

CABINET
6 January 2026

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DRAFT APPRAISAL FOR THE WEST END CONSERVATION
AREA INCLUDING PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES**

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

**Responsible Director -
Trevor Watson, Executive Director Economy and Public Protection**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks Cabinet approval to go out for public consultation with the new draft appraisal for the WEST END Conservation Area (NB: there is similar report for the new Victoria Embankment Conservation Area draft appraisal). The document also includes proposals to significantly change the existing conservation area boundary.

Summary

2. This report provides justification for writing a new appraisal for the West End Conservation Area. It also briefly outlines the contents of the document and the proposed consultation process.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Cabinet authorises public consultation on the new draft appraisal for the West End Conservation Area attached at **APPENDIX 1**.
 - (b) The draft document is publicised for a period of at least six weeks, to allow members of the public and other stakeholders sufficient time to submit comments.
 - (c) The draft document is amended and finalised in light of the comments received during the public consultation period.
 - (d) The finalised conservation area appraisal including new boundary is submitted to Councillors for adoption; this will be subject to another Cabinet report.

Reasons

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

- (a) According to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended), the Council must review Darlington's conservation area boundaries from time to time and make amendments where necessary. The duty to prepare and review appraisals is also reflected in the Darlington Local Plan, forming part of the Council's proactive approach towards protecting the borough's heritage assets.
- (b) The current boundary line of the West End Conservation Area (NB: this is not the original boundary line, see Main Report) was designated on 30 March 2010. An appraisal was first adopted at the same time. The 2010 document is now considered out of date and inadequate.
- (c) The West End Conservation Area has been on the national Heritage at Risk registers since 2011.
- (d) The new appraisal offers a comprehensive re-evaluation of the West End Conservation Area in accordance with current planning policy and guidance, providing a robust document that would be of greater influence in the planning process. It also includes an assessment of the 2010 boundary line and the area's condition, as well as proposals for enhancement in order to take it off the risk register.

Trevor Watson
Executive Director Economy and Public Protection

Background Papers

Darlington Borough Council (2010) *West End Conservation Area. Character Appraisal. March 2010*: https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/2vghwdzk/weca_appraisal.pdf

English Heritage (2011) *Heritage at Risk. North East 2009*

Historic England (2024) *Heritage at Risk*

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/heritage-at-risk/search-register/annual-heritage-at-risk-registers-and-maps/>

David Hand : 6294

Council Plan	<p>Our ambitions – <i>An inclusive and sustainable economy will have a growing economy that supports our environment and heritage.</i></p> <p>Our ambitions – <i>Thriving places and connected communities will have cultural, heritage and community assets.</i></p> <p>Our priorities – <i>Local environment: Investing in our heritage and culture is important in preserving the identity of our communities, delivering regeneration and economic impact.</i></p> <p>Our priorities – Local environment – Key deliverables: 6. <i>Deliver revised supplementary planning documents that [...] contribute to a sense of pride in place.</i></p>
Addressing inequalities	No impact
Tackling Climate Change	<p>The draft appraisal points out that the achievement of sustainable development also encompasses an environmental objective to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment.</p> <p>The draft appraisal also raises some awareness <i>against</i> the use of modern materials that are incompatible with traditional buildings. Modern materials are likely to decrease the insulating properties of traditional structures by trapping water in the walling, potentially leading to long-term damp problems. In addition, they often have a high-carbon footprint and short lifespan.</p>
Efficient and effective use of resources	<p>In the long term, the new appraisal is meant to assist planning officers, applicants and other stakeholders in making informed decisions on development proposals within the West End Conservation Area, which should be more time effective (and deliver desirable outcomes).</p> <p>In addition, if external funding is sought for works within the West End Conservation Area, this up-to-date appraisal will be an essential requirement.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>The information provided in the draft appraisal may lead to wider improvements in the West End Conservation Area.</p> <p>The draft appraisal also raises some awareness <i>against</i> the use of modern materials that are incompatible with traditional buildings, potentially leading to long-term damp problems which can impact negatively on the occupants' health.</p>
S17 Crime and Disorder	The information provided in the draft appraisal may lead to wider improvements in the West End Conservation Area.
Wards Affected	Park East, Park West, College, Pierremont and Mowden
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	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. The origin of the West End Conservation Area goes back to 1968, when two small, very tightly drawn conservation areas were designated for Stanhope Green and Harewood Hill.
6. On 6 October 1975, a Stanhope Road/Grange Road Conservation Area was designated, extending out from and linking the former separate areas. On 10 May 1990 and 29 April 1999, it was further extended.
7. On 30 March 2010, the first character appraisal was adopted for the renamed West End Conservation Area, including additional boundary extensions. The 2010 document is now considered out of date and inadequate.
8. 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. The special interest of the West End Conservation Area under review comprises:
 - (a) three main roads that were turnpiked in the eighteenth century
 - (b) mansions, villas and substantial terraced houses of high architectural quality interspersed with lush vegetation including many mature trees as well as various public parks, creating a large, prosperous and attractive inner suburb
 - (c) associations with philanthropic causes of the wealthy Quaker causes and others
 - (d) the development of the glebe land owned by the Duke of Cleveland for middle-class residences exclusively, comprising the first wave of town planning in the area, which has resulted in a diversity of built forms and layouts with an underlying consistency in terms of materials and spatial quality
 - (e) the best of Darlington's early suburban development which has been altered relatively little, including the survival of a significant amount of traditional features
 - (f) school buildings including the bespoke constructions designed by notable Darlington architects GG Hoskins and JP Pritchett

9. The West End Conservation Area has been on the national Heritage at Risk registers since 2011. In order to help remove the area from the register it had therefore been considered that a new appraisal would be advisable.

RECENT ASSESSMENT

10. The new appraisal was drafted between October 2024 and August 2025 by the Council's Conservation Officer.
11. The draft appraisal reassesses the West End Conservation Area in accordance with current planning policy and guidance, providing a robust document that can be of greater influence in the planning process. It focuses on the following aspects:
 - (a) The special architectural and historic interest of the area
 - (b) The condition of the area, any problems or threats to it, and opportunities for beneficial change
 - (c) The relevance of the existing boundary line and any proposed changes to it

PROPOSED PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

12. The draft appraisal will be available for consultation for a minimum of six weeks.
13. It will be available:
 - (a) In digital format on the Council's website, along with a feedback form that can be completed. Additionally, members of the public can also email a response to the Conservation Officer
 - (b) As paper copies (read only) of the document and feedback form at the Town Hall (by appointment only), and at the Crown Street and Cockerton libraries
14. At the commencement of the public consultation period, the Conservation Officer will directly approach individuals, groups and organisations that are likely to have a particular interest in the West End Conservation Area, including Councillors of the affected wards.
15. Site notices will be displayed within the proposed boundary extension areas.

Financial Implications

16. The public consultation on the draft appraisal will only require minor expenses for the printing of a few hard copies of the document and feedback forms, and the time of the Conservation Officer for evaluating comments received and amending draft.
17. If, in the future, the document including boundary changes is adopted, one-time advertisement costs for publicising the amended conservation area will occur.

Legal Implications

18. At the time of public consultation there will be none.
19. Conservation area designation (or loss of it) would take effect following the adoption of a new boundary, which would be subject to another Cabinet and a Council meeting.

Estates and Property Advice

20. The proposed boundary changes affect Council land (for example South Park, Skerne Park, the Grange Road Roundabout, etc.).

Carbon Impact and Climate Change

21. The draft appraisal points out that the achievement of sustainable development also encompasses an environmental objective to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment.
22. The draft appraisal also raises some awareness against the use of modern materials that are incompatible with traditional buildings. Modern materials are likely to decrease the insulating properties of traditional structures by trapping water in the walling, potentially leading to long-term damp problems. In addition, they often have a high-carbon footprint and short lifespan.