
- b) Whilst some of character/appearance of that special interest has been 'diluted' through the establishment of vegetation on the reservoir embankments and loss of water within the original basin, the historical layout and topography of the site have been retained.
- c) It is desirable for the site to be preserved or enhanced, e.g. by providing on-site interpretation, reinstating the original fenestration to the former [L] Pumping Station and rebuilding the western wall at the bottom of the water park's embankment (see section 4.3).

8 – The Square & Yarm Road (D2). This area was not proposed by DCC, but the author believes that the early development around the Square and the workers housing along the roads, which are the direct result of the establishment of the formerly nearby [Q] Middleton Iron Works, justify inclusion. A stretch of distinct boundary walling built from slag behind one of the terraces is the only industrial

evidence that survives on the former iron works site. Buildings of interest within the area include the former [O] Killinghall Arms, a focal point from the public highway, the [N] Havelock Arms Hotel and the former [P] Co-op and Stable.

- a) Area 8 has sufficient architectural and historic interest to be considered 'special' due to representing the early development of the village, its links to the locally highly significant iron works and its industrial past in general, the group value of the buildings and including locally important buildings/structures.
- b) Whilst much of the character/appearance of that special interest has been lost or diluted through unsympathetic alterations to many of the buildings, the overall built form has been retained in the surviving historical platform and spatial contribution.
- c) It is desirable for these buildings to be preserved and enhanced by removal of unsympathetic more recent alterations (modern renders, change of opening patterns, etc.) and the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works boundary wall to be consolidated, with interpretation provided alongside it (see section 4.3).

9 – Southern allotments & greenspaces (F2 & G2). This area was not proposed by DCC, but the author thinks that there is a case for including the two triangular greenspaces, which are first shown on the 1912-14 OS map and accessible to the public, and the historical allotments. The latter and the larger triangular greenspace are in the immediate setting of the former workers houses along Yarm Road.

- a) Whilst the architectural and historic interest of Area 9 is not sufficient to be considered 'special' enough on its own, it does form part of the setting of Area 8, and as such contributes to the special interest.
- b) The character/appearance of the historic interest survives.
- c) It is desirable for the greenspaces to be preserved.

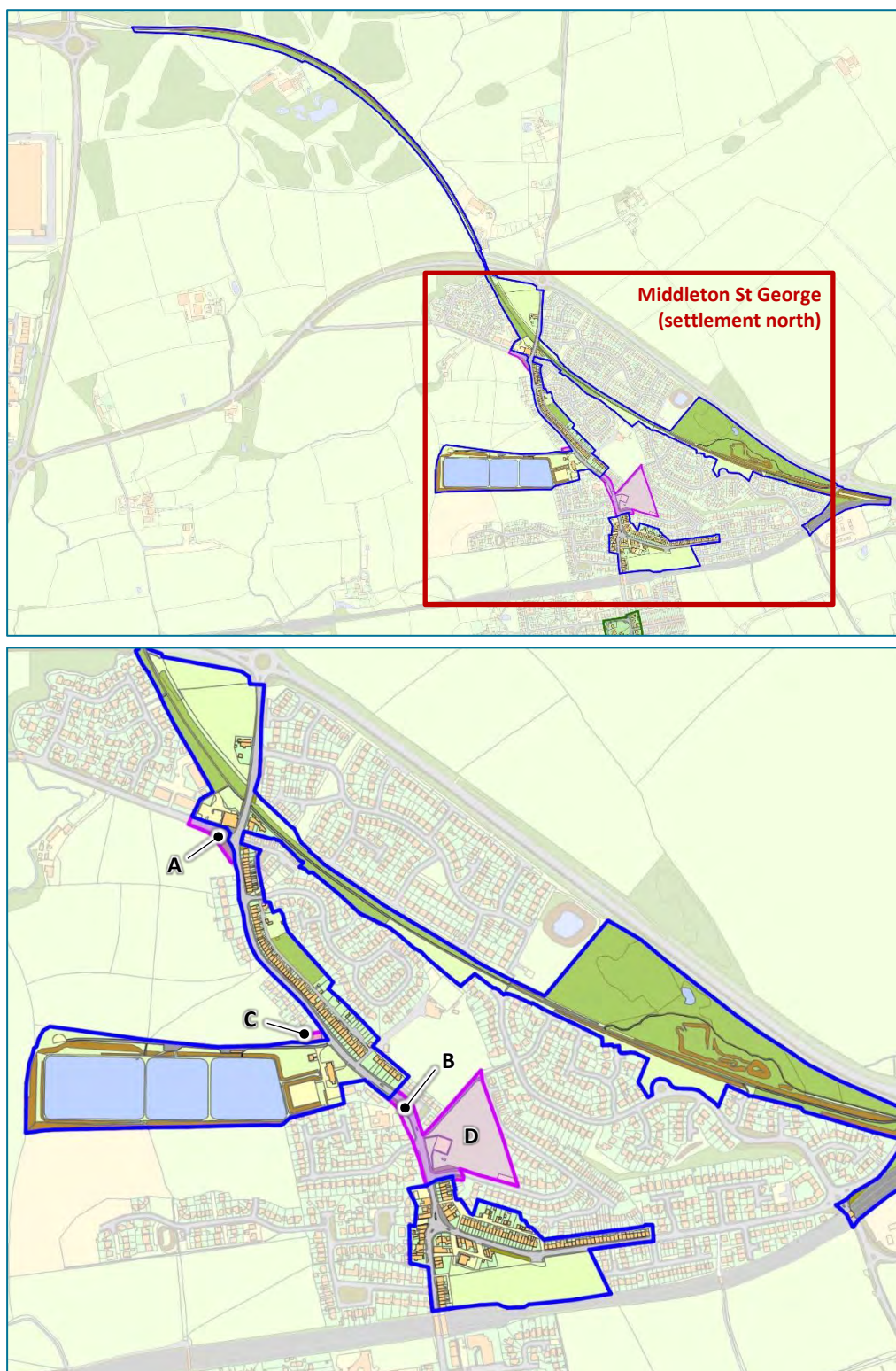
5.2 Boundary Changes post Public Consultation

Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

When giving the presentation at the Women's Institute during the consultation period (see section 1.3 & appendix 1), the author suggested further possible boundary additions:

- A. The road to Darlington along the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn plot, to clearly represent the historic road junction. This stretch of road had been omitted by mistake from draft area 4 (see section 5.1)
- B. The stretch of Station Road between draft areas 6 and 8, to create a continuous conservation area line (NB: a conservation area does not necessarily need to have one continuous boundary line)

Having considered the above, it has been decided to add areas A and B, including associated roadside greens, to the finalised Middleton St George Conservation Area boundary. In addition, following the public consultation period, the decision has been made to also include:



Boundary line changes (further additions) post public consultation in pink. Blue conservation area boundary line as proposed in draft appraisal, see section 5.1. *Top:* The assessment area, with existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary in dark green. *Bottom:* Settlement north (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024. Graphics by Gaby Rose)

- C. The former [J] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. Whilst it was mentioned in the text to be included in draft area 6, it had been omitted from the boundary line on the map by mistake. This is now rectified.

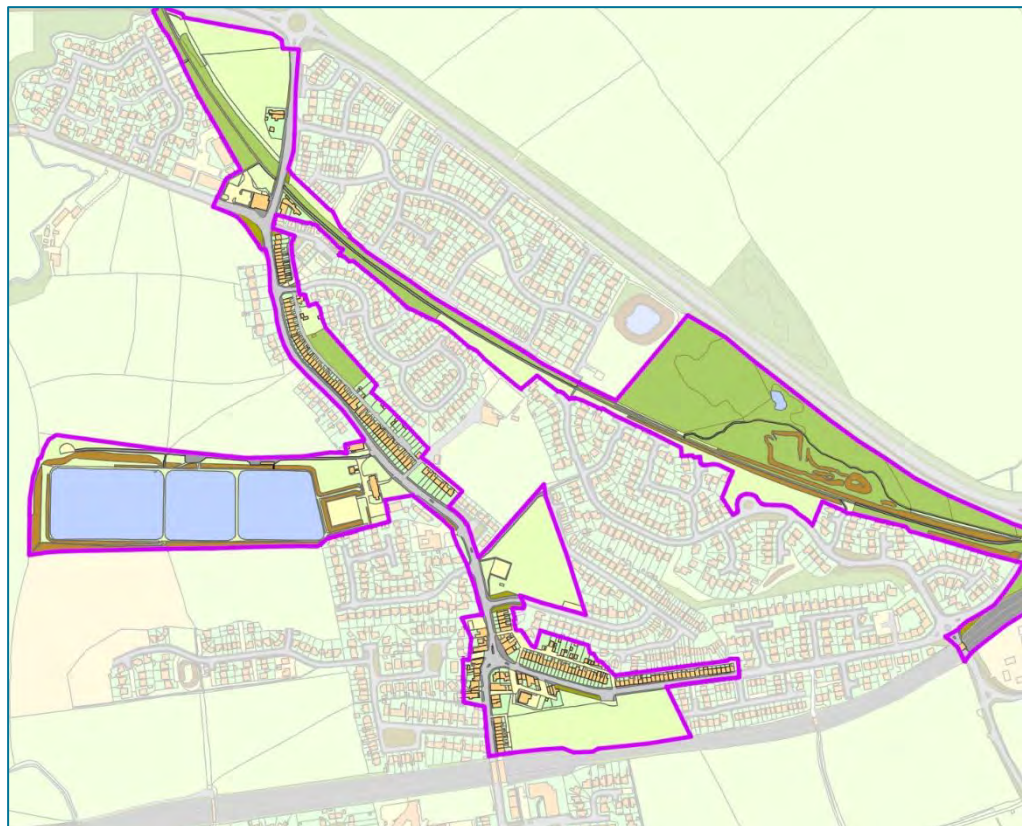
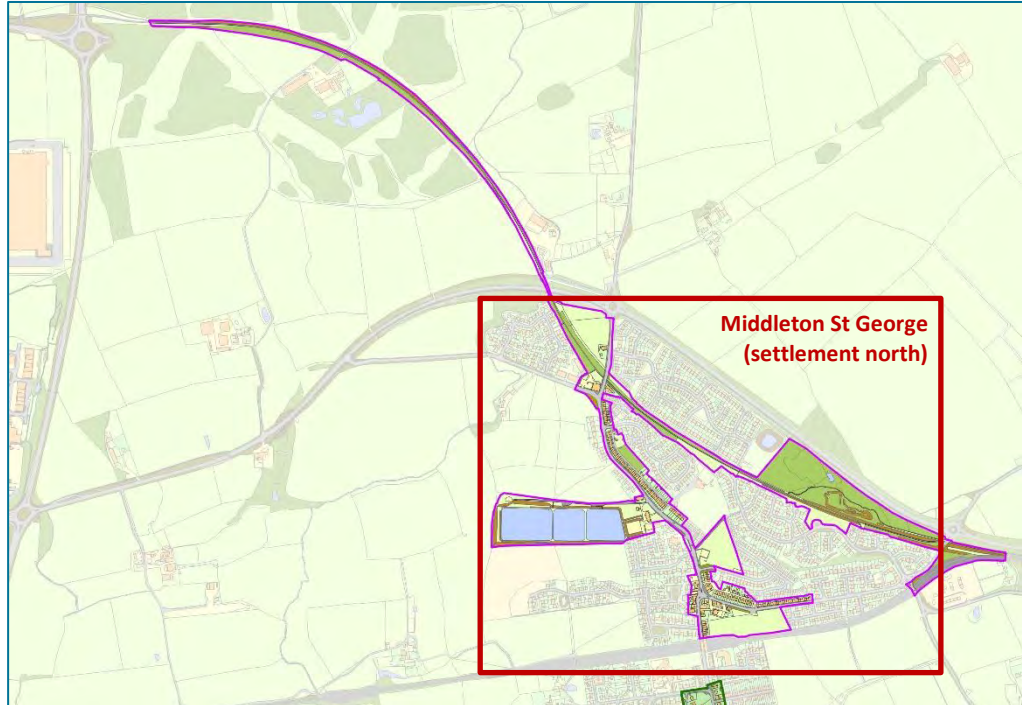
- D. The playing field (see section 3.5/G1). This roughly triangular shaped field is first shown on the 1896 OS map with its eastern side forming the boundary to the [Q] Middleton Iron Works and the existing path along its northwestern side representing the line of a former access route from the main street to the works (see section 3.3).
- a) Area E has sufficient historic interest to be considered ‘special’ due to its link to the locally highly significant iron works site, of which only very little evidence survives.
 - b) Whilst the character/appearance of the field has changed from possibly agricultural to leisure and the immediate setting from industrial to residential, the historical planform does survive.
 - c) It is desirable for the (play) field to be preserved and enhanced by providing on-site interpretation alongside the former [Q] Middleton Iron Works boundary line and repairing/replacing the existing timber fence.



Extension area D – playing field: View from path along its northwestern side looking west onto the former boundary line of the [Q] Middleton Iron Works, which is now marked by a timber boarded fence and a line of trees. Further trees were being planted at the time of the visit. The modern houses behind are on the former site of the iron works. (Photo © Gaby Rose, February 2025)

6.0 Adopted Boundary (DATE)

The map shows the finalised conservation area line for Middleton St George which is proposed for adoption. It comprises the boundaries proposed in the draft appraisal (see section 5.1) and further areas added post public consultation (see section 5.2).



Middleton St George Conservation Area boundary proposed for adoption in pink. Top: Assessment area, with existing Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary in dark green. Bottom: Settlement north (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024. Graphics by Gaby Rose)

7.0 Sources

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Darlington Borough Council – Conservation Areas:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/conservation-historical-environment/conservation-areas/>

Darlington Borough Council – Non-designated heritage assets:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/conservation-historical-environment/non-designated-heritage-assets/>

Darlington Borough Council – Planning application and permission:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-application-and-permission/>

Darlington Borough Council – Stockton & Darlington Railway:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/conservation-historical-environment/stockton-darlington-railway/>

Darlington Centre for Local Studies: <https://www2.darlington.gov.uk/-/darlington-centre-for-local-studies>

Darlington Model Railway Club: <https://www.facebook.com/p/Darlington-Model-Railway-Club-100041630905166/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/Darlington.Railway.Museum.Trust/>

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Historic England – Heritage at Risk Registers:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/>

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Keys to the Past: <https://keystothepast.info/>

Locomotion museum: <https://www.locomotion.org.uk/home>

Middleton St George History Group: <https://msglocalhistory.wordpress.com/about/>

Middleton St George Parish Council: <https://middleton-st-george.org.uk/>

Middleton St George Community Centre: <https://msgcommunitycentre.co.uk/>

Middletons in Bloom: <https://www.facebook.com/MiddletonsInBloom>

National Library of Scotland – Maps: <https://maps.nls.uk/>

North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group: <https://www.nelpg.org.uk/>

North Eastern Railway Association: <https://ner.org.uk/>

Planning Portal: <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission>

The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust: <https://www.a1steam.com/>

The North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Society: <https://nelpg.org/>

The Northern Echo: <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/>

Northumbria in Bloom: <https://northumbriainbloom.com/>

Appendix 1: Copy of Meeting Notes

**Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks)
Conservation Area Appraisal. Public Consultation Draft (December 2024)
Meeting at the Women's Institute, Middleton St George (MSG)
Monday 20 January 2025, 18:30 – 19:50**

An estimated 20-30 people attended including representatives of the MSG Parish Council (PC), the local history group, Friends of the S&DR, and residents .

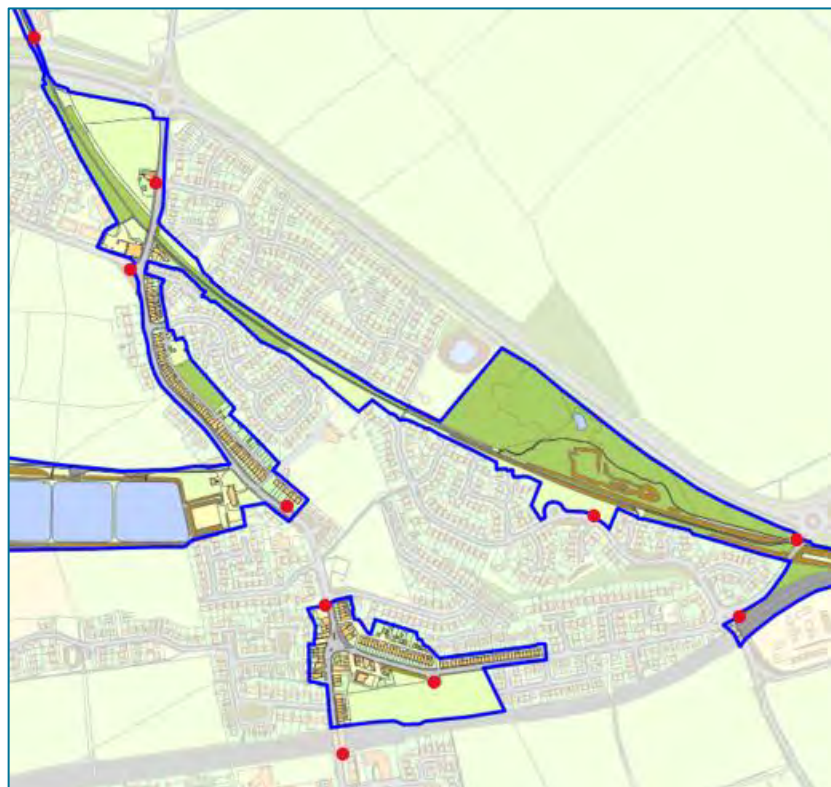
At the start, a presentation on the proposed new conservation area (CA) was given by Gaby Rose, the Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Conservation Officer.

During the Q & A afterwards, the following points were raised:

- Uncertainty about an existing CA at the north end of Middleton Lane. I confirm that the Middleton One Row Conservation extends as far north as 1 Middleton Lane:
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/1959/middleton-web-map.pdf>
- Question whether loss of special architectural interest still merits CA designation. I confirmed that CAs are *areas of special architectural or historic interest*. Special historic interest (e.g. the former iron works) does merit designation if it is associated with physical evidence (e.g. workers terraces).
- Query about the proposed extent of designation. I explained that the currently proposed boundary is what I think is the maximum extent of justifiable CA designation for MSG. I wanted to 'put all the cards on the table' and discuss them, rather than too few.
- Different views about the inclusion of the workers terraces in the CA boundary, with one side being opposed due to the lack of architectural interest and the other side being in favour. I understand that the latter attendants live in such houses and are keen to restore them to a more sympathetic appearance. They also voiced strong support for raising awareness of the industrial heritage which is often much neglected.
- Discussion whether the terracing at MSG is common or average in the Northeast; there were different opinions. I mentioned that in my assessment I evaluate significance in the context of Darlington borough, and asked whether there are similar scenarios like at MSG elsewhere in the borough as I am not aware of any.
- Different views on whether CA designation for the terracing is now too late, as the fields on the opposite side of Station Road are already being developed. The planning report apparently stated that development was acceptable as there was no CA at the time.
- Query whether the Whinnies would benefit from CA designation as they are already protected by the Local Plan (policy ENV 7).

Additional designation will provide further protection, such as with regards to works to trees.

- Lack of clarity on the exact details of restrictions CA designation would put on property owners. Section 2.3 of the draft provides an overview of the implications for the public and the relevant legislation (see chapter 7.0 for how to access these sources).
- Request that if houses were designated, a design guide specific to MSG on how to sympathetically improve and modify these properties is provided.
- Concern that people living in the terraces may not be aware of the proposed CA designation. Below is a map showing all the locations where I have hung site notices, mainly attached to lamp posts (red dots). The consultation has also been advertised on the DBC's and the PC's websites, and the DBC Facebook page.



- Query about what happens after the consultation period, in particular what will get designated. After the consultation, I will process and evaluate the responses received. I will amend the appraisal with regards to factual/historical information where necessary. Different views on the proposed CA boundary will be considered, and a decision will be made on whether to amend the currently proposed boundary. The finalised CA boundary will then be recommended to Councillors for approval at the cabinet and council meetings.

Gaby Rose, 21 January 2025

Appendix 2: Outcome of Public Consultation

The general parameters of the consultation process have been outlined at the start of the appraisal (see section 1.3). Altogether, the Council received a total of fifteen responses on the document ***Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Public Consultation Draft (December 2024)***, comprising representatives of (number of responses in brackets):

- (9) Residents (in or close to assessment area)
- (1) The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway
- (1) MSG Parish Council
- (1) Darlington Borough Council
- (1) Historic England
- (1) Durham County Council
- (1) Other

Seven of the above filled in the feedback form that had been provided by the Council. Below is a summary of the responses received (number of responses/ comments in brackets). *The text in added blue explains how the feedback was considered for or integrated in the revised document ***Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Finalised document. May 2025:****

Q1 *Do you live or work in the assessment area, see map at the start of the appraisal document?*

(6) Yes (1) No

Q2 *Do you live or work in the proposed conservation area boundary for Middleton St George, see map in chapter 5.0 of the appraisal document?*

(1) Yes (6) No [according to postcode provided]

Q3 *What is your personal or professional interest in the area? Comments:*

- (7) Resident
- (2) Family also lives/lived in the village
- (1) Active in local community
- (1) Supports protection and conservation of village and its historical features
- (1) Formerly employed at the old railway welding depot
- (1) Regularly socialises in village pubs
- (1) Has witnessed the demise of a very small community which has significantly grown through housing development over recent years

Q4 *Do you think Middleton St George would benefit from being a Conservation Area?*

(7) Yes – reasons:

- (3) To protect greenspaces/wildlife/natural habitats which are being destroyed for new housing estates
- (2) To protect and enhance historical assets
- (2) To prevent further damage and protect what is left
- (2) To impose planning controls with regards to alterations, new builds, and the general expansion of village ensuring that adequate infrastructure and local amenities will be provided
- (2) For the reasons set out in the CA Draft Appraisal

(0) No

Q5 *Do you think that the draft appraisal accurately describes the significance, character and appearance of Middleton St George, see chapter 3.0?*

(7) Yes – comments:

- (2) Showcases history/historical importance of the village
- (2) Very impressive, comprehensive, interesting and/or well written report
- (1) Photos taken prove character of the area
- (1) The key pertinent points are hit

(0) No

Q6 *What, in your opinion, are the most positive aspects about Middleton St George; what should be protected?* Comments:

- (4) Nature, trees, greenspaces, nature reserve and/or surrounding countryside
- (3) Historical structures/features/assets
- (3) S&RD station area and/or former railway corridor
- (2) History of the village incl. agricultural and industrial heritage, and its undeniable links to S&DR
- (2) Lovely place to live
- (1) Great community
- (1) Cricket Club, Water Park, the Havelock Arms
- (1) Village centre
- (1) Excellent transport links

➤ These points are now summarised at the beginning of [section 3.6](#)

Q7 *What, in your opinion, are the most negative aspects about Middleton St George (also see section 4.1); what could be improved?* Comments:

- (4) Too much and/or unsuitable new housing
- (3) Lack of new infrastructure/amenities improvements following housing expansions, increase in traffic movement and/or parking issues
- (3) Loss of village feel and/or community spirit
- (1) Loss of village's heritage
- (1) Loss of greenspaces

- (1) Inappropriate ‘upgrading’ of old properties by landlords
- (1) Very limited resources for children of school age or late teens to do activities

➤ These points are now summarised at the beginning of [section 4.1](#)

Q8 *What, in your opinion, are threats or potential future issues for Middleton St George (also see section 4.2)?* Comments:

- (5) New housing and their impact on historic assets, nature/trees/greenspaces/habitats/farmland and tranquillity
- (2) New housing designs
- (1) New housing being unaffordable for first-time buyers, possibly forcing people born and raised in the village to leave
 - [Policy H 5 of the Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036. Adopted February 2022](#) specifies a 20% affordable housing requirement for residential development schemes of 10 or more dwellings in Middleton St George, of which 50% is affordable rent and 50% affordable homeownership.
- (1) Closure of shops and businesses
- (1) MSG losing its identity as a village and becoming a small town with few extra amenities

➤ These points are now summarised at the beginning of [section 4.2](#)

Q9 *How, in your opinion, could positive change be implemented (also see section 4.3)? How could negative change be avoided?* Comments:

- (3) Stop or decrease building more houses
- (3) Provide more wildlife, trees and/or flowers (grass verges) and/or preserve existing green areas
- (1) Designate conservation area with Art 4 Direction to control/monitor development including future alterations
- (1) Provide transparent planning process whereby decisions for new buildings are both rigorously scrutinised and sanctioned by the parish council
- (1) Preserve the village identity that is left
- (1) Enhance and bring back the lost character of unsympathetically upgraded old properties
- (1) Provide a list of products suitable for renovating old houses and other key information to residents within the CA
 - [Further information is now provided in section 4.3, and links to the Building Conservation Directory are available in section 7.3](#)
- (1) Provide additional community resources and/or invest into community projects and local security (e.g. CCTV and static cameras at the four entrances into the village)

➤ These points are now summarised at the beginning of [section 4.3](#)

Q10 *Do you agree with the line of the proposed Conservation Area boundary, see section 5.0 of appraisal document?*

(4) Yes – comments:

- (1) No other greenspace to call a boundary
- (1) Protects the main routes through the original village

(1) No – comments:

- (1) Agrees with proposed CA inclusions but also wants the field at the top of Woodlands Green and cricket pitch to be designated
 - The cricket pitch is not shown on the historic maps, and the shape of the site has changed over time too; therefore, it will not be designated.
 - The playing field is now included in the finalised CA boundary, see **section 5.2** and **chapter 6.0**

Q11 *Any other comments?*

- (2) Supports the proposal and hopes that CA will be implemented
- (1) Fully supports additional boundary inclusions to those made by Durham County Council
- (1) Believes that the CA is overall a positive thing and should help to enhance the character of buildings
- (1) Advises to keep village as green as possible and encourage more wildlife to areas/gardens through initiatives
- (1) Believes the ridge-and-furrow sites on farmland should be protected, noting that new housing is ripping through one now
 - As noted, the fields to the north of the water park are currently being destroyed by new housing construction, so designation comes too late.
 - The small field to the south of the A67/Sadberge Road roundabout is part of the proposed Middleton St George CA boundary, and reference to the ridge-and-furrow is now made in the text for draft area 5, see **section 5.1**.
 - The two fields to the north of the A67/Sadberge Road roundabout are too cut off from the proposed designated area by the A67; they are no longer part of the setting of the village.
 - The ridge-and-furrow systems at West Hartburn and Middleton One Row are outside the assessment area. With regard to the former, it may be included in the scheduled monument, although the earthworks do not seem well preserved (judging from the LiDAR). The author strongly believes that the latter should be included in the Middleton One Row CA.
- (1) States that the whole village (not just the proposed CA) needs protecting from becoming a town and losing its character, its aesthetic look, community spirit and historical legacy
 - The criteria for conservation area designation eligibility are outlined in **sections 2.1, 3.0 & 5.1**. and the modern housing estates do not meet them
- (1) Queries whether the CA would be governed by preservation orders etc., to keep the natural tree lines and habitat
 - Trees in a CA are protected under section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, see **section 2.3**.
- (1) Strongly objects to any development in this specific CA

The remaining consultation responses were sent in by email. Below is an overview of what they contained. The text added in blue explains how responses have been considered for or integrated in the revised document *Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks) Conservation Area Appraisal. Finalised document. May 2025:*

Comments on **general information** with the appraisal:

- Historic England: Acknowledgement that draft document contains a great deal of valuable information to reveal the historical and architectural interest of the study area.
- Historic England: Advice to publish management proposals needed to secure enhancement at the same time as the decision to designate, to show that it is desirable, and to indicate how it would be delivered.
 - Some of this is included in **section 4.3**
- Historic England: Advice that if designation is pursued, a separate, new CA appraisal should be adopted and the current one of the wider study area placed separately in the local Historic Environment Record. Encouragement to make any new appraisal more visual.
 - A new appraisal is not considered to be necessary or appropriate, as all information is contained within this document. An additional document may confuse the record of the appraisal process.
 - It is considered that the presentation of the information contained in this appraisal is fit for purpose.
- Friends of the S&DR: Offer to help the Council in addressing a range of issues and opportunities.
 - These are now listed in **section 4.3**
- Resident: Acknowledgement that draft document is very wide ranging and done with commendable thoroughness.
- Resident: Suggestion not to reference areas well outside the proposed CA and not to stray into the pre-industrial history.
 - It has been decided to retain this information for the following reasons (see **section 3.3**):
 - Cade's Road is relevant as it went through the assessment area and is still readable in the current road/boundary layouts. While some have difficulty in accepting the Roman road in this location, the HER entry implies there is sufficient evidence pointing to the likelihood of its former existence.
 - The former manors of MSG, MOR and Dinsdale are relevant as they were within the assessment area. Moreover, the manorial family names of Killinghall, Pemberton and, notably, Cocks still survive in the village.
 - The church of St George outside the assessment area is relevant as it seems to incorporate the oldest surviving building in the parish. It also served the village until 1871, and Henry Cocks is buried in it.
 - References to the three villages (two of which are no longer extant) outside the assessment area are provided to reveal the settlement context (within the former manors) that MSG is located in. The hamlet of Oak Tree

- provided the name of the railway junction in the assessment area.
 - The changes in agrarian management are relevant as they are visible in the assessment area (e.g. ridge and furrow, enclosed fields).
 - Dinsdale Spa is relevant as Fighting Cocks Station became the point of arrival for spa visitors and the landlord of the Fighting Cocks Inn provided transport to the spa for first-class train passengers.
- Resident: Concern that lack of regard for the history of MSG is still embedded in planning policies and actions of developers, with the result that village is turning into a characterless small town with a traffic problem.
 - It is anticipated that the formal adoption of this appraisal will raise awareness amongst planners, developers and property owners, and result in better-informed decision making.
- Resident: Identification of former Pumping Station and Board Room as some of the significant buildings in the village.
 - These are now mentioned and marked as 'structures of interest' (see map at the beginning of the document) throughout the finalised appraisal.
- Resident: Concern that the removal of trees from the banks of the water park has opened up views onto new housing estates and that in the future there could be pressure to remove the water and flatten the former reservoirs.
 - Conservation area designation would provide some protection for trees, see **section 2.3**
 - The 2021 vegetation removal is now included in **section 4.1**.
 - The flattening of the reservoirs/water park would require planning permission. CA designation would be a material consideration in the decision-making process of an application. This is now included in **section 4.2**
- Other: Suggestion that Council should coordinate the design and location of highway signs, lighting columns, other street furniture, and highway maintenance to reduce clutter and unsympathetic materials.
 - This is now included in **section 4.3**
- Darlington Borough Council: Request to mention Hopetown Darlington and the Centre for Local Studies in sources.
 - This is now included in **section 7.3**
- Various: Provision of further information and corrections on a range of factual/historical/other matters.
 - These are now included in **sections 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.2 and 7.3** where applicable

Comments on **proposed new designation and conservation area boundary**:

(11) In support:

- Parish Council: Acceptance of the recommendations for the Fighting Cocks Conservation Area.
- Friends of the S&DR: Support of the proposed CA boundaries as the protection and enhancement of the former S&DR track bed is

important justification for the proposed designation; there would be no MSG as we know it today without the S&DR.

- Friends of the S&DR: Support of the inclusion of the former industries' workers housing as it will help raise awareness of the importance of the S&DR in the history of the village.
- Other: Confirmation that Friends of the S&DR have some funding reserved for the remaining projects of the Heritage Hub, but external sources must be found to complete the works. Having a CA designation would be of great help for the Friends.

➤ This is now included in [section 4.3](#)

- Other: Support of proposed draft boundaries as draft areas 1 to 5 cover railway heritage and areas 6 to 9 show how a village community emerged following the coming of the S&DR railway and the businesses and industries it generated.
- Resident: Strong support that MSG's cultural and industrial heritage is saved as so much has already been lost, e.g. the big industrial building (the last of its kind in the whole of the area) that was demolished for Woodlands Green, 1500sqm of ancient hedgerow at the water park due to Homes by Carlton's desire for lakes views, and the oldest ticket office on the S&DR to a Sainsbury's store.
 - Further information is now provided about the (demolished) blowing engine house, see [section 3.3](#).
 - According to the MSG Parish Council meeting notes of 15 February 2021 (available on their website) it appears that the Parish Council had instigated the vegetation removal from the south bank of the water park following the recommendations of a reservoirs engineer, and that Homes by Carlton in fact raised a complaint about the works. The 2021 vegetation removal is now included in [section 4.1](#).
 - The author has not been able to find sources backing up that the Fighting Cocks Inn ever included a ticket office. This seems unlikely considering the first station building (Railway Lodge of 1830/1) predates the original inn (built at some point between 1832 and 1834). Moreover, whilst the station had been provided by the S&DR, the inn was owned by Henry Cocks, lord of the manor, see [section 3.3](#). Finally, looking at the pre-conversion floor plan of the former inn (planning application ref. 21/00223/OUT), there is no indication of a ticket office in what is believed to be the original part of the building.
- Resident: Particular interest in saving the area behind Station Road which was allotments and food growing space, and is still full of fruit trees and wildlife.

➤ This greenspace is now mentioned in [section 3.5](#).

(2) **Not** in support:

- Historic England: Whilst in agreement that in broad terms the study area's interest turns on its historical links to the very high significance of the S&DR, there is concern that more work is needed to clearly identify the special architectural or historic interest, in particular with regard to the Square, the workers housing and former reservoirs, and to use this to reconsider the boundaries proposed for CA designation.

- Further information on the heritage significance of the former water park and village has been provided in **sections 3.1 & 3.3**.
- Clear justification for areas to be designated is now provided using the parameters set out in HE guidance, see **sections 5.1 & 5.2**.
- Historic England: Query why the ridge-and-furrow field systems described in the document are not appraised in chapter 5.0 and are left out of consideration for CA status.
 - This has been explained under feedback form responses to Q11, see above.
- Historic England: Concern that, if designation is pursued as proposed, this will have implications for the Council when meeting duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the areas.
 - These are the implications for, and the purpose of, any CA designation, see **section 2.2**.
- Historic England: Encouragement to consider other potential ways to protect the character and features as an alternative to CA status, such as the MSG Neighbourhood Plan, local listing, the DBC Local Plan, a supplementary planning document or non-planning activity, such as managing the natural environment, redesigning highways, or engaging with local history.
 - Considering DCC already proposed a conservation area in 2021 and the findings of this report also conclude with a proposal to designate, which has been supported by residents, the Friends of the S&DR and MSG Parish Council, the author sees no reason for not creating a CA.
 - The MSG Neighbourhood Plan covers a much larger area though excludes part of the former track bed of the S&DR (which is outside MSG parish). It is aimed to address a variety of issues. In contrast, a CA appraisal focuses in detail on heritage matters and is therefore likely to carry more weight in the planning process with regards to development proposals in the built historical environment.
 - The Council does not have a Local List. Local listing would only be suitable for structures that have not been much altered and would not protect larger groups of buildings (which is what CA designation is for).
 - The DBC Local Plan covers the whole borough and is aimed to address a variety of issues with a broader brush. In contrast, the CA appraisal is specific to the assessment area and provides a quantity of details that will be of interest to and consequence of in the planning process, supporting Local Plan policies.
 - The adopted appraisal would be a supplementary planning document.
 - Non-planning activities will rely on the good will of people. They are more likely to be carried out when specified in a CA appraisal/management plan, such as cosmetic improvement works by Highways, as they are otherwise not a priority to the Council.
- Resident: Support of 2022 DCC boundary as it restricts itself to the immediate subject (the S&DR), although the exact boundary could be

discussed, for example whether it should include the former station buildings or the Whinnies nature reserve.

- Other areas have been identified to have special interest, see **sections 3.1, 5.1 & 5.2** – further information and justification has been provided since the draft appraisal.
- Resident: Opinion that workers terraces, the Square and boundary wall of former iron works are not of special architectural interest.
 - It is correct that the special historic interest significantly outweighs the architectural value here – NB: conservation areas are *areas of special architectural or historic interest*.
 - The boundary wall constructed from slag is an important – and the only – survivor directly related to the iron works site.
- Resident: Suggestion that history of the village is better obtained from documentary sources than coming to see it, and concern that MSG is being talked up as a place of interest when a visit is likely to lead to disappointment.
 - Every attempt has been made to accurately portray the history of the place and what survives. Recently taken photos give a true impression of the current state of the village.
- Resident: Opinion that conservation area designation will not result in improvement of properties, due to lack of resources or inclination.
 - A few residents at the presentation meeting stated that they want to sympathetically restore their old properties. They also voiced that raising awareness (through this document) may inspire others to do the same. In any case, designation is more likely to result in improvements (and funding opportunities) and stop further harm than having none.
- Resident: Opinion that conservation area designation will result in pointless restrictions on property owners.
 - The restrictions are likely to result in some protection of old buildings and trees, which is considered to the benefit of the area. The instances of removal of permitted development rights that concern conservation areas are now listed in **section 2.3**. following a resident's request.

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**CABINET
6 MAY 2025**

RELEASE OF HIGH NEEDS CAPITAL – BEAUMONT HILL ACADEMY

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Nick Wallis, Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
James Stroyan, Executive Director of People**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek members agreement to release an additional £375,000 of High Needs Capital Funding for the refurbishment of Haughton Children's Centre and Block 3 Beaumont Hill Academy.

Summary

2. To date Cabinet has released £466,000 of High Needs Capital Funding. That amount was based on an initial estimate of costs from an outline feasibility study by Eddisons Building & Project Consultancy in 2023. A more detailed survey has now been completed by the RLB Group which has identified some significant costs that were not included in the original estimate, largely in relation to the Beaumont Hill remodelling. In addition, because of the time lapsed since the original survey in 2023, and Cabinet approved the funding on 5 March 2024, there has also been some inflationary costs of materials.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that members agree to formally release £375,000 of High Needs Capital Funding for the provision of additional special education needs places at Beaumont Hill academy in line with the new SEND strategy.

Reasons

4. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons:-
 - (a) Release of the High Needs Capital funding will allow Beaumont Hill academy to refurbish Haughton Children's Centre to provide a sixth form centre for up to 30 pupils.
 - (b) Remodelling the space vacated by the sixth form pupils will create an addition 30-40 high needs places for secondary age pupils with special educational needs and reduce reliance on expensive out of borough placements.

**James Stroyan,
Group Director of People**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Paul Richardson: Extension 6015

Council Plan	<p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations</p> <p>Providing additional places in Beaumont Hill Academy will reduce the number of children with special educational needs having to go out of borough due to lack of spaces. This development will allow those pupils to learn locally with their peers and friendship group.</p>
Addressing inequalities	This development will ensure children with special educational needs have access to high quality local specialist provision.
Tackling Climate Change	All work undertaken will be designed and constructed with sustainability in mind and aim to reduce the carbon footprint, and re-use energy and environmental resources.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Providing more local high needs places in Beaumont Hill academy should reduce the requirement to place children with special educational needs in high-cost out of area independent provision. This in turn should reduce overall transport costs for those pupils.
Health and Wellbeing	Having a separate, purpose built sixth form centre will allow these 16-18 year olds to develop their independent living skills.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Not applicable
Wards Affected	Whilst this specific project is located in the Haughton and Springfield Ward children at Beaumont Hill Academy come from all over Darlington.
Groups Affected	This development will provide high needs places for young people of secondary and post 16 age with Education, Health and Care Plans
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is an urgent decision. In order to complete this project for September 2025, contractors have to be appointed by the first week of June. Without certainty around funding the Education Village Academy Trust will not be able to proceed, and the council will need to make alternative arrangements for a number of children with special educational needs.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This development has the potential to impact on looked after children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

MAIN REPORT

Background

5. Cabinet previously agreed to pursue the transfer of Haughton Children's Centre to the Education Village Academy Trust, the parent trust of Beaumont Hill Academy, to develop a sixth form centre for pupils with special educational needs, this in turn would result in the creation of additional spaces in Beaumont Hill. The additional secondary places will also reduce the need to send EHCP pupils out to more expensive out of area independent settings.
6. The Department for Education (DfE) have given their agreement to the re-purposing of the Children's Centre (it was funding partially through Sure Start Grant and the DfE retained an interest). The trust has also consulted, and had permission from the DfE, to take on an additional site.
7. The original feasibility survey was undertaken by Eddisons in 2023 based on quarter 2 rates from 2023. However, the fact that Beaumont Hill is part of a PFI build introduced additional legal and cost complications unless the work at the school was undertaken through the PFI facilities management company. Therefore, the trust had no option but to contract Mitie to facilitate both developments, rather than have two separate contractors. Subsequent staffing changes at Mitie, and the need to undertake a second survey, has caused significant delay to reaching this point. The latest costs are as accurate as possible but subject to change pending final procurement quotations.

Financial Impact

8. This project will utilise funding from the High Needs Capital grant which is provided by the DfE. There is no draw on council funds. The project costs incorporate a small contingency, and any unspent funds will be allocated to alternative projects. The grant agreement issued to the trust will only be for final costs and will not exceed the amount authorised by Cabinet.
9. The latest schools benchmarking data shows the average gross cost for refurbishment of a SEN school to be £1,161 per square metre. The revised costs come out at £944/m² for Beaumont Hill and £591/m² for Haughton Children's Centre, therefore both projects still provide value for money, even with the increased costs.
10. Whilst it is difficult to compare the two estimates due to how they are presented, the main increase has been the costs at Beaumont Hill for the provision of services moving from an open plan area to partitioned classrooms. The costs for electrical, lighting, ventilation and fire protection rose from £55,000 in the original feasibility study to almost £213,000 in the detailed survey.
11. Haughton Children's Centre will be transferred to the Education Village Academy Trust on a standard academy lease, the lease will be subject to the trust completing the works, and any liability for increased costs will sit with the trust. Payment of the High Needs Capital funds will be to EVAT as a grant agreement.

Impact of Not Proceeding

12. This development is due to open in September 2025 and around 30 young people with Education, Health and Care Plans have been offered places at Beaumont Hill based on this. If the funding is not agreed and the project does not go ahead, alternative arrangements will have to be made for those young people.
13. If Cabinet approves the funding, that will give the trust the assurance that they can progress this project. They have been assured that as long as contractors are appointed by the first week in June, the works can be completed on time.

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