

HERITAGE POLICIES PAPER – RECOMMENDED CHANGES to POLICIES ENV 1 & ENV 2 IN RESPONSE TO COMMENTS MADE BY HISTORIC ENGLAND

Please note: Recommend changes outlined in this paper are in response to the comments made by Historic England to Policies ENV 1 and ENV 2 of the Draft Local Plan, and have been agreed with Historic England during subsequent discussions. Further changes have been recommended to these policies in relation to other individual comments, and are set out within the main Consultation Summary and Response table.

Safeguarding the Historic Environment

9.1.1 National planning policy⁽²⁰⁾ requires local planning authorities to set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. It emphasises the importance of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and acknowledges the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring.

9.1.2 The historic environment includes areas and buildings, archaeological sites, historic streets and transport routes, historic landscapes, parks and other green spaces. It is a non-renewable, shared resource, and any loss or harm to it is usually irreversible. Understanding the significance of the historic environment and the contribution that the setting of historic assets makes to their significance is essential to guide good decisions about land use change and development affecting them.

9.1.3 As a group, Darlington's archaeology and historic buildings are of considerable significance not least because of its potentially significant railway, industrial and Quaker history. The Borough's designated heritage assets⁽²¹⁾ include:

- Over 550 Listed Buildings;
- 20 Scheduled Monuments;
- 17 Conservation Areas; and
- 2 Registered Parks and Gardens

9.1.4 The Borough also contains a wealth of non-designated heritage and archaeological assets. Non-designated heritage assets can be summarised as parts of the historic environment including buildings, structures, areas and archaeology that are considered by the Local Planning Authority to be locally significant. They can be identified through strategic planning and development management, included on a Local List, and can sometimes be as significant as designated assets.

9.1.5 The origins of the town of Darlington first appeared in writing in 1003. The small Anglo-Saxon settlement experienced medieval growth as a result of Darlington's position in the Durham bishopric. The market flourished to serve an agricultural hinterland and those passing through the town on the Great North Road between London and Edinburgh. Around St Cuthbert's Church, a

²⁰ Chapter 162, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), DCLG, 20192

²¹ Identified on the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Durham County Council's Archaeology Service on behalf of Darlington Borough Council

prominent Grade I listed town centre landmark, grew an ecclesiastical complex, with the Bishop's palace at its heart (1164 -1870). By the 1530s Darlington was described as the best market town in the bishopric outside of Durham. In 1585 a fire destroyed most of medieval Darlington. The town was rebuilt within the medieval streets and burgage plots and this pattern of central yards and wynds survives in the town centre today. There was little building beyond the confines of the medieval settlement, other than the mansions of the influential Quaker families on the fringes of the urban core, until growth was triggered by the arrival of the railway⁽²²⁾.

9.1.6 Opened in 1825, the Stockton and Darlington Railway was funded by Edward Pease a prominent Darlington Quaker as the world's first publicly financed passenger railway. This is covered by a standalone policy (see Policy ENV 2) due to its national significance.

9.1.7 Darlington has particularly significant Quaker history and associated heritage assets. Darlington Quakers played an active part in the government, industry, commerce and development in the town during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were responsible for many of Darlington's landmark Victorian public buildings and manor houses, parks and cemeteries including South Park, the indoor market and clock tower, and the Friends Meeting House. The value and significance of these assets is recognised, for their contribution to the unique identity of the borough and their potential contribution to tourism. Non-designated heritage associated with the Quaker movement includes Elm Ridge Methodist Church and Carmel School.

9.1.8 Darlington has also played a significant role in the development of industry. It has a number of designated heritage assets of significance to industries like leather, tanning, textiles and steel. Designated assets include Tees Cottage Pumping Station and the Cummins building on Yarm Road, the latter being the most contemporary building – constructed in 1965 - to be listed.

9.1.9 'Experience Darlington' is an overarching concept promoting heritage assets as part of the Visitor Economy Strategy⁽²³⁾ that seeks to link and make the most of Darlington's locally distinct heritage as summarised above.

9.1.10 The vision for Darlington's Town Centre Fringe and its historic environment is set out in the Conservation Management Plan⁽²⁴⁾ and aims for the area to be transformed into a vibrant urban area with well-maintained historic buildings, exciting small scale modern development, a thriving tourism industry based on railway heritage and a healthy, accessible river.

9.1.11 The Borough contains a significant Roman settlement at Piercebridge and other characterful rural villages and hamlets. These villages are home to a high concentration of listed vernacular cottages and historic farm buildings and are generally designated as Conservation Areas. Several of the Conservation Area villages are located along the River Tees corridor and this relationship with the river setting is an integral part of their historic and aesthetic value. Walworth Castle is a prominent Grade I listed building in a picturesque rural setting within the Borough. The character of the Borough's rural historic environment and the heritage assets integral to it will be protected, enhanced and promoted.

9.1.12 The Council will support proposals which conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment of Darlington. Particular consideration will be given to ensure that the

²² Gillian Cookson: The Townscape of Darlington (2003)

²³ Experience Darlington: A Visitor Economy Strategy 2016-2026, DBC

²⁴ A Conservation Management Plan for Darlington Town Centre Fringe, 2010, Archaeo-Environment

significance of those elements of the historic environment which contribute most to Darlington's distinctive identity and sense of place are not harmed. These include:

- The buildings, spaces, trackbed and other infrastructure associated with the Stockton and Darlington Railway.
- The medieval streets and burgage plots associated with medieval Darlington.
- Evidence of Roman activity such as the settlement at Piercebridge.
- The mix of buildings and spaces associated with the Quaker movement including Victorian public buildings, manor houses, parks and cemeteries.
- Remnants of Darlington's industrial heritage including leather, tanning, textiles and steel and its associated infrastructure.
- The historic farm buildings and rural villages and hamlets, including those along the River Tees.
- The range of its places of worship.
- Conservation areas and listed buildings across the Borough.
- Key cultural assets encompassing parklands, woodlands, landscapes, canals and riversides, museums, libraries, art galleries, public art, food and drink, customs and traditions.

Policy ENV 1

Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Darlington's Historic Environment

A) Designated heritage assets

Proposals affecting a designated heritage asset (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments, or an archaeological sites of national importance) should conserve those elements which contribute to its significance, including any contribution made by its setting. Harm to such elements will be permitted only where this is clearly justified and outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. Substantial harm or total loss to the significance of a designated heritage asset (or an archaeological site of national importance) will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

Development involving the alteration, extension or change of use of a listed building or construction of any structure within its curtilage must:

- i. protect its significance as a listed building; and
- ii. protect existing historic hard and soft landscaping features including trees, hedges, walls, fences and surfaces; and
- iii. protect historic plot boundaries and layouts; and
- iv. ensure the optimum viable use of the building, where appropriate.

Any development affecting the setting of a listed building will be permitted if the proposal conserves or enhances either its significance and/or the contribution its setting makes to its significance. Proposals involving the demolition of a listed building or structure within the curtilage of a listed building will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances as detailed in national policy.

Development will only be permitted in Parks and Gardens of National Interest where it cannot be accommodated elsewhere, is directly related to the conservation management of the park or garden, and does not harm those elements which contribute to its enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance or setting (including key views from or towards the landscape).

B) Conservation Areas

Proposals affecting development in a conservation area, involving the alteration, extension or change of use of a building or construction of any structure must should preserve and enhance those elements identified in any conservation area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the significance of that area. pay sSpecial attention should be given to:

- i. existing architectural and historic character and associations by having regard to the positioning and grouping, form, scale, massing, detailing of development and the use of materials in its construction; and
- ii. existing hard and soft landscaping features including areas of open space, trees, hedges, walls, fences, watercourses and surfacing and the special character created by them; and
- iii. historic plot boundaries and layouts; and
- iv. the setting of the conservation area.

Built development will not be permitted on public and private open spaces within or adjacent to conservation areas where they make a positive contribution to its setting as identified in the conservation area appraisal ~~are important to the~~ including landscape and/or townscape qualities of the conservation area or provide ~~and~~ views or vistas into, from or within the conservation area, unless it can be demonstrated that the ~~wider~~ public benefit demonstrably outweighs the harm ~~to the heritage asset. These areas will be identified in conservation area character appraisals.~~

The demolition of buildings or structures in a conservation area will not be permitted if:

- v. the building makes a positive contribution to the ~~architectural or historic~~ character and appearance of the conservation area (as identified within the conservation area appraisal); and
- vi. the structural condition of the building is repairable; and
- vii. there are no approved detailed plans for the redevelopment of the site and a contract has not been entered into for the implementation of that redevelopment; and
- viii. there has been insufficient consideration of other options to re-use the building in its current form.

~~B) Listed Buildings~~

~~Development involving the alteration, extension or change of use of a listed building or construction of any structure within its curtilage must:~~

- ~~v. protect its significance as a listed building; and~~
- ~~vi. protect existing historic hard and soft landscaping features including trees, hedges, walls, fences and surfaces; and~~
- ~~vii. protect historic plot boundaries and layouts; and~~
- ~~viii. ensure the optimum viable use of the building, where appropriate.~~

~~Any development affecting the setting of a listed building will be permitted if the proposal conserves or enhances either its significance and/or the contribution its setting makes to its significance.~~

~~Proposals involving the demolition of a listed building or structure within the curtilage of a listed building will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances as detailed in national policy.~~

~~C) Archaeological Sites and Scheduled Monuments~~

Proposals affecting archaeological sites of less than national importance should conserve those elements which contribute to their significance in line with the importance of the remains. In those cases where development affecting such sites is acceptable in principle, mitigation of damage will be ensured through preservation of the remains in situ as a preferred solution. When in situ preservation is not justified, the developer will be required to make adequate provision for

excavation and recording before or during development. Subsequent analysis, publication and dissemination of the findings will be required to be submitted to the local planning authority and deposited with the Historic Environment Record.

Development proposals involving ground disturbance in Areas of High Archaeological Potential (as identified in APPENDIX C), must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report. Householder development and extensions, and alterations to existing commercial premises of 40 metres squared or less, are exempt from this requirement unless the proposed development is likely to affect~~directly affects or is within 50 metres of~~ a Scheduled Monument. ~~Development proposals should also fully consider and protect the setting of Scheduled Monuments.~~

Outside Areas of High Archaeological Potential, planning applications on sites of more than 1 hectare must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation report, unless the area is already known to have been archaeologically sterilised by previous development (such as mineral extraction).

D) Historic Parks and Gardens

~~Development will only be permitted in Parks and Gardens of National Interest where it cannot be accommodated elsewhere, is directly related to the conservation management of the park or garden, and does not harm those elements which contribute to its enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance or setting (including key views from or towards the landscape).~~

DE) Non-Designated Heritage Assets

~~Proposals for the demolition which would remove, harm or undermine the significance of a non-designated heritage assets will only be permitted where the benefits are considered to outweigh the harm to the character of the local area. Proposals must protect and enhance the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, including its setting, through good design.~~

~~Applications involving the demolition of a non-designated heritage building or structure must demonstrate that there is no sustainable use of the building; and proposals for alterations and extensions must be based on a proportionate understanding of the significance of the asset including the structure, and respect the architectural character, and detailing of the original building. The structure, features, and materials of the building that contribute to its architectural and historic interest should be sustained or enhanced with appropriate materials and techniques proportionate to their significance.~~

~~Proposals must protect and enhance the setting of non-designated heritage assets through good design and be proportionate to their significance.~~

EF) Heritage at Risk

~~Proposals that would help to safeguard the significance of and secure a sustainable future for Darlington's heritage assets, especially those identified as being at greatest risk of loss or decay, will be supported. remove heritage assets from the Heritage at Risk Register are encouraged. The Council will support proposals to alter 'Heritage At Risk' where they will result in the optimum, viable and sustainable use. Particular support will be given to schemes that preserve or enhance heritage assets' settings and archaeological remains most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.~~

EG) Securing the optimum viable use

~~If the existing or original use of a heritage asset is no longer viable development proposals will be required to secure the optimum viable alternative use.~~

H) Enabling development

In exceptional circumstances proposals for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with adopted development plans and national policies, but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset may be permitted if:

- i. the development secures the long-term future of an asset and, where applicable, its continued use for an appropriate purpose; and
- ii. the development is necessary to resolve problems arising from the inherent needs of the asset, rather than the circumstances of the present owner, or the purchase price paid; and
- iii. sufficient funding is not available from any other source to support the heritage asset; and
- iv. the amount of enabling development is the minimum necessary to secure the future of the asset and that its form minimises harm to public interests; and
- v. the public benefit of securing the future of the asset significantly outweighs the dis-benefits of the development not being in accordance with other planning policies.

I) Energy efficiency

Retrofitting energy efficiency measures and low carbon technologies into heritage assets will be encouraged where this does not impact on significance, or any harm to significance, and delivers a public benefit to outweigh the harm. [Include a new criterion under Policy DC 1: Sustainable Design Principles criterion b. to read: 'energy efficiency measures and low carbon technologies will be encouraged, where this does not result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset;']

9.1.13~~2~~ The Council has a statutory duty to protect designated heritage assets such as listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments. Great weight will be given to the conservation of heritage assets in line with national planning policy⁽²⁵⁾.

9.1.14 In addition to the Council's statutory obligations regarding the historic environment²⁶, the Council the will:

- a) Seek to identify, protect and enhance local heritage assets;
- b) Promote heritage-led regeneration, including in relation to development opportunities in Darlington's Town Centre Fringe and proposals in relation to the Stockton & Darlington Railway Heritage Action zone;
- c) Produce conservation area appraisals and management plans;
- d) Maintain its positive approach to safeguard the future of heritage assets at risk.
- e) Adopt a proactive approach utilising development opportunities to increase the promotion and understanding of the area's archaeology.

9.1.15~~3~~ The Council will encourage developments promoting the educational, recreational and/or tourism potential of the locally distinct heritage, landmarks and historic villages of the Borough through sensitive management, enhancement and interpretation of these heritage assets as set out in the Visitor Economy strategy.

9.1.16~~4~~ The Council will also seek to deliver the vision for Darlington's Town Centre Fringe over the plan period, to be transformed into a vibrant urban area with well-maintained historic buildings,

²⁵ Paragraphs ~~193~~~~132~~ to ~~197~~~~134~~ of the NPPF

²⁶ Town and Country Planning Act 1990; Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; and, Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Area Act 1979

exciting small scale modern development, a thriving tourism industry based on railway heritage and a healthy, accessible river, as set out in the Town Centre Fringe Conservation Management Plan.

Conservation Areas

9.1.175 In Conservation Areas particular attention must be given in all planning decisions to the desirability of conserving and enhancing a Conservation Area's significance. The Council will consider introducing Article 4 Directions where a Conservation Area is identified as 'At Risk' when annually surveyed by the Local Authority in conjunction with Historic England.

9.1.186 As part of the Council's positive strategy for the historic environment, it will prepare and review Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans for each conservation area, including any proposed new or extended areas, as the basis for determining proposals within or where it would affect the setting of conservation areas.

Listed Buildings

9.1.197 The Borough of Darlington is fortunate in having a large stock of important listed buildings within its boundary, including those associated with the early railways. A listed building can be any kind of structure, such as a signpost, postbox, bridge, or telephone kiosk, for example, and not necessarily a building.

9.1.2018 Any changes affecting the character or appearance of a listed building are likely to require Listed Building Consent. For example historic fabric such as doors, windows, fireplaces and so on are important to the character of the building and consent is likely to be required for their alteration, removal or replacement. Applications for Listed Building Consent are dealt with by the Council's Planning Team, alongside applications for Planning Permission and other planning-related applications (e.g. proposals for a change of use, extension or other alteration to the envelope of the building, or development within its curtilage). It is always advisable to consult the Borough Council's Planning Services section before proceeding with any changes.

Archaeological Sites and Scheduled Monuments

9.1.219 Significant archaeology (designated and non-designated) in the Borough include those from the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval periods. New archaeological investigations and finds continue to be added to the Historic Environment Record (HER) allowing greater understanding of this element of the historic environment. Survey and recording prior to development is an important way of adding to the record, particularly in areas of known local historical interest, such as within designated Conservation Areas, and Areas of High Archaeological Potential (see **APPENDIX C**), where archaeological finds are more likely unless the area has already been archaeologically sterilised by an activity such as mineral extraction.

9.1.220 In line with national planning policy⁽²⁷⁾, applications for development involving ground disturbance within Areas of High Archaeological Potential will require the submission of an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation. Where archaeology is found to be present the Council will require a mitigation strategy involving either preservation in situ, or excavation, analysis and reporting, or a combination of the two. Proposals affecting archaeological sites or monuments will only be approved where a satisfactory mitigation measures

²⁷ NPPF paragraph 18928

can be implemented. Exemptions are made in Policy ENV 1 for small scale householder and commercial development that are unlikely to affect a Scheduled Monument.

9.1.23~~4~~ Outside of the identified Areas of High Archaeological Potential, Durham County Council take the approach that desk-based assessment and field evaluation is required for all development proposals affecting an area of 1 hectare or more, unless it is already known to have been archaeologically sterilised by previous development such as mineral extraction. The reasoning underpinning this is that archaeological investigation and research in recent decades has shown right across the country that the number and geospatial density of archaeological sites is far higher than previously imagined and so the likelihood of encountering archaeology on a site of this size or larger has increased.

Historic Parks and Gardens

9.1.24~~2~~ A Register of Parks and Gardens of "Special Historic Interest" is maintained by Historic England to encourage their protection and conservation but has no associated statutory controls. The two registered sites within Darlington Borough are both Grade II, and both publicly owned: South Park and West Cemetery.

Non-designated Heritage Assets

9.1.25~~3~~ The significance, character and setting of heritage assets of local interest will be identified using the criteria provided at **APPENDIX C** and protected through the development management process (including pre-applications), through plan making (including neighbourhood plans), the production of Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans, and other Council activities.

Heritage at Risk

9.1.26~~4~~ Heritage at Risk includes buildings, structures and sites whose preservation is threatened, often by vacancy or lack of regular repair and maintenance. Darlington Council maintains a register of Grade II Listed Buildings at Risk (available online and on request). The ultimate responsibility for a historic building lies with its owner. However, the Council has the authority to issue enforcement notices to require necessary works to ensure a heritage asset is no longer at risk. These powers are used sparingly; it is in the best interests of all parties if work is carried out voluntarily and before emergency work is required. The Council adopts a proactive approach to heritage at risk by actively engaging in advice for proposals to enhance Heritage at Risk resulting in sustainable uses. Proposals that either secure the future of heritage at risk or prevent assets from becoming 'at risk' in the first place will be encouraged where the significance of the asset can be adequately protected.

Securing the Optimum Viable Use

9.1.27~~5~~ For statutorily protected buildings, those within conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets, the Council will seek to secure the optimum viable use. Keeping a building in its original use is preferred, as it generally has least impact on its character or appearance. It may be converted to a new use, if it can be demonstrated that it will be compatible with the significance and the setting of the historic building, and not detract from other evidential, historic, aesthetic or communal heritage values.

Enabling Development

~~9.1.26 Enabling development will be considered as a last resort when other efforts to secure a sustainable future for Heritage at Risk assets or any other asset that require investment, restoration~~

and repair have failed. The Council will assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies, but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset and offer sufficient benefits in heritage terms, outweigh departing from planning policies. Any assessment will be based upon sound evidence that demonstrates that enabling development is the only way to secure the long term future of the heritage assets.

Energy Efficiency

9.1.27 When considering the alteration, extension or construction of any structure related to historic buildings within conservation areas and which are either listed or of local importance, the council will not prejudice the incorporation of energy efficiency measures and low carbon technologies as long as proposals are in accordance with the principles set out in this policy and the suite of Historic England guidance documents on energy efficiency.

Assessment of Heritage Significance

9.1.28 The Council has a responsibility to consider whether a building or structure is a heritage asset, either designated or non-designated, when exercising its planning powers. In Darlington many heritage assets will be related to the railways, Quaker's and industry but there are assets that have other local significance. The Council intends to produce a Local List, with community involvement and support, that would also include the relevant content of adopted neighbourhood plans. In the meantime, the Council has published a Criteria for Assessing Non-Designated Heritage Assets, based on Historic England guidance. This will enable the identification of non-designated heritage assets as they are brought to the Councils attention, particularly when proposals to alter them are received. Developing community skills and building capacity to identify non-designated heritage assets will help the Council to proactively meet its statutory duties in this regard. The Council is looking at options to set up an interactive way for people to nominate local heritage as well as comment on those put forward by the Council.

9.1.29 National planning policy⁽²⁸⁾ requires applicants to assess the significance of heritage assets likely to be affected by a proposal including any contribution made by its setting⁽²⁹⁾ and the impact of development on them. Further information is available on the Council's website to assist in compiling an assessment of significance. This should be submitted in a Heritage Statement or Heritage Impact Assessment. Potential developers are advised to contact the Council in advance to find out what level of detail will be required, as this will vary for the type and size of proposal, and the number and significance of heritage assets likely to be affected. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Planning Applications

9.1.30 Permission will not be granted for applications which are not fully justified and accompanied by the information necessary to fully assess the impact of the proposal on the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset or assets. Proposals that affect heritage assets should be accompanied a Heritage Impact Assessment to demonstrate that the architectural and historic interest of the structure has been understood and accounted for in any proposals. Proposals that

²⁸ Paragraph 189~~28~~ of the NPPF

²⁹ Historic England defines the setting of a heritage asset as "The surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape"

affect assets of the highest significance⁽³⁰⁾ should also be accompanied by a Statement of Significance, which may form part of a Design and Access Statement.

9.1.31 Where permission is granted for a development which would result in the total or partial loss of a designated heritage asset, approval will be conditional upon the asset being fully recorded and the record and commentary deposited with the Local Planning Authority and the Historic Environment Record.

Protecting, enhancing and promoting the Stockton and Darlington Railway

9.2.1 The route of the Stockton and Darlington Railway through the Borough is mostly intact and still serves a transport function. The route includes several important structures, but only some, such as the scheduled Skerne Bridge, have statutory protection. The area around North Road Railway Station and within the Northgate Conservation Area has a particular concentration of railway heritage, including the Museum, Carriage Works, Lime Cells and Goods Shed and associated Victorian residential terraces. In addition to designated assets, Westbrook Villas, the Coal Drops to the rear of Westbrook Villas and the Railway Tavern Public House on Northgate are examples of non-designated assets to be found in the Borough with strong links to the town's railway heritage.

Policy ENV 2

Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR)

Proposals which will conserve and enhance elements which contribute to the significance of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and its setting, including its trackbed and branchlines, will be supported.

~~Any proposal for development on or within 50 metres of the Stockton and Darlington Railway trackbed, including the branchlines (as indicated on the Policies Map) must~~ Proposals will be supported where they include measures that preserve any physical remains along the route, include site interpretation and their interpretation on site and where appropriate reinstate a legible route where those remains no longer exist.

~~Development proposals that would support~~ Development proposals that would support ~~prejudice the development of the S&DR as a visitor attraction will be encouraged~~ prejudice the development of the S&DR as a visitor attraction will be refused.

~~Any proposals for development of a heritage asset associated with the S&DR must be informed by any research undertaken as part of the Heritage Action Zone, and subsequent planning documents, adopted by the Council.~~

9.2.2 Where a development is on or within 50 metres of the trackbed, or relates to a designated or non-designated heritage asset associated with the route, The 1825 Stockton and Darlington Railway: Historic Environment Audit should inform proposals and accompanying Heritage Statements and Heritage Impact Assessments.

9.2.3 In partnership with Historic England, Durham County Council, Stockton Borough Council and other key stakeholders, the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone initiative (2018-2023) will provide greater understanding of significance through historic area assessments, historic

³⁰ As defined in paragraph 194 b) of the NPPF

buildings assessments and archaeological investigations. Proposals for development associated with the S&DR must be informed by any research undertaken as part of the Heritage Action Zone, and subsequent planning documents, adopted by the Council.

9.2.4 The Council, with its partners, will develop further planning guidance, including a Conservation Management Plan, to ensure the protection, enhancement and promotion of this locally distinct and nationally significant heritage asset in advance of the 2025 bicentenary celebrations.

9.2.5 It is the long term aspiration to create a walking and cycling route along the full 26 mile route of the Stockton and Darlington Railway along with providing associated interpretation, opening up the route for leisure and tourist visits, and as an education resource.