



# **Darlington Borough Council**

## **Towns Fund**

## **Town Investment Plan**

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# Executive Summary

## Darlington – The World’s Original Railway Town

Darlington is a unitary borough in the North East of England, is part of the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and covers an area of 76.3 sq. miles. The Council provides services to a local population of 106,374 (2017). Darlington provides a focal point of activities, services and facilities to populations in South West Durham, North Yorkshire and parts of the Tees Valley and is identified as a cohesive historic market town.

Darlington dates to the 10th Century and the town has several economic, transport and heritage assets across the borough. Notwithstanding its East Coast Mainline Station and its established and growing economy sectors in logistics, advanced engineering and biotechnologies it also has a rich heritage and proud history. Darlington has a unique claim to fame in that is recognised across the globe as the birthplace of the modern railway, with strong Quaker influences that were the building blocks of the engineering era of the industrial revolution.

**The 200th anniversary of the birthplace of the modern passenger railway will be in 2025, providing a golden opportunity to make more of this unique history as a corner stone to a wider urban regeneration of the town.**

## Challenges

As with many towns, Darlington has experienced a relatively low investment to take full advantage of its inherent strengths and Darlington’s Towns Board recognise that we have several challenges, including:

- The lowest workplace and residence-based earnings in the Tees Valley.
- A high proportion of young people, 18-24, not in work, education or training (NEETs) whilst local graduates often leave the Borough to find “good jobs”.
- Adult in-work poverty.
- Issues of basic literacy and numeracy including digital skills.
- There remain significant differences between prosperous and less prosperous areas
- Poor quality housing stock
- High numbers of empty properties in the town centre
- Over reliance on retail in the town centre
- Low levels of commercial property in the town centre
- Only 220 residential properties, giving an unbalanced town centre
- A need to address declining levels of town centre footfall
- The challenge of regenerating the town centre when recent large-scale retail led schemes have failed

## **Our Towns Board Vision:**

As a Town Board we are confident our vision aligns with strategic plans and serves as an inspiration to ensure delivery of our intervention proposals.

### **The Towns Fund Vision:**

***“Through targeted capital investment and by taking advantage of our unique passenger railway heritage and our growth potential we will ensure Darlington has a strong economic and sustainable future which builds on its sense of place and offers opportunities for all”***

# Context Analysis

## Intervention Programme:

Darlington is seeking **£25m** of Towns Fund monies as part of a total investment of £74.575m. In line with our vision, our projects include heritage driven improvements, along with high quality residential and mixed-use developments, public realm enhancements and improved skills infrastructure. Which will align to transform the town centre and two of the town's key gateways.

Central to these interventions is Darlington's role in the creation of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR), and the birth of passenger railways in 1825.



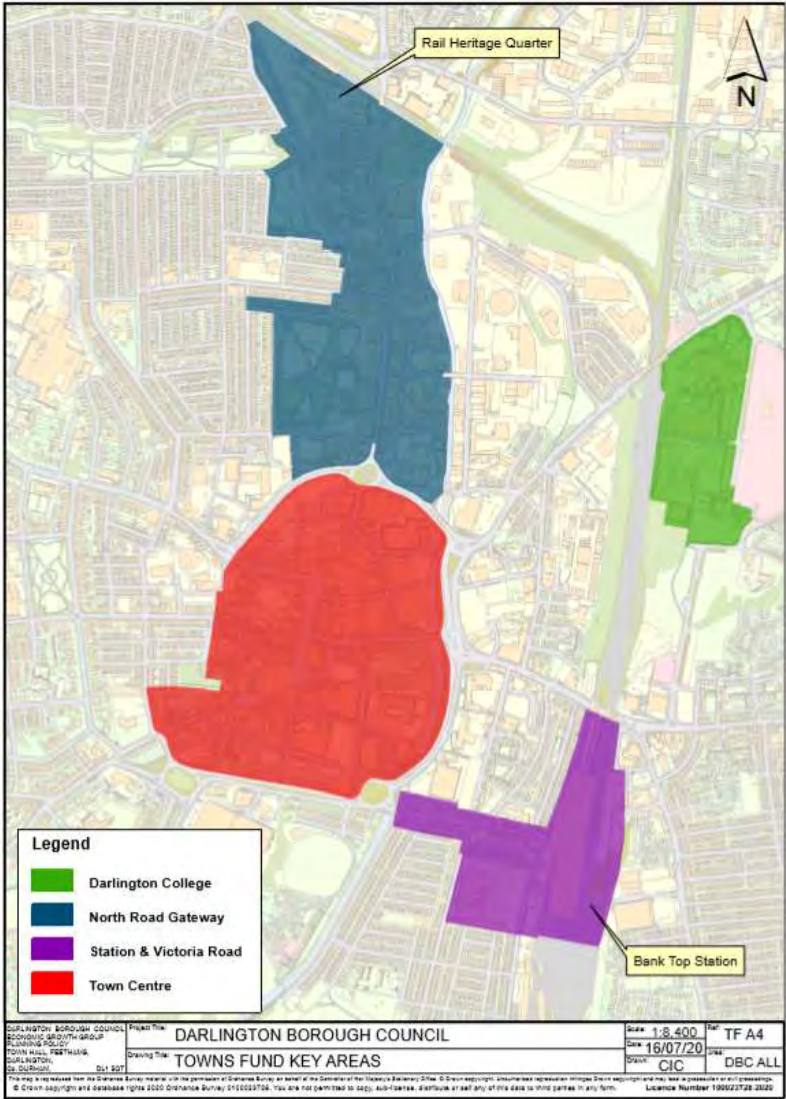
The relevance of the railway and the innovation generated within the town nearly 200 years ago, remains as strong as ever today. The railway was created to enable transportation and to connect people together, this need for connectivity remains as strong in our modern era.

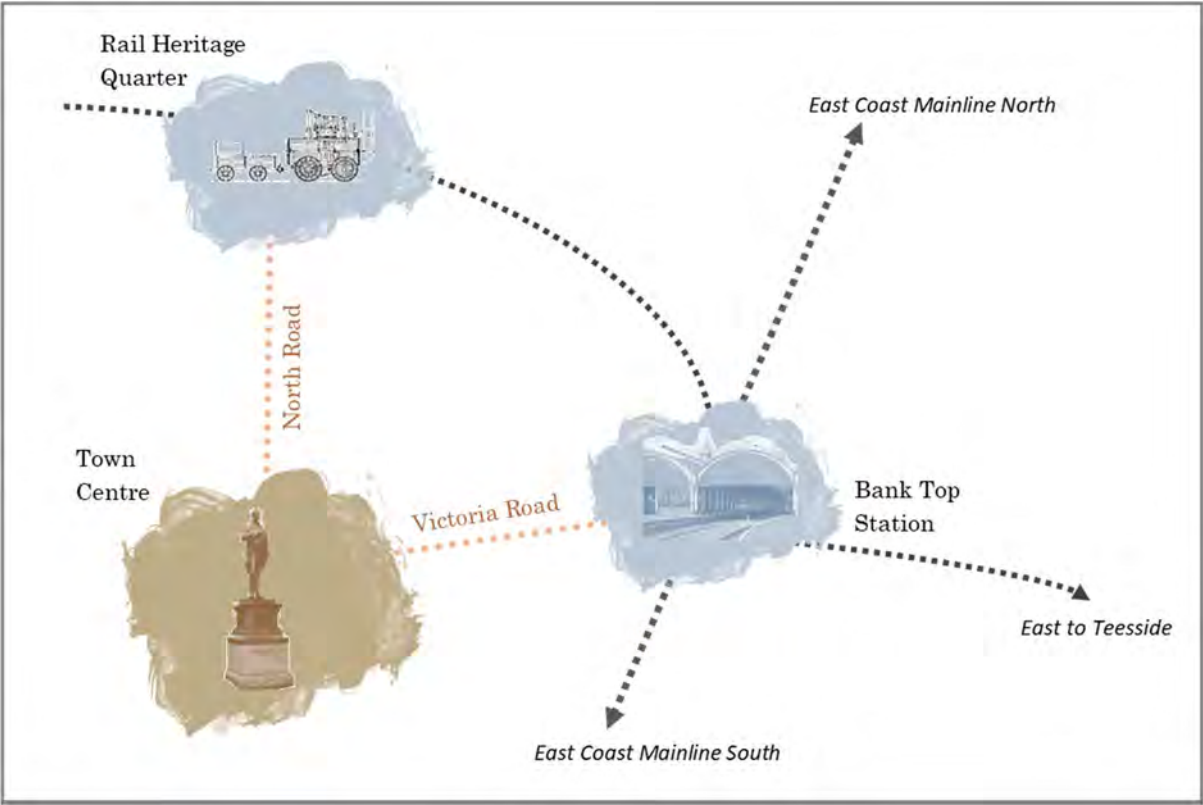
This forms a drive to capitalise on the key asset of Bank Top Station, which is set to benefit from £80m investment from Network Rail to modernise the station itself, and link via Victoria Road gateway down into the town centre, and onwards up the North Road gateway to the Rail Heritage Quarter (RHQ).



Darlington is an important calling point for HS2. Faster journeys and extra capacity will better link the advanced manufacturing and energy industries of the Tees Valley, including the developing UK’s largest industrial zone, with innovation hubs in the West and Midlands.

Map and Graphic of Key Intervention Areas:





Intervention Projects:

This matrix illustrates the alignment of our projects to the **Intervention Framework** and how they align with the objectives of; **heritage**, **clean growth**, and provision of **green space**.

Intervention Project	Key Area	Overview	Local Transport	Digital Connectivity	Urban Regeneration	Arts, Culture and Heritage	Skills Infrastructure	Enterprise Infrastructure	Heritage	Clean Growth	Green Spaces
Rail Heritage Quarter	North Road	Major heritage visitor attraction									
Northgate House & North Road	North Road	Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration									
Edward Pease House	North Road	Urban and heritage regeneration									
Linear Park and Skerne Corridor	North Road	Creation of green corridor and urban regeneration									
Victoria Road	Victoria Road	Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration									
Bank Top Station & Cattle Mart	Victoria Road	Major improvements to infrastructure and housing									
Skinnergate & The Yards	Town Centre	Enhanced public realm and town centre regeneration									
Adult learning space	Town Centre	Adult learning infrastructure									
T Levels Facility	Town Centre	Specialist T Levels infrastructure									



Clean growth means growing our national income while cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Achieving clean growth, while ensuring an affordable energy supply for businesses and consumers, is at the heart of the UK's Industrial Strategy.

*The **outcomes** from the interventions will include;*

- *Improved perception of Darlington by residents, businesses, and visitors*
- *Increased numbers visiting the towns heritage and cultural venues and events*
- *Opportunities provided for adaptable and flexible working*
- *Improved digital connections, within increased numbers connecting*
- *Improved and new sustainable transport opportunities locally and regionally*
- *Increased numbers of learners gaining recognised qualifications to get them job ready*
- *Provision of space to encourage enterprise and development/retention of new business*
- *The development of a sustainable and a diverse, vibrant town centre as a place to go, from revitalised neighbourhoods*

*Creating **economic growth** and building on our strong sense of place for our communities and visitors.*

## Darlington – Town Boundary and Context

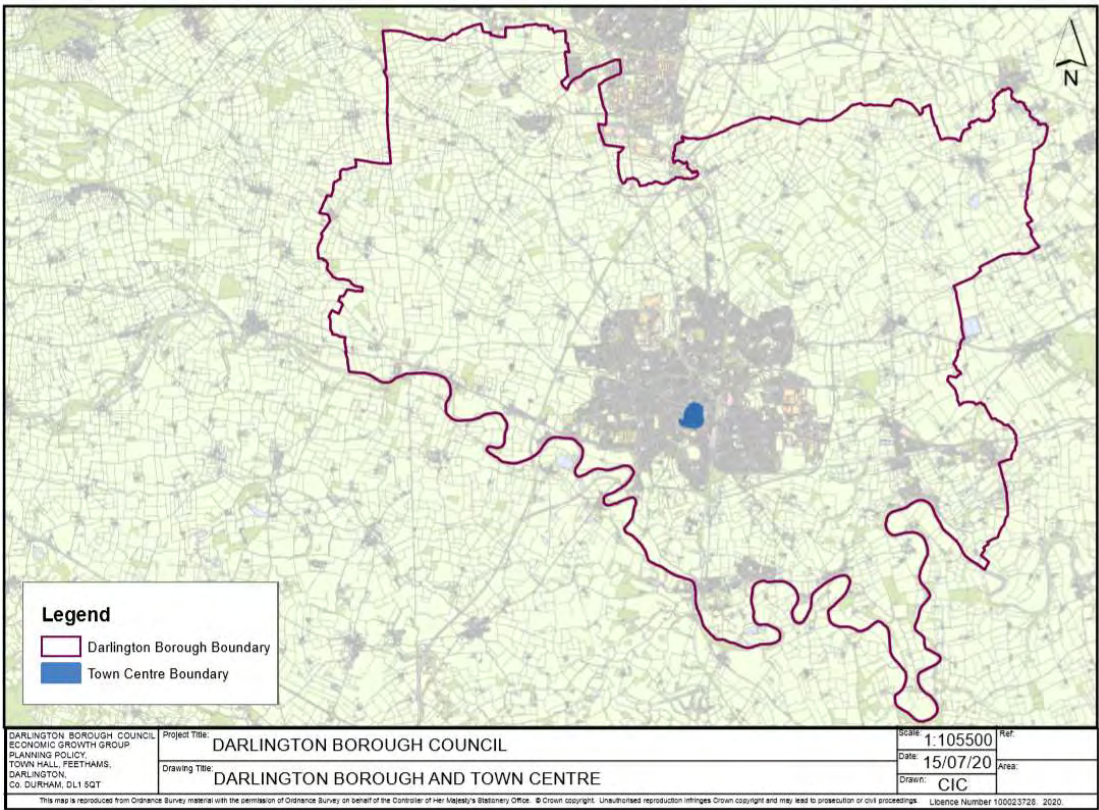
Darlington is a unitary borough in the North East of England, is part of the TVCA and covers 76.3 sq. miles. The Council provides services to a local population of 106,374 (2017). A focal point of activities, services and facilities to populations in South West Durham, North Yorkshire and parts of the Tees Valley and is identified as a cohesive historic market town.

Excellent transport connectivity:

- Less than 10 miles from Teesside International Airport.
- Two railway stations - the historic local station, North Road and the main station, known as Bank Top, connecting to all points on the network including the main east coast mainline.
- Connected to the strategic road network. A1(M) North/South and A66 East/West.

As a result of these strong transport links, an additional 100,000 people live within a 15-minute drive of Darlington.

Map of the town boundary and town centre:



Darlington’s Town Centre Strategy describes the borough as being monocentric with the town centre being the focal point for retail and leisure facilities. Darlington town centre ranked 58th in the UK Shopping Venue Rankings, this ranked it third highest in the North East region behind Newcastle City Centre and the Metrocentre at Gateshead. Despite this ranking, the town centre continues to suffer pressures from out-of-town retail offerings, and increasingly during the Covid-19 lockdown, online shopping.

The population of Darlington has increased steadily - 7.8% has been recorded over the past 20 years. Lower than the corresponding rates recorded in the UK, although exceeding the North East average (3.8%).

Darlington’s population has a slightly older profile than the North East and Great Britain. Just over a fifth of Darlington’s population in 2018 (20.3%) are aged over 65 compared to 18.4% in Great Britain<sup>1</sup>. ONS population projections<sup>2</sup> show that Darlington’s population is expected to demonstrate limited levels of growth over the next 25 years. However, the proportion of the town’s older age population will increase dramatically. Projections suggest that 28.2% of Darlington’s population will be aged over 65 by 2040, an increase in 9,000 people within this age group. This will create increased demand for houses and residential accommodation desirable with this demographic.

<sup>1</sup> Source: ONS population estimates, 2018  
<sup>2</sup> Source: ONS population projections, 2016

Feedback in the development of Darlington's Town Centre Strategy showed support for town centre living, particularly amongst the older people's focus group - easy access to local amenities. The forecast increase in older people within the local population and this group's receptiveness to town centre living provide an opportunity to provide a new market for intergenerational living in the town centre.

## Interventions overview

The Town Intervention Plan (TIP) guides the reader through the document, showing evidenced need, demand and challenges. A well-structured intervention programme aligned with strategies will capitalise on identified opportunities to deliver on the vision.

- What are the known challenges for Darlington?
- Evidenced by Needs and Demands
- Strengths/Assets
- Identify opportunities
- Agreeing the Vision
- Aligning with strategies and policy
- Develop the Intervention Programme/Projects
- Capitalise on opportunities
- Deliver the outcomes
- Enable Economic Growth

### Themes running throughout the TIP:

- Establish a vibrant, diverse and sustainable **Town Centre**
- Ensure our **unique heritage** is saved and attracts visitors
- Grow **sustainable communication** networks across the town, regionally and nationally
- Provide quality and flexible **housing** where needed.

## Challenges facing Darlington

Darlington is the third smallest unitary authority in England and whilst this lack of size provides its challenges, the town and its people rise to this. It is a proud and well-connected town, locally and nationally, forward thinking, with a strong history.



#### Key challenges:

- We have the lowest workplace and residence-based earnings in the whole of the Tees Valley – we need to attract and/or support the creation of, higher value employment;
- We have a high and increasing proportion of young people, 18-24, not in work, education or training (NEETs) whilst local graduates often leave the Borough to find “good jobs” elsewhere. The challenge is to improve access to skills, work experience and employment for young people;
- Adult in-work poverty – over reliance on low waged, insecure and part-time work;
- Our young people are not considered “work ready” by employers, often measured against the qualifications they gain, with broader skills and attitudes taking less priority. The challenge is to improve the relationship between education and business. Achieving a better understanding of business requirements, is a priority;
- Challenges relating to basic literacy and numeracy including digital skills. Darlington remains below the national average on indicators such as English and Maths GCSE grades;
- Businesses often move out of Darlington when seeking new premises, due to the lack of commercial premises. 8.2% of properties in the town centre are commercial, against 50% nationally;
- There remain significant differences between the more prosperous and less prosperous areas within the Borough, with specific wards experiencing the highest levels of worklessness;
- Over reliance on retail in the town centre, which is 55% in Darlington compared to 26% nationally;
- Lack of residential property in the town centre, with only 220 properties;
- The challenge created by the above is that the town centre is currently unbalanced, with too much reliance on retail and associated declining levels of footfall. The Town Centre Strategy (2019-2030) highlights an 18% reduction in footfall in the last three years. The highest levels of footfall are along the streets comprising of primary shops fronts and activity dissipates around the periphery;
- Growing property vacancy rates in the town centre, where 16.5% of the units were empty in 2018. Recent trends have been larger scale brands (e.g. BHS or TK Maxx) relocating to out of town shopping centres or closing completely;
- The challenge of regenerating the town centre when recent large-scale retail led schemes have failed. Efforts to revitalise the town centre via a flagship retail development have failed to come forward. The Oval development was proposed and given planning permission for a £100m, 394,000 square foot complex at Commercial Street. The scheme was due to include 34 shops, five restaurants, two leisure units and a multi-screen cinema. Market conditions led to the scheme not coming forward. The required Gross Development Values and the wider high street trends both nationally and in Darlington suggest it is unlikely that future high street values will allow such retail and leisure scheme to come forward to regenerate the town centre without public sector support;
- Poor quality housing stock in some areas of town, including the Wards within our intervention programme;

#### Impact of COVID-19:

‘The Impact of COVID-19 in Darlington’ report, states that whilst the aim of the report is to provide an overview of the impacts to date of COVID-19 and as best an estimate as is possible of what can be expected to occur over the medium-term across all wellbeing domains, a crucial finding is that the number of unknowns vastly outweigh the number of knowns at this point in

time. However, the report does provide an up to date and detailed picture of the current situation in Darlington.

What is clear however is that while COVID-19 has affected everyone, it is affecting some much harder than others. That disadvantaged groups are being disproportionately impacted and are likely to continue being so has clearly emerged as a common theme across the various domains analysed in this report. As the World Economic Forum are already warning, without adequate investments from governments “there is a real risk that inequalities and social deprivation will increase”.

## The Need for Intervention within Darlington

The areas of town within this TIP are some of the more deprived areas of Darlington. Northgate and Park East Wards, which includes the Town Centre.

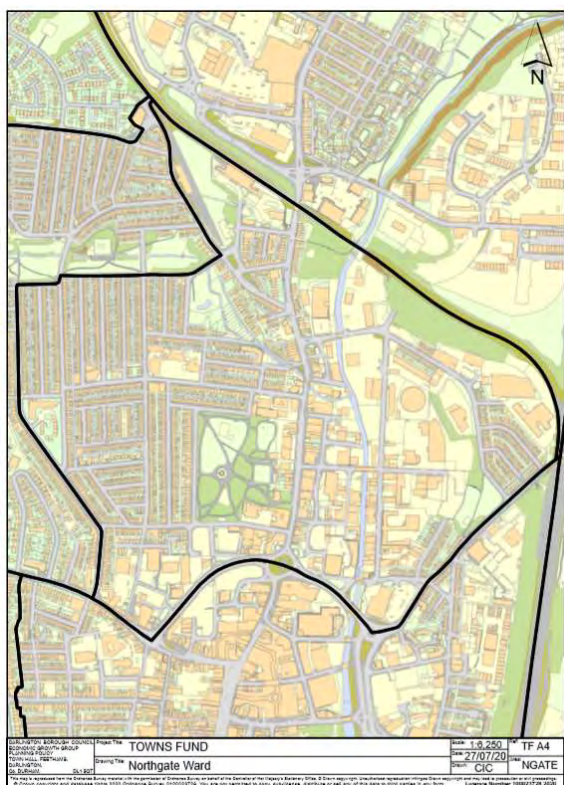
### **Northgate:**

Northgate - a diverse community, with multiple communities, ranks highly within Darlington for the following measures:

- Unemployment benefit (JSA/Universal Credit): 9.3% (6.6% England)
- Youth Unemployment (18-24): 13.9% (8.8% England)
- People with mental health issues (IB/ESA): 5.6% (2% England)
- Universal Credit claimants: 16.6% (5.8% England)
- Vacant Dwellings: 9.1% (4.3% England)
- Burglary (rates per 1,000 residents): 36.6 (15% England)
- Emergency hospital admissions (rate): 153.5 (101 England)
- Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Income Score (rate): 27.6%
- IMD2019 Employment Score (rate): 21.4%
- Households in poverty: 36.2%

It also ranks as the lowest ward for the following measures:

- Net annual household income estimate after housing costs: £18,724
- IMD2019 rank (smaller is more deprived): 3810
- IMD2019 Health Deprivation and Disability rank: 3729
- IMD2019 Crime rank: 2069
- IMD2019 Living Environment rank: 11888
- IMD2019 Wider Barriers Sub-domain rank: 21625
- Local social relationships (average score): -0.037
- Belonging (average score): -0.080



### Northgate Ward:

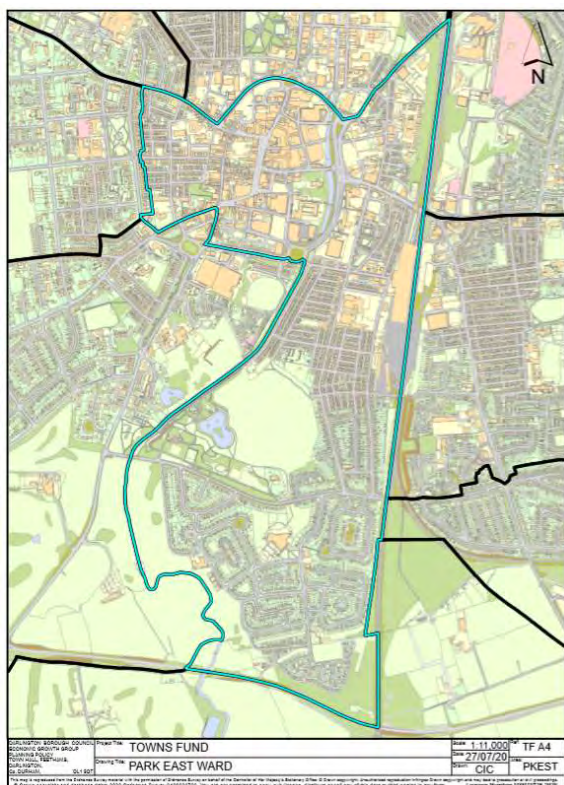
An area of long-standing deprivation with residents suffering severe health inequalities and outcomes as a result, most notably healthy life expectancy: male healthy life expectancy is just 53, 9 years below the borough average, whilst females can expect just 60 years of health, compared to an average of 64.

### Park East:

Park East is a Ward which includes the Town Centre, also ranks highly for several of the similar measures:

- Unemployment benefit (JSA/Universal Credit): 12.6% (6.6% England)
- Youth Unemployment (18-24): 19.8% (8.8% England)
- Children living in Poverty: 33% (17% England)
- People with mental health issues (IB/ESA): 5.6% (2% England)
- Universal Credit claimants: 11.3% (5.8% England)
- Vacant Dwellings: 7.7% (4.3% England)
- Burglary (rates per 1,000 residents): 23.1% (15% England)
- Emergency hospital admissions (rate): 141 (101 England)
- People with no Qualifications: 32% (22% England)

Similar to Northgate, Park East Ward is an area of long-standing deprivation with residents suffering severe health inequalities and outcomes as a result, most notably healthy life expectancy: male healthy life expectancy is just 56, 6 years below the borough average, whilst females expect just 60 years of health, compared to an average for Darlington of 64.



### Park East Ward:

Further data is available for Darlington and specific Wards at this link:

<https://darlington.communityinsight.org/#>

Provided by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (**OCSI**) a research consultancy from the Social Disadvantage Research Centre at the University of Oxford.

### The Impact of COVID-19 in Darlington:

Nationally there are fears that unemployment could continue to grow to 15%. It can be noted that pre-Covid unemployment benefit claims in the two Wards included in the TIP stand at 9.3% and 12.6%.

The Impact of COVID-19 in the Darlington report draws conclusions that demand for public services is likely to increase significantly following lockdown, as a wave of hidden family crises, health conditions and artificially deferred evictions emerge.

The Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP) has estimated a potential fall in Darlington GVA of 33 % for the third quarter.

There is likely to be significant risk over the medium-term with regard to survival rates of town centre businesses, as lower disposable income for many residents translates into reduced demand for leisure, retail and hospitality in particular and due to people's buying habits having shifted even further online during lockdown.

11,600 Darlington residents were being supported by the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at the end of May, along with 27% of the workforce nationally. Whilst this intervention will have hopefully saved many residents employment some estimates predict that up to 30% (3,480) of those could yet find themselves unemployed come October when the Scheme ends.

Overall, 24% of jobs in Darlington are estimated to be at risk according to analysis by the RSA19.



Our interventions provide a joined-up collaborative, flexible and adaptable approach, allowing the manner in which they are delivered to fully consider impacts and maximise opportunity for mitigation and success.

**Work readiness and soft skills:**

**National research provides:**

**CBI 2019 - 'Getting Young People Work Ready'**

"While 45% of businesses rank work readiness as the most important factor they look for when recruiting, 44% feel that young people leaving school, college or university are not work ready." And "Almost 1 in 4 young people don't feel adequately prepared by the education for the world of work."

**TVCA - Inspiring our Future Skills Strategy**

"Business leaders continue to tell us that our available labour force is too often ill-prepared for work. They highlight that enterprise, entrepreneurial spirit and creativity are often not evident or recognised as critical skills yet are highly valued by employers."

**Tees Valley Careers.com website**

"Research shows that young people who receive four or more meaningful engagements with employers between the ages of 11-16 years are 86% less likely to be unemployed or not in education, employment and training."

**Learning and Work Institute – Youth Commission 2019**

"90% of jobs need basic computer skills, but international research shows that around one half of adults in England lack the basic skills to effectively use computers."

## Recognised Demand

Our developing Local Plan determines the housing requirements within the borough to meet a minimum requirement of 422 net additional dwellings per annum over the plan period from 2016 to 2036. This results in a total net minimum requirement of 8,440 dwellings.

The housing target makes an allowance for economic growth and 7,000 full time equivalent additional jobs over the plan period.

In 2018 Oxford Economics provided Darlington with projections of anticipate jobs growth in the following sectors:

Professional, scientific and technical activities (+600);

Administration/support services (+500);

Information/Communications (+300);

Human health and social work (+200);

Culture (+300).

Whilst allowance must now be factored in for the impacts of Covid-19, the jobs growth across these sectors remains anticipated.

The identified housing target will be met in full through the delivery of housing from a variety of sources. With 8.4% of the housing growth being within the main urban area.

### Local Plan housing proposals within the TIP include:

**Northgate House redevelopment** – 69 new units. With potential for more.

**The Cattle Mart site** – 76 new units.

In addition to this our TIP proposals look to contribute to demand within our intervention project at **Skinnergate & The Yards**, with 16 new residential and live work units.

Further residential will be provided on brownfield sites along the **River Skerne corridor**.

Data shows the number of people currently on the Housing Register, providing an indication of demand for social housing. As of December 2019, the register recorded a total of 1,612 on the housing register.

The following trends are observed:

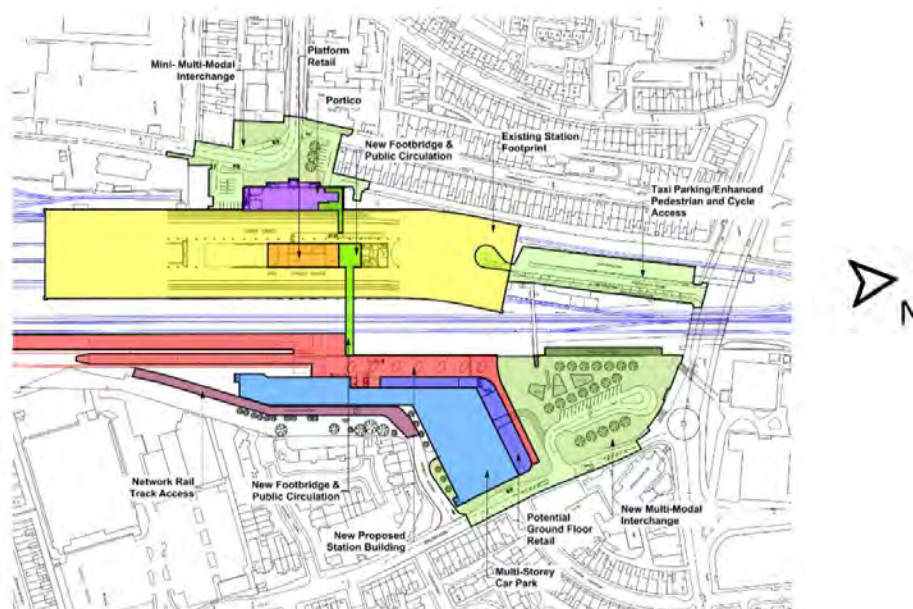
- Darlington's social housing is predominantly outside of the town centre.
- Number of bids registered for social housing suggests a strong demand for town centre residential social housing. During 2019, 148 properties in Darlington town centre were advertised generated 2,102 bids.

Our Local Plan, TVCA, and associated strategies recognise the need to protect our rail heritage, conservation areas, and green spaces.

The **RHQ** will open up access to the Skerne Bridge and other historical elements of the world's first passenger railway site, along with ensuring the important Edward Pease House is saved and opened up for the community, creating a link to important town centre heritage, of which the Pease House, Joseph Pease statue, clock tower and indoor market are a number of these.

There is a demand for improvements to **Bank Top Station**, a major transport hub serving 600,000 passengers per year. Investment will provide the facilities commensurate with a station that Transport for The North and Network Rail are investing heavily in to, to address constraints in train capacity that undermine the East Coast Mainline, and to ensure it can perform as a major hub for HS2.

### Bank Top Station proposals:



## Darlington's Strengths and Assets

Darlington continues to be a thriving, vibrant and successful market town. We have a population with a passionate connection to the town, with many high-quality buildings and good town/people's parks creating an excellent place to spend time.

The indoor Market Hall and Clock Tower, featured on the Towns Fund Prospectus, and whose bells are the sister bells to those in the Elizabeth Tower at the Houses of Parliament.

Perhaps our strongest asset relates to communication and our **modern and historic links to the railways**.

The mainline station is a 10-minute walk from the town centre, from which the centre of London can be reached in less than 2½ hours, whilst to the north, Newcastle is 30 minutes away and Edinburgh 2 hours.

In 2025 Darlington has ambitions to be a globally significant visitor attraction celebrating the birthplace of the modern passenger railway in 1825. As the starting point of this journey we are developing the RHQ attracting visitors to an experience that will reveal and celebrate the importance of the S&DR to a global audience.

The RHQ possesses nationally significant heritage assets such as:

- the original 1825 track bed;
- the £5 note Skerne Bridge, and;
- Locomotion No 1.

The RHQ is perfectly placed for visitors to enjoy a host of wider cultural attractions throughout Tees Valley and within a 30 minute walk of the mainline rail station via the town centre, and a half hour travel time from NRM Locomotion Shildon and York, Kynren/Auckland Palace at Bishop Auckland and Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle.

The rail heritage of Darlington is unique to the town, there is nowhere else in the world that is able to say it is the birthplace of passenger railway, and the heritage offer does not stop at the RHQ.

A visit to Darlington will not be complete without a visit to the town centre, able to reflect its strong history:

- Edward and Joseph Pease, alongside George Stephenson, define the industrial age. A statue to Joseph Pease stands at the junction of High Row and Bondgate in the centre of Darlington. Unveiled in 1875, the golden anniversary of the opening of the S&DR.
- Joseph became an MP introducing a bill against the Cruelty to Animals Act 1835 (the 'Pease Act'). The foundations of the RSPCA. He was also an ardent anti-slavery campaigner.
- The Clock Tower, historic indoor Market and the wynds/yards.





Linking out into the wider North East region and further afield, the 26-mile HAZ Cycle and Walkway is to be created along the route of the original S&DR. **A 26-mile strip of countryside in the North East of England that transformed the world.**

## Our key opportunities

Notwithstanding these needs, demands, and challenges, Darlington with our partners TVCA have continued to deliver growth and address challenges.

In recent years we have delivered:

- Feethams Grade, 30,000sqft A1 offices in the town centre – £8M
- The Hippodrome Theatre refurbishment - £13M
- DL1 Leisure Park £30m
- Department of Education Building - £8.5m
- Riverside Park £1.5m

**We continue to identify our opportunities** and prioritise to address needs; challenges; and demands.

Whilst our TIP is not a recovery plan, it is clear that the opportunities presented by the Towns Fund will significantly contribute to and join up with other recovery initiatives within the town, regionally and nationally, to enable sustainable economic growth. Darlington is working in partnership with Durham County Council and the Tees Valley Mayors Office, taking forward a recovery plan, which has an action plan to reduce the impact of Covid-19 and provide opportunities where it is able.

This has developed an intervention programme approach within the TIP focusing on three key areas:

- **The Town Centre.** Central to our TIP and the growth of the town into the future. It is the hub of the wheel holding the programme together.
- **The North Road Gateway.** The key communications route between the town centre and the Rail Heritage Quarter.
- **The Victoria Road Gateway.** The key communication route between the town centre and the mainline rail station at Bank Top.

## Existing projects, providing additionality:

### Town Centre:

#### FHSF – Town Centre Residential Quarter

Darlington is seeking £7.7m of FHSF monies as part of a £32.8m high quality housing led regeneration scheme to transform the town centre regenerating vacant sites and premises, exploiting the potential to open-up the River Skerne via high quality public realm improvements. The proposed scheme will contribute towards Darlington's need to increase the number of affordable homes and meet ambitious housing demands and become a catalyst for change in the town centre.

See **Annex 5**.

DARLINGTON - FUTURE HIGH STREET



Complemented by the Skinnergate & The Yards intervention, providing residential and mixed use on the other side of the town centre.

**Victorian Indoor Market:**

Darlington BC together with partner Market Asset Management Limited have commenced a circa £4m investment into its iconic Victorian Indoor Market. The development features a re-development and re-purposing of the market hall to provide a street food scene, bar and events stage and enhanced entrance.

We will produce and manage a full events diary and focus our efforts on driving family-based evening economy to benefit the market and the wider town-centre and to dovetail with our recent successful outdoor markets and events, which are all set to continue. Further phases included will involve a face-lift to the remaining shop floor of the market providing a more exciting place to shop and a mezzanine level business centre

The final phase of this exciting development will include the construction of a temperate garden and redevelopment of large sections of the market vaults into a bar and restaurant.

Acting as a catalyst in ensuring that Darlington town centre becomes a regional attractor for visitors across the Tees Valley, Durham and North Yorkshire.

**Skinnergate Redevelopment:**

Existing development proposals cover the redevelopment of the properties facing Skinnergate through to Raby Terrace.

Replaced with new build consisting of 16 residential properties including three 'pop up' shops with living accommodation above.

The first stage in encouraging additional residential and live/work accommodation within this historic area of the town centre.

This project is an integral part of the Skinnergate & The Yards Intervention, which expands the project into public realm enhancements along Skinnergate and transformational improvements within the yards. See **Annexes 1 and 6** showing 'Project Darling'. Phase 1 is in Forward Funding proposals.

## Project Darling;



Buckton's Yard:

In recent years, the yards have suffered a decline which has reduced footfall for the small independent businesses that reside there.

It is our intention in Phase 1 of this project to revive Clarke's & Buckton's yards leading to an enlivened experience for all.

A flavour of the new yards.

For Phase 1, European courtyards, The Lanes in Brighton, Neal's Yard in London, and The Shambles in York, have provided us with role models to create a new phase of flexibility and playfulness for Darlington's Yards.

Further detail in **Annex 6**.



## **The North Road Gateway**

### **Railway Heritage Quarter (RHQ)**

This project will see the RHQ developed into a new internationally significant major visitor attraction by 2024 so that it can be a central part of the bi-centenary celebrations of the S&DR in 2025. Essential improvements to a number of historic buildings, including a new immersive experience ride which will be a full media environment within a 'black box' with a capacity for 30 people, café and shop, themed play area and a new live engineering building.

Our vision in the TIP and the Darlington Visitor Strategy identifies this as a key priority and an opportunity to build on railway heritage and economy.

## **The Victoria Road Gateway**

### **Bank Top Station:**

Darlington Bank Top Station is a major hub serving 600,000 passengers per year and supporting 1,400 jobs. The surrounding area desperately requires consolidation and the expansion of parking provision and improved facilities to support public transport, pedestrian, cycle and car users improving accessibility.

The project entails acquiring properties to create the new gateway on the east side of the existing station, where the transport interchange, new station, multi-storey car park and associated concessions will be built. These will improve the efficiency of access, improve safety and greatly enhance an area of the town that is of poor quality. It also creates an impressive connection to Central Park – an important, hi-tech commercial business park.

### **Rethinking Victoria Road:**

This project is a key component of the Victoria Gateway proposals, sitting between Bank Top Station and the town centre.

Victoria Road is a busy commercial road connecting Darlington town centre and Bank Top station. It will improve the highway and public realm along the route forming a more effective and pleasant pedestrian, cycle, and vehicular route linking the station and the town centre.



## Towns Fund Forward funding:

The TIP is aligned with proposals within the Towns Fund Forward funding of £1M, which is to fund projects having immediate impact within 2020/21.

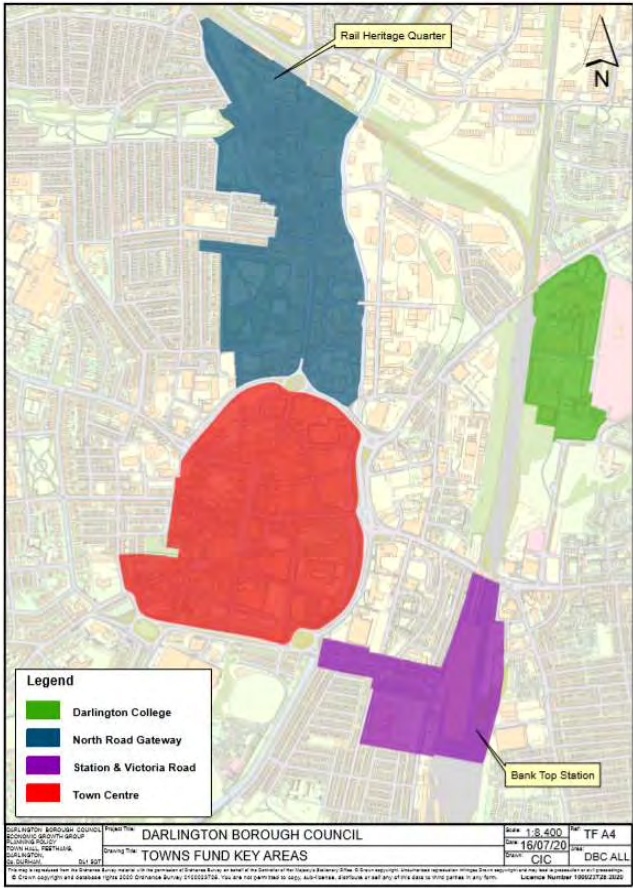
The letter explaining proposals for this £1M is in **Annex 11**.

In summary the additional funding has provided opportunity to:

- Undertake **The Yards 'Project Darling' Phase 1** project, adjacent to and linking Skinnergate and the Indoor Market, which will transform the yards, creating green space and breathe life into this historic area of the town centre - £270,000.
  - Skinnergate & The Yards Phase 2 will build on initial investment.
- Undertake a transformational **Lighting project** within the external Market area, lighting up the Clock Tower and other features in the town centre during the dark winter months - £100,000
  - the first step in works proposed to the indoor market and the links up through the Yards.
- Provision of **Town Centre Wifi** across much of the centre, attracting footfall and providing new opportunity for communications between business, community and visitors.
  - Further WiFi through the two Gateways will form Phase 2.
- Securing the **acquisition of Northgate House**, a redundant office block, empty for over 10 years, which will open the way for the delivery of a significant intervention within our TIP. Adjacent to the Town Centre and at the gateway to North Road.

These forward funded projects provide Darlington with a cohesive strategy to ensure we are able to adapt and maximise the benefits of all opportunities.

The TIP is focused on the **three key areas**. Ensuring alignment with **other capital developments** and the **forward funding** proposals as referenced above.



Location of areas. Shows our spatially joined up approach.

# Strategy

## Strategy Alignment

### Darlington Town Vision

As a Town Board we are confident our vision aligns with funding streams and strategic plans, including:

- Tees Valley Combined Authority Local Industrial Strategy
- Darlington Borough Council Emerging Local Plan
- Darlington's Town Centre Strategy
- Visitor Economy Strategy
- Darlington Borough Council's Climate Change Strategy

Our TIP is focused within the town centre and along two key gateway areas. Across these areas we have intervention projects aligned together across the six intervention themes, providing multiple outputs and target outcomes.

### Our vision within the Towns Fund is:

***“Through targeted capital investment and by taking advantage of our unique passenger railway heritage and our growth potential we will ensure Darlington has a strong economic and sustainable future which builds on its sense of place and offers opportunities for all”***

### Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA)

As a member of the TVCA, many of the Council's strategic objectives are aligned to the TVCA Industrial Strategy, Housing Strategy, Cultural Strategy and Transport Strategy. Most of our large-scale funding for economic development projects and growth, transport and heritage are accessed via the TVCA through the Tees Valley Investment Strategy.

The TVCA recognises the importance of town centres to economic growth, the attraction of new investment and skilled workers, and boosting of civic pride. DBC and TVCA aims to attract new employment in knowledge intensive business sectors such as: professional services and digital and creative industries which will diversify town centres from an existing overreliance on the retail sector. In addition, the TVCA recognises that the heritage and culture economy can provide opportunities to further extend the working life of many town centres and to develop the evening economy. More vibrant centres will help to retain more of its talented and well qualified young people and attract skilled workers from elsewhere, linking town centre vibrancy to the whole area.

### Darlington's Local Plan

The NPPF makes it clear that local plans should promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for their management and growth.



Our emerging Local Plan indicates that Darlington Town Centre should grow and retain its status as a sub-regional shopping centre serving a wider catchment for retail, leisure and services. Strengthening the Town Centre by challenging new main town centre uses is vital if Darlington is to fulfil this. <https://microsites.darlington.gov.uk/local-plan>.

### **Darlington's Town Centre Strategy 2019-2030**

The success of Darlington Town Centre is central to the wider economic strategy for the Borough. Darlington Town Centre has some strong assets in its fine architecture, Victorian Indoor Market and a town centre retail offer which has fared relatively well in difficult circumstances. In addition, the town centre has also seen some significant investment in recent years with the development of Feethams Leisure site in 2016 which brought to the town a new cinema, restaurants and hotel. In addition, the completion of the refurbishment of the Hippodrome Theatre has greatly enhanced Darlington's cultural and leisure offer.

**"By 2030, Darlington Borough Council working together with partners and local communities, will deliver real positive change to our town centre, placing it at the heart of our community for years to come."**

It will:

- (a) develops and enhance Darlington's USP,
- (b) establish a richer understanding of the current and future demographic demands
- (c) create an accessible town centre
- (d) establish new anchors within the town,
- (e) invest in our heritage assets like the historic yards and wynds, utilising their charm and attractiveness by holding regular events and activities.
- (f) reduce the retail footprint of the town replacing empty shops and derelict land with sustainable and high-quality residential
- (g) ensures any future developments of the town centre strategically fits and complements forthcoming investments into the Bank Top Train Station and the development of initiatives surrounding the Darlington 2025 programme of projects.

### **Experience Darlington a Visitor Economy Strategy 2016 – 2026**

By 2026 Darlington will have built a sustainable legacy following the 2025 Festival of the 200th anniversary of the first passenger railway. Darlington will be a place where art happens, where the arts, culture and heritage matter and are central to Darlington's future identity and economic success. Darlington will have a thriving and diverse Town Centre, offering high quality shopping, leisure and cultural experiences, where businesses choose to invest, and people want to spend time.

**"By 2026 Darlington will be recognised for its world class heritage having built on its reputation as the birthplace of the railways to strengthen and promote a strong cultural offer that provides a distinctive experience for visitors. Darlington will attract a significant number of new visitors to the town. Our enhanced and recognised visitor offer will increase the number of**

**overnight stays while also encouraging existing visitors to stay longer and spend more in our local businesses”**

### **A Carbon Neutral Darlington Borough Council - Climate Change Strategy**

Darlington ambition is for a carbon neutral council by 2050 and plans are being put in place to achieve this. There are four core principles which underpin the actions within our plan that are critical to our successful delivery:

- Reduce our overall energy consumption
- Reduce our demand for fossil fuel-based energy
- Contribute to a greener grid
- Sequester carbon

### **Darlington Economic Strategy**

The ‘Darlington Economic Strategy’ identifies themed headings, each with an action plan. The themes being:

- **The right place** - Darlington needs to develop a new approach to promoting and marketing its offer which complements and adds value to ‘Tees Valley’ marketing activity, which captures the unique history and heritage of yesterday’s.
- **The right people** - key challenges for business in difficult economic times are to:
  - develop a more entrepreneurial culture;
  - develop a stronger and more dynamic business base;
  - increase levels of business productivity

A number of our interventions focus on improving skills (T Levels and Adult Learning) and providing opportunity for enterprise associated with these interventions.

- **The right infrastructure** - Darlington’s economy can only grow with the right infrastructure powering it. When businesses come to make investment decisions, the reliability, cost and quality of infrastructure – from roads and airports to energy supply and broadband networks – are major considerations.

Our interventions include for a Town Centre and Gateway free access WIFI network.

- **The right business** - In recent years Darlington has seen business growth in the town. Despite this growth, challenges for businesses include:
  - changes to business support provision;
  - Access to appropriate business premises;
  - Access to new markets and supply chain opportunities

In 2010 Darlington had the highest number of active enterprises per capita in the Tees Valley; whilst the rate of new business formation compares very favourably with the Tees Valley and North East. Business failure rates are comparatively high and almost 40% of new start businesses fail by their third birthday.

Our interventions seek to assist in supporting and providing new space for enterprise.

### **Northgate Initiative**

The initiative is a multi-agency programme who will pilot a range of interventions, from support and advice to enforcement activities, in order to improve outcomes for residents' in all areas of wellbeing including economy, education and childhood, health, environment and social relationships.

Work will focus on the area of Northgate Ward and will work alongside and complement our TIP interventions.

**“Northgate is a place where residents are empowered to take control of and improve their wellbeing and life outcomes, by helping deliver the following conditions:**

## **Darlington TIP – Strategic Objectives**

Darlington's TIP provides a strategic programme of intervention projects, which are aligned to ongoing and planned development, needs and demands and develop upon our existing strengths, look to address several challenges in the town and realise some tangible opportunities.

In line with Towns Fund guidance our overall objective being the economic growth of Darlington through

- Urban regeneration
- Developing skills and enterprise
- Improved connectivity

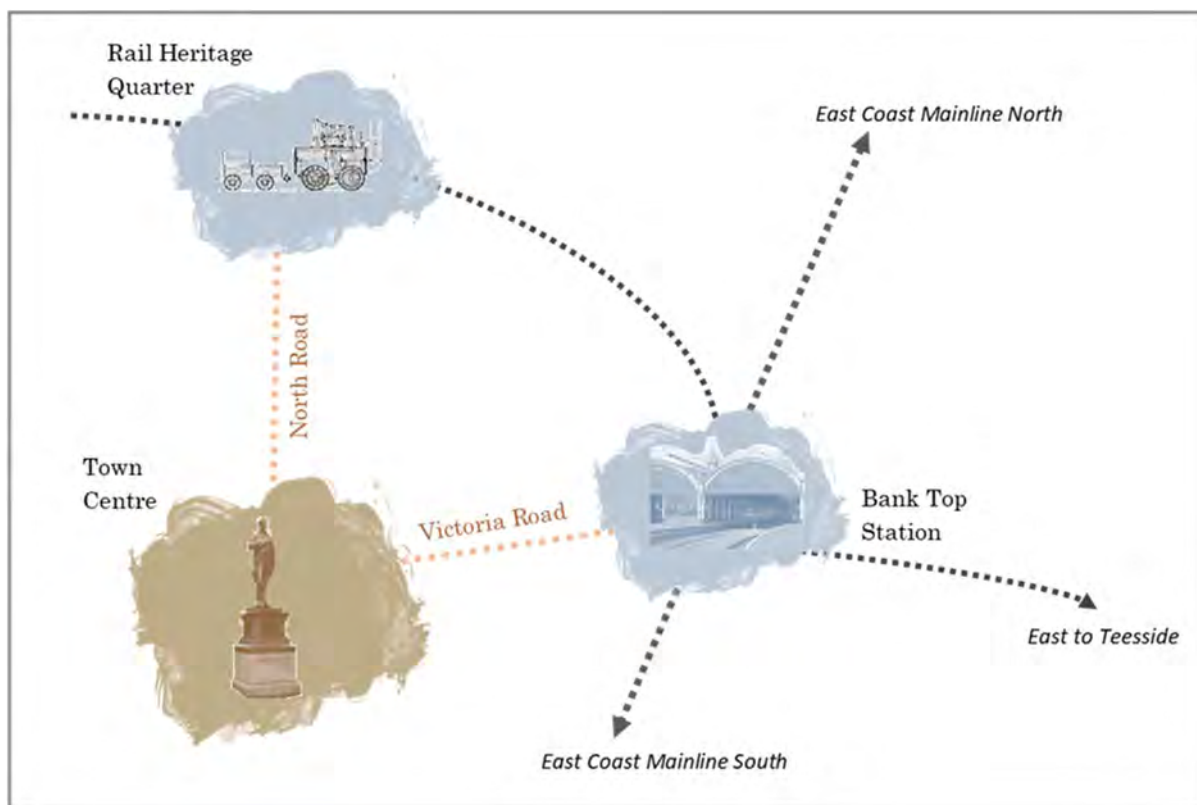
We are focussed on three specific geographical areas yet highly interdependent projects (which is illustrated in the graphic below) which when redeveloped will play a major role in the regeneration of Darlington.

The project areas are:

**Town Centre** - Skinnergate and the Yards; Adult Learning Space; Specialist T Level Teaching Space

**North Road Gateway;** - RHQ, Northgate House and North Road; Edward Pease House; Linear Park and River Skerne

**Victoria Road Gateway;** - Victoria Road; Bank Top Station and Cattle Mart



The Town Board is aware that not all our identified long list of projects within the above key areas are achievable within the Towns Funding and have therefore undertaken a robust process of prioritisation which was unanimously agreed by the Town Board. **Annex 2** provides the outcomes of the process.

**This prioritisation was based upon the following:**

- Alignment to the Intervention Framework.
- Long term alignment to our vision, strategies and builds on our town strengths, with a clear focus on place, ensuring that the project is aligned with the wider strategy for the Towns Fund programme.
- Stimulates economic growth and creates opportunity; addresses challenge and needs and seeks to ensure Clean Growth whilst also taking consideration of the impact of Covid-19.
- Deliverability, including adaptability, sustainability and opportunity to maximise additional funding and is joined up.
- Stakeholder support.

## Strategic Planning

Our emerging Local Plan is central to our strategic direction within the town, it ensures that we fully coordinate with national policy and link all our local strategies together.

Whilst our TIP consists of 9 intervention projects, guided by the objectives of economic growth and sustainability they are all tied together within our vision and long-term strategies.

Capital expenditure directly from and as a result of the Towns Fund, will be directed to provide the desired outputs and outcomes. Providing a sustainable environment, driven by clean growth principles and the UK's legal commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Alongside this will be our overriding commitment to sustainable social improvements, providing vibrant places where people want to be and want to spend time.

An integral part of our strategic planning approach the Town Board adopted a SWOT analysis to determine the intervention projects.

### SWOT Analysis on Interventions

<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong unique heritage claims as Darlington being the birthplace of passenger railways.</li> <li>• DBC and partners excellent track record in the delivery of large-scale capital projects.</li> <li>• There are an increasing number of successful independent stores within the town centre.</li> <li>• Darlington has many heritage assets associated with railway heritage and Quaker history</li> <li>• Excellent transport links</li> <li>• Local affinity to the town centre by local communities is evident in our 2018 resident survey.</li> <li>• Ongoing private and public investment throughout the borough.</li> <li>• Strong partnership arrangements and community buy-in</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The general appearance of the buildings and street scene within the TIP area is of poor quality and is probably one of the most neglected areas of the town.</li> <li>• The general trend in the area is one of decline and over several years the area has been blighted with several persistent voids and a high turnover.</li> <li>• Darlington has experienced a drop-in footfall in the town centre, 2016/17 to present day has seen a reduction of over 18% in footfall rates.</li> <li>• There exists little above shop residential homes and this is an issue which the council wants to address to make Darlington a Living Town Centre.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TIP area suffers from a distinct lack of quality business space. An increase in office space within the TIP area will have a positive impact upon the footfall figures, vibrancy and retail activity within the area.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures Darlington's heritage as the birthplace of passenger railways is fully realised to become a worldwide identified location.</li> <li>TIP aligns with other major projects including the investments into Bank Top Station, RHQ, Victorian Indoor Market and Central Library.</li> <li>The Council has commenced the acquiring of properties within the TIP area as part of a programme of residential developments</li> <li>The TIP area and proposed interventions dovetail with the ambitions articulated in the Council's Future High Street Fund bid.</li> <li>The Council recently commissioned an independent review of the public realm and shop frontage of the TIP area which highlighted several deficiencies and proposed improvements.</li> <li>Provision of accessible Adult Learning venues in the heart of the town.</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of buy in from landowners</li> <li>Lack of funding</li> <li>Impact of COVID19</li> </ul>

### Our strategy:

Links the heritage of the railways with a new bright modern rail network (with £80M of planned investment within the station); Darlington **the worlds original Railway Town.**

- Creates a new sense of place on arrival into Darlington by rail.
- Makes communication simple and sustainable - digitally and physically.
- Provides opportunity and aspiration for the people into the future ensuring they have spaces to develop their skills and enterprise and are fully included within our drive and ambition for Darlington.
- Creates a vibrant and living town centre

### Supporting a place for 'people' to experience, to be and to spend time enjoying.

As a member of the TVCA, strategic objectives align with their Strategic Economic Plan regarding the improvements to heritage and tourism, infrastructure, business growth, and encouraging housing growth and the reshaping of town centres. We are confident that as a Council together with local stakeholders our vision will compliment and deliver many of the objectives TVCA are working to deliver, including the S&DR Heritage Action Zone.

Our intervention projects are strategically bound together and align with other policies, strategies, available funding, and initiatives within Darlington. They cover the following three key areas and cross cutting themes;

- **Town Centre**
- **North Road Gateway**
- **Victoria Road Gateway**

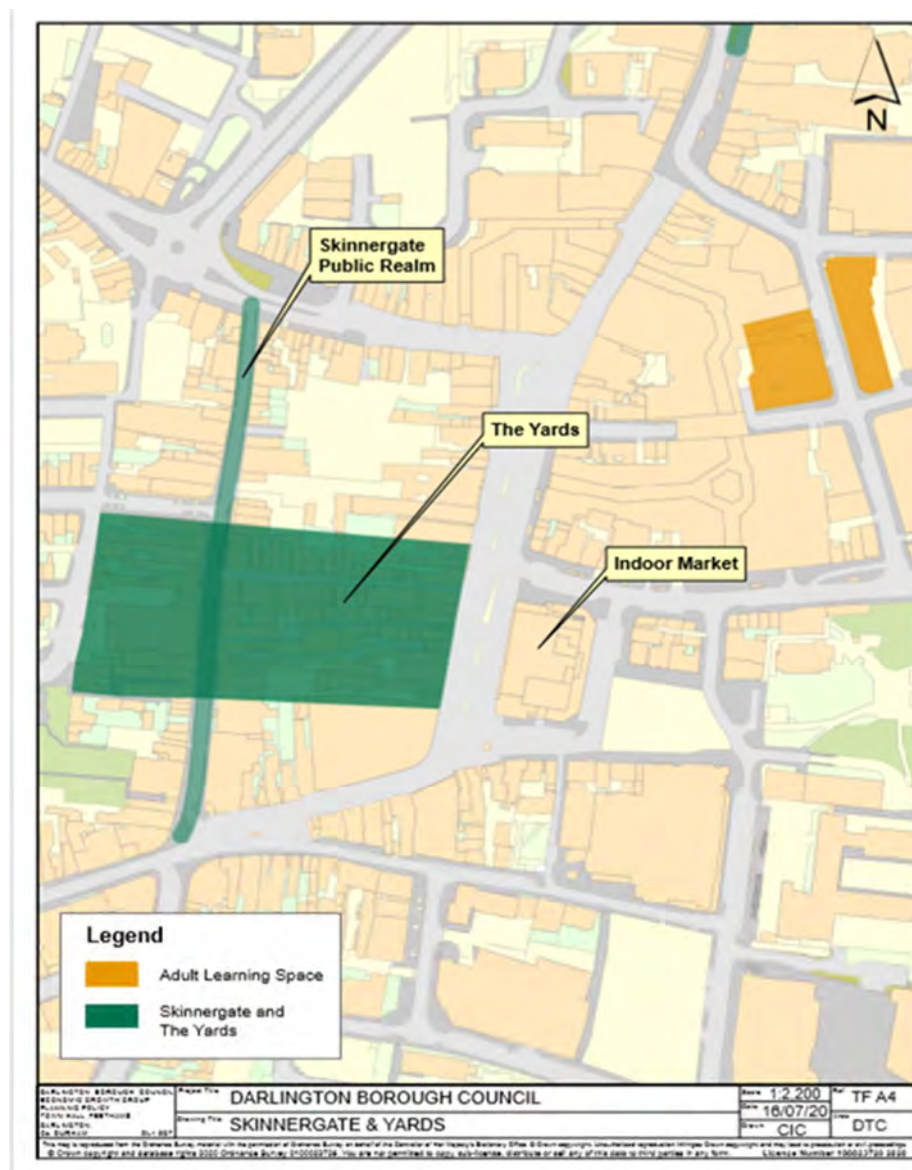
Cross cutting themes;

- Skills Infrastructure
- Enterprise Infrastructure
- Clean and Sustainable development (Clean Growth)
- Accessibility to green open space
- Transport and access improvement
- IT infrastructure improvement
- Arts, culture, tourism and heritage infrastructure

## Project Interventions and Outcomes

See TIP Section 2 templates.

### 1. Town Centre



#### Skinnergate and the Yards

Outcomes:

- Enhanced townscape and regeneration
- Development of historic yards/wynds at the heart of town
- Public realm and signage improvements
- Shop front and premises enhancements
- Focused transformation of the area to provide a mixed and vibrant people space



Skinnergate and the Yards are at the historic heart of town and in the past were prominent retail thoroughfares. More recently the area has suffered from several years of persistent voids and a high turnover of retail units. The emerging Local Plan identifies the area as being within the primary shopping zone, however given that the patterns of retail use it is likely that the amount of retail frontage currently available will not be required, providing opportunity.

The Yards and Wynds adjacent to Skinnergate reflect the town's medieval street pattern with several prominent burgage plots. They are a hidden gem and are greatly underplayed. There is an opportunity through careful investment and working with local traders to improve the floorspace of these routes, improve the lighting and importantly improve the shop frontages as a main driver to promote an improved offer increasing footfall.

The development of the Yards will be done in two phases under the heading of '**Project Darling**', the concept plan in place to transform the yards, drawing on the spirit of European courtyards, the Shambles of York and the Lanes of Brighton. The main phase including a 'secret town garden' in Mechanic's Yard.



Add into this a new and complementary public realm along Skinnergate, enhanced shopfronts through the area, and a strategy which looks to draw in residential to the centre, creating a vibrant social space, to encourage and retain footfall in the town centre.

## **Adult Learning Space**

Outcomes:

Supporting skills and small business development

Facilitated by Darlington FE College, in partnership with Darlington BC within an accessible building in the town centre.

There will be significant increased demand in the short-term and potentially the medium-term for re-skilling and re-training for adults affected by Covid-19. Over the longer term, adult skills are still a high priority to address in Darlington, as it faces the challenge of having too many people in low wage, low skill work and the need to retrain people to move into sectors that are resilient and will grow.



It is challenging to provide the right environment for adult learning. Our intervention will provide the ideal solution, with training led by the college and a bespoke facility provided centrally with easy access.

### **Specialist T Levels Teaching Space**

#### **Anticipated Outcome**

Additional college space to enable the introduction of T Levels

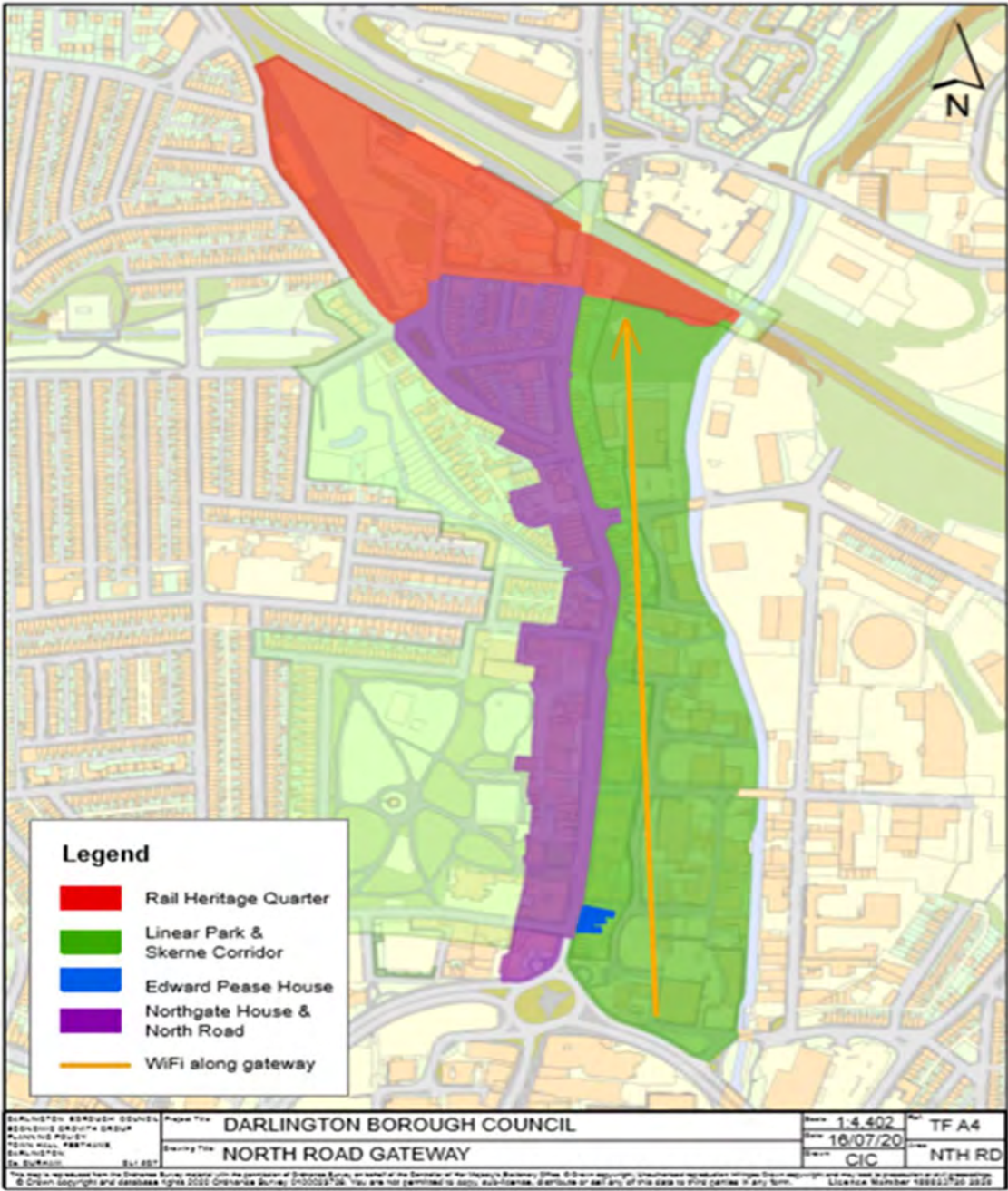
Darlington College has been selected to deliver T-levels from September 2022 and will be offering qualifications in:

- Engineering/Manufacturing
- Digital
- Education
- Health/Science
- Business/Administration

T Levels will play a vital role to make sure young people gain the skills and experience they need to progress and help recover our economy.

To offer these new qualifications, there is a need to invest in the Darlington campus for increased numbers of students.

2. North Road Gateway



Rail Heritage Quarter (RHQ)

Anticipated Outcomes

Contribution to the development of an internationally significant heritage asset. The site of the world’s first passenger railway, providing an enhanced visitor attraction, interpretation, enhanced townscape and urban regeneration.





Our TIP will be used for property acquisition to enable linking of elements of the project and facilitate improved access to the Skerne Bridge. The oldest operational passenger rail bridge in the world. The creation of public green spaces and the remediation and conservation of significant heritage assets.

RHQ Masterplan;

<https://democracy.darlington.gov.uk/documents/s8513/Appendix%202.pdf>

### **Northgate House & North Road**

Anticipated Outcomes

Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration

- property acquisitions/site clearance
- development and alignment with private sector partner
- housing and commercial space. Improved public realm and green space
- property enhancements
- WIFI

Northgate House is a multi-story office block which has been unoccupied for over 10 years. Located in a pivotal and prominent position adjacent to the town centre, at the southern entrance to the North Road Gateway.



Acquiring the site and potentially working in partnership with private sector developers (supporting letter in **Annex 10**) will transform this abandoned area of town. The creation of residential and mixed-use development with the inclusion of green spaces and easy transport options.

In addition, we include proposals for public realm improvements, property acquisition, town WIFI and enhancements along North Road up to the RHQ.

### **Edward Pease House**

Supporting our heritage assets

- property acquisition,
- refurbishment to create a sustainable multi-use space

The property is of significant historic value as a well-documented meeting took place between Edward Pease and George Stephenson in the kitchen of Pease's Northgate home on 19th April 1821. This meeting led to the construction of the S&DR, the first public passenger railway in the world.



The building is currently in a poor state of repair, with numerous changes made to the façade over the years and is now almost unrecognisable as the Georgian building it is.

The railway heritage of Darlington is incomplete without recognition and the intervention of sympathetic property refurbishment.

Following refurbishment inside and out, it will be configured as a multi-use space open to all.

### **Linear Park & River Skerne Corridor**

Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration

- linear park- new improved public realm and green space, walking and cycling route
- property acquisition and site clearance
- residential/mixed use development

Creating a linear park alongside the River Skerne to re-open the river corridor and introduce quality green infrastructure from the RHQ to the northern end of Northgate, and into the town centre.

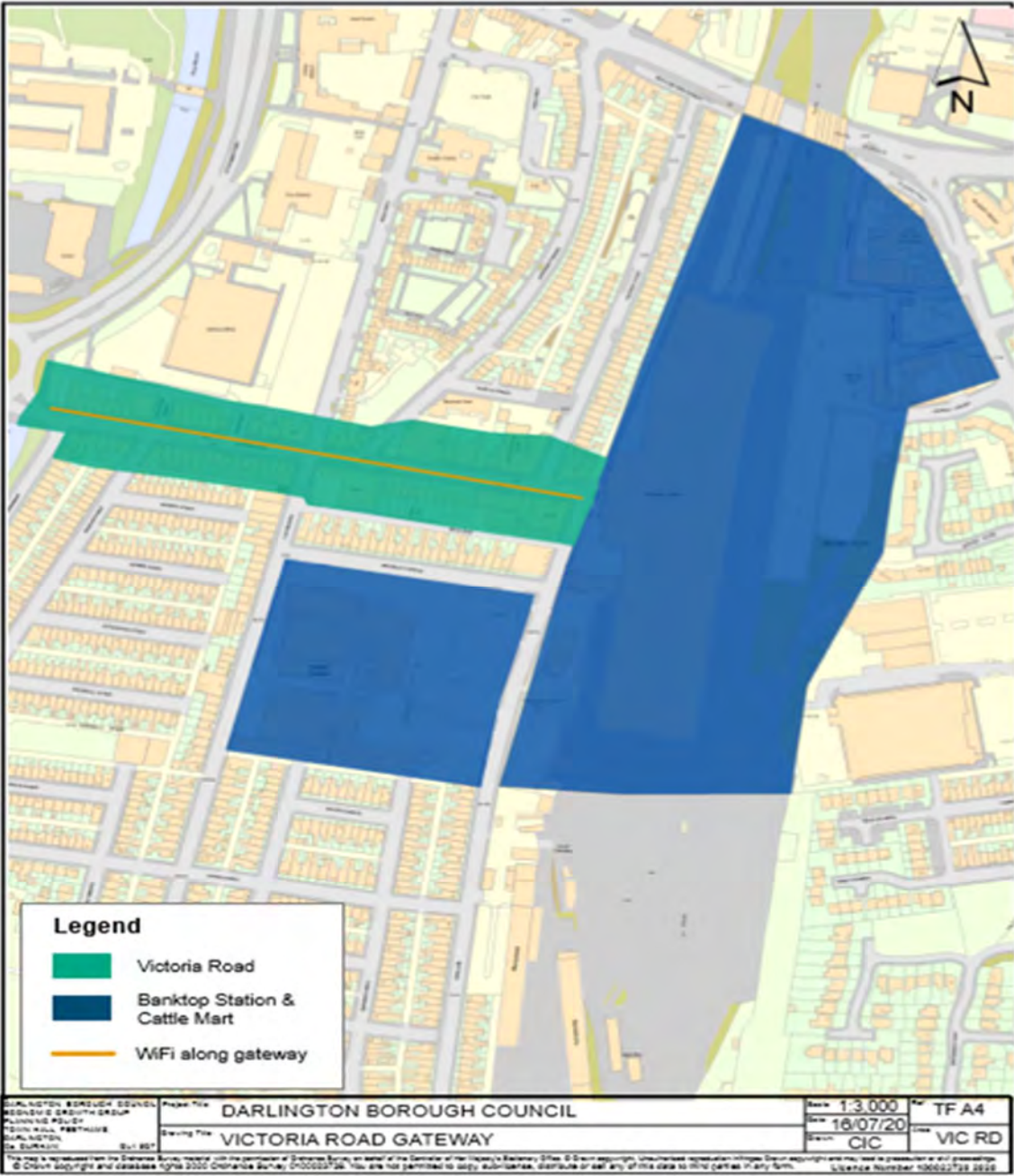


It will create a green alternative to the route along North Road itself, facilitating easy connections into North Road. The opening up of the riverside access will create opportunity for pockets of residential and mixed-use developments.





3. Victoria Road Gateway



Victoria Road

Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration

- shop front, premises enhancements and town WIFI

Victoria Road is a commercial road connecting town centre with Bank Top Railway Station. The project will replace and improve worn out public realm, highway improvements, improving shops

and other premises along the route forming a more effective and pleasant pedestrian, cycle, and vehicular route. The addition of town WIFI along the route will ensure digital connectivity.



The result will be a safer and improved gateway, more attractive to all users, with a vibrant range of attractive shops, and complimentary to other town developments.

### **Bank Top Rail Station and Cattle Mart area**

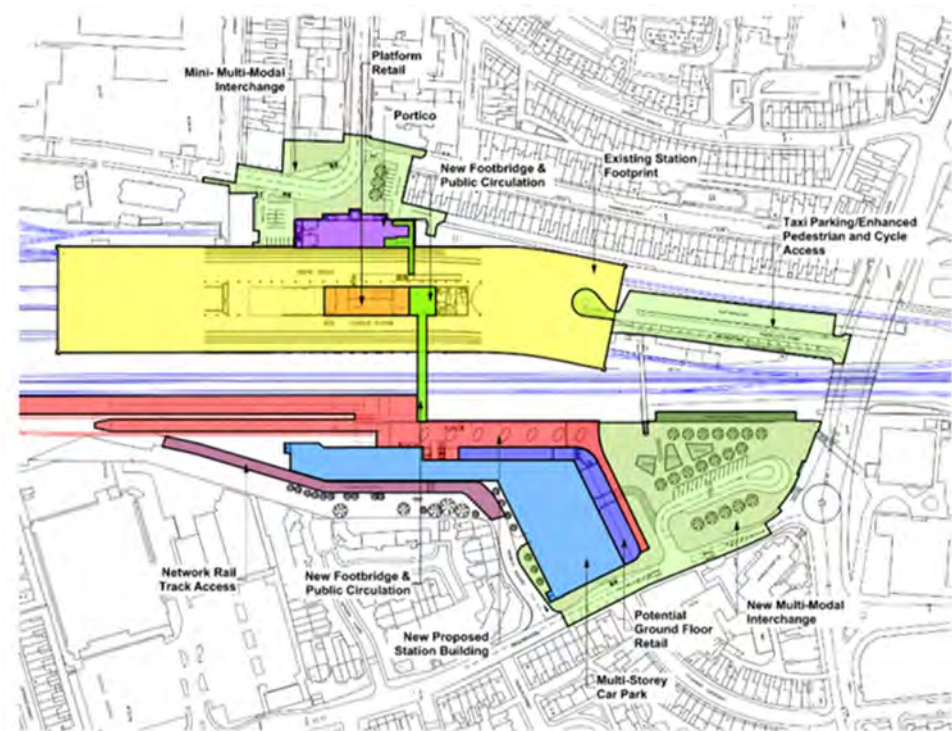
Enhanced townscape and urban regeneration

- enhancements associated with the proposed new interchange
- development of area adjacent to and along to the cattle mart

This intervention is part of a significant regeneration of an area of approximately 5Ha that has deteriorated over many years. The overall regeneration will provide Darlington with a modern and efficient rail station, transport interchange, parking and well-designed commercial and public realm that will boost use of the station and encourage investment into this part of the town.

The station modernisation is led by Network Rail, whilst Darlington are leading on developments immediately to the east and west of the station.

The overall outcome will be a modern/improved station, with easy/efficient access from both the east and west. Supported by new residential development and an opening up of the eastern end of Victoria Road to create a sense of arrival into Darlington.



The Cattle Market has been relocated to the new site out of town on the A68. As part of the development agreement Darlington BC now own the old site and will progress proposals to provide around 76 new build residential properties.

## Funding

**Darlington Borough Council is seeking £25M from the Towns Fund, as part of a wide-ranging strategy within the key areas identified**

The table below provides a summary of Towns Fund and additional funding. See also TIP Section 2 and cost profiling in **Annex 5**.

Intervention Project	Towns Fund (£M)	Additional funding	Totals (£M)	Potential Further Funding (£M)
Rail Heritage Quarter	4.6	20.4	25	
Northgate House & North Road	6.5	0.68	7.18	10*
Edward Pease House	3.5	0	3.5	
Linear Park and Skerne Corridor	2.5	2.2	4.7	
Victoria Road	0.6	1.025	1.625	
Bank Top Station & Cattle Mart area	1	20	21	80**
Skinnergate & The Yards	2	5.27	7.27	
Adult learning space (Town Centre)	1.35	0	1.35	
T Levels facility (College)	2.95	0	2.95	
	<b>25.00</b>	<b>49.575</b>	<b>74.575</b>	<b>91</b>

\* - Potential £10M private funding - Northgate House area

\*\* - Potential £80M Network Rail funding for modernisation of Bank Top Station

# Engagement

## Community and Business Engagement

### Undertaken:

Extensive engagement in connection with:

- The '**Town Centre Strategy**';
- The **Rail Heritage Quarter**;
- **Re-Thinking Victoria Road**;
- **Bank Top Station**.

#### **Town Centre Strategy:**

In July 2019 Cabinet approval was provided for the draft Darlington Town Centre Strategy (2019-2030) and to commence engagement. The aim to contribute economic wellbeing and vitality in the Town Centre.

To raise awareness the following actions were agreed and progressed:

- Article with key messages in the 'One Darlington' magazine
- Media releases
- News story on the website linking through to consultation page.
- DBCs social media feeds used to promote the consultation. Sign posting to the consultation webpage.
- The Town Centre Reference Group (DBC and town centre businesses), were included and are central to engagement with businesses.

At commencement it was agreed that a stakeholder workshop be held, including the Town Centre Reference Group, housing providers, local property and landowners, transport providers and public-sector partners.

Further engagement agreed:

- Drop-in exhibitions within the town centre
- Proposal documents posted on the Council's website
- The use of Council house tenant's groups to gain views on town centre living
- Engage young people, working with local colleges
- Presentations to political groups
- Feedback will be collated at the end of the engagement period, and subsequent recommendations for change will be made as appropriate

Community engagement focused on the direction of the strategy and each scheme as it is progressed.

A January 2019 Cabinet report identified centre developments at:

- Victorian Indoor Market
- Crown Street area
- Skinnergate and the Yards/Wynds

Forward funding proposals include lighting centred external to the Market.

Crown Street area is in FHSF proposals.

**Skinnergate and The Yards** is included within early improvements in the Yards and is the subject of a proposed TIP intervention.

### **Rail Heritage Quarter**

Wide ranging initial consultation has taken place with over 30 in depth face to face interviews across stakeholders, including TVCA, North East Chamber of Commerce, and The Friends of S&DR.

#### **Some key issues emerging:**

Business Interest:

- Strong support for developing skills of young people.
- Hitachi will progress electric trains and battery storage. They have a hands on build a train workshop at Shildon. Opportunity to bring into RHQ with college/schools. Opportunity to build a steam and an electric train?

Access:

- Northgate needs to be improved as will be important for visitors from the town centre (a key TIP intervention).
- Opportunity for a bike hub – linked to 26-mile cycle route (TIP intervention).
- Sustainable travel is important (TIP Intervention).

Common issues:

- RHQ should be the access point for the HAZ cycleway (TIP intervention).
- RHQ to be a tool for wider regeneration (TIP).
- Northgate needs to be improved - important for visitors from the town centre (Key TIP Intervention).

Recommendations made for future engagement:

- An event for businesses on site to showcase.
- Engage with local schools to involve in the development.
- Involve businesses, business organisations, Teesside University and other education and academic institutions in both the development of the innovation and skills.

*'This is exactly the type of project we would want to get involved in'*

**Teesside University Engineering**



### **Victoria Road – ‘Rethinking Victoria Road’**

Two initial phases of consultation were carried out by ‘Groundwork’ over a total period of 6 months. The community was invited to take part on-line, on the doorstep and at face to face events.

A two phased approach enabled Groundwork to initially consult and provide feedback on issues/opportunities raised by the community based upon early ideas of interventions to improve Victoria Road. This feedback was used within the design and these concept early design plans were consulted upon in the second phase enabling the community to again feedback.

Concepts consulted upon:

- Greater priority to pedestrians
- New cycle lane facilities
- Improved bus links, priority and stops
- More effective loading and parking
- More sustainable travel
- Replacement of damaged and worn-out public realm and introduction of trees
- Shopfront improvement scheme (TIP)
- A much-improved key travel route that complements regeneration in Darlington
- Improved first impression of the town

Participation amongst residents was high. During the first phase there were 788 views of the plans with 229 comments, plus a further 32 completed surveys and feedback from specific organisations such as the Police and GP Surgery. At the second phase there were 329 views with 94 comments, plus 140 people in attendance at drop in events.

Transforming this key gateway into Darlington, the benefits from investments into the station and cattlemarket, river corridor and town centre improvements will be greatly enhanced.

### **Bank Top**

An extract from the Pre-Planning response letter regarding proposals:

## **Conclusion**

The proposed redevelopment of Darlington Station presents a major change to the station and the surrounding areas. It has the potential to transform Darlington as a key gateway to the Tees Valley while also being at the heart of the regeneration of the eastern part of the town. The opportunity presented by the station as part of a wider economic growth strategy for the Tees Valley is recognised and supported.

The proposed station rationalisation improvements offer a real opportunity to enhance Darlington and help to unlock areas of wider regeneration to the east of the town. This must, however, be balanced against ensuring that the development respects and enhances the existing station environment and surroundings. The design considerations in relation to this redevelopment will be fundamental to the overall success of the project. DBC welcome the opportunity to work closely with the project team in offering guidance as the scheme develops toward detailed design which successfully achieves the aspirations for the project.

During development of the Masterplan, stakeholder workshops were undertaken to capture feedback, develop a fuller understanding, and inform proposals that could address these issues.

In preparing the refresh of the Tees Valley SEP, consultation was undertaken with local stakeholders to ascertain views in relation to improving the rail network within the Tees Valley. This illustrated support for improvements at Darlington Station, as shown by its specific inclusion within the Transport and Infrastructure section of the SEP.

In addition, the need for improvements at Darlington Station is included in the priorities identified in the Tees Valley STP and its associated Rail Strategy.

A sub-regional launch event of the Masterplan was held, at which a panel from Network Rail, TfN and HS2 Ltd introduced the vision for the station to businesses across the Region.

An exhibition room was introduced at the station to receive comments from rail users. This wider consultation showed significant support for the proposals.

A stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken to seek views, communicate progress and create consensus during the further development of the scheme.

***Darlington BC, Needs were agreed as***

*‘Regeneration, economic return, benefit of HS2 connectivity’*

## **Ongoing:**

### **Darlington Local Plan.**

A new development plan, for the period up to 2036, for long term investment and growth for Darlington has been the subject of significant consultation and continues to be prepared. It will set out where significant new development should go and will include policies to protect valued environments and heritage and ensure liveable places.

The development of the Local Plan has a requirement to follow statutory process to ensure full opportunity is provided to ensure consultation with all stakeholders. The Local Plan Engagement Strategy is provided within **Annex 5**.

Consultation was paused during lockdown. With the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, the Council are now looking to restart the Local Plan preparation process and intend publishing the Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) for a statutory representation period of 6 weeks.

<https://microsites.darlington.gov.uk/local-plan>.

### **Northgate Initiative**

A people focused strategy now restarted following Covid-19. It is a multi-faceted regeneration initiative, focused on community engagement.

1. Recruiting a wide range of local stakeholders.
2. A community mapping exercise to identify existing local assets which can be utilised to ensure as a diverse cross-section of the population as possible is given the opportunity to contribute.
3. Population-level analysis to both identify local residents' preferred means of engagement

An early action has been to secure the service of **'The Bread and Butter Thing'** (TBBT) charity to operate in Northgate. TBBT provides affordable food, distributed from community settings. It also is a tool for community engagement as it involves many hard to reach communities which exist within the area.

### **Complementary**

Towns Board:

Our Board includes representatives from the community in Northgate; the Chair of Darlington Cares, an established organisation which matches the skills of the of local business with needs of the community; and the Principal of Darlington College. All of whom have been involved in the decision-making processes regarding prioritisation of the interventions.

Our Youth MP he is being met by senior officers for input into proposals.

Review of the engagement via the MyTown website is ongoing.

TVCA:

Engagement has been undertaken with TVCA during the compilation of this TIP, with detailed discussion held regarding:

- sustainable transport options;
- district heating opportunities;

- digital communication opportunities;
- ensuring that our proposals for skills infrastructure is in line with wider authority plans

Quote from TVCA Digital Lead relating to Town WiFi;

*'Agree this is a positive step but perhaps look to include some 'non-High Street locations' to promote a Social accessibility agenda if that is a priority for Darlington.*

*This could be providing publicly accessible Wi-Fi in shared spaces, perhaps libraries etc (perhaps with kit provided) to allow on-line access to those who do not have available.'*

## Proposed

Our TIP intervention projects cover three key areas and whilst we will be providing opportunity to obtain engagement across all areas, via a proposed online questionnaire and engagement face to face when possible and safe to do so, our engagement strategy is one that enables those with specific interest in each of the key areas, to be heard and engaged with, throughout the development and delivery of the interventions.

### North Road Gateway:

Includes four intervention projects:

- Rail Heritage Quarter
- Northgate House
- Edward Pease House
- Linear Park and River Skerne corridor

On several levels:

The overall **Towns Fund** Engagement being focused on the projects within the TIP, including the wider regeneration of the public realm and along North Road.

The **Northgate Initiative**. Now restarted and forms an ideal base on which to build and undertake engagement.

Northgate is a **conservation** area, and as such we are working alongside Historic England to undertake a fully funded Masterplan, including consultation. Draft proposal brief is included in **Annex 9**.

Coordinated elements brought together in one strategic plan within the Towns Fund.

We are currently progressing a commissioning exercise to identify the most appropriate agency to develop and coordinate the engagement plan for Northgate and across the other key areas.

**Proposed Stakeholder Engagement Plan is provided with Annex 8.**

## Private Sector

In addition to engagement mentioned above.

The Town Centre Reference Group are fully committed to supporting the Towns Fund and are central to our engagement with businesses. A letter of support to our FHSF proposal from TGI Media is provided in **Annex 10**.

Further letters of support are provided by NewRiver, and Lugano Developments, in connection to the FHSF.

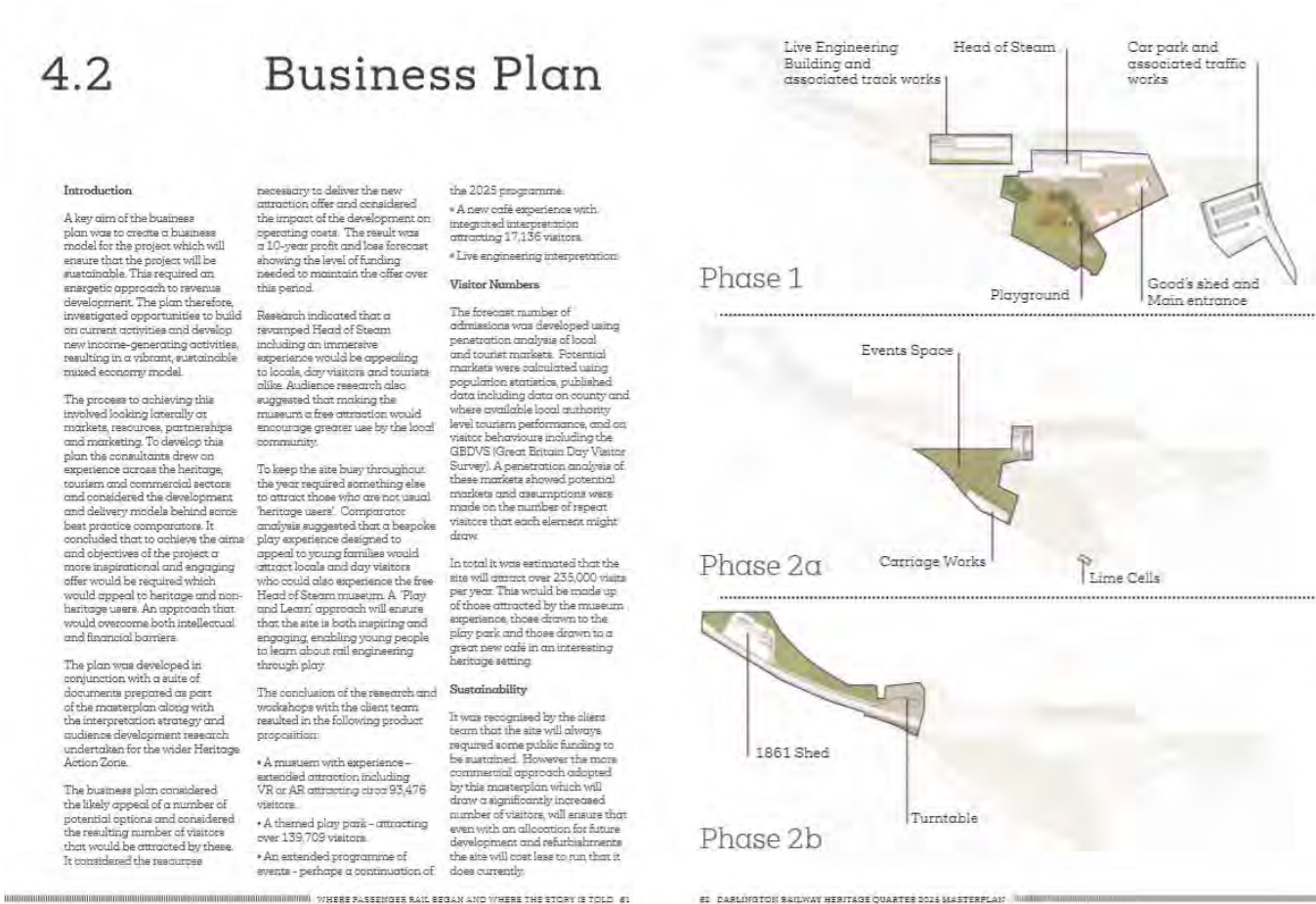
Ongoing discussion is taking place with Allure Developments, who own significant property interest adjacent to Northgate House. A letter of support and visuals of their concepts are provided in the **Annex**. A map in **Annex 5** shows the potential development area opened up in Northgate, should our partnership fully develop and be realised, with investment in the order of £10m possible.

# Business Case Development

Outline Business Cases/Plans exist associated with three proposed project interventions;

- Rail Heritage Quarter
- Bank Top Station
- Skinnergate residential

## Rail Heritage Quarter extract:



## Bank Top Station:

A copy of the Executive Summary from the full Business Case is provided within **Annex 5**.

It identifies - *The preferred option goes beyond improvements to Darlington Station itself. The enhanced station gateway will complement the current and planned developments in Darlington town centre and will be integrated with the bids being developed for the FHSF and Towns Funds.*

These Business Cases will be developed further, alongside the remaining 6 intervention projects, further in line with Towns Fund Guidance, by Darlington Borough Council as Accountable Body.



## High Level overview of the Business Cases to be developed for each project:

<b>The Strategic Case</b>	
Setting the Context	
Identifying Barriers	
Exploring Options and Objectives	
Exploring Impacts of Interventions	
Preferred Option	
Measures for Success	
Aligning with Wider Local Plans and Objectives	
Considering Wider Evidence and Stakeholder Views	
Summary of Strategic Case	
<b>The Economic Case</b>	
Options Appraised	
Methodology and Assumptions	
Present Value of Costs	
Costs	
Benefits	
Environmental Impacts	
Historic Environment	
Social Impacts	
Wider Economic Impacts	
Value for Money	
Sensitivity Tests	
<b>The Financial Case</b>	
Costs	
Capital Costs	
Revenue Costs	
Risks Allowance	
Spend Profile	
Budgets/Funding	
<b>The Commercial Case</b>	
Commercial Viability	
Procurement Strategy	
Risk Allocation	
Contract Length and Management	
<b>The Management Case</b>	
Evidence of Similar Projects	
Project Dependencies	
Governance, Organisation Structure and Roles	
Project Plan	
Communications and Stakeholder Management	
Programme/Project Reporting	
Risk Management Strategy	
Benefits Realisation Plan	
Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	
<b>Summary</b>	

## Delivery Plan

The following key milestones are associated with each intervention project within the TIP. The timescales presented are indicative at the point and subject to the timescales associated with the award of funding.

*Gantt Charts with additional detail are provided in Annex 3.*

<b>Rail Heritage Quarter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RIBA stage 3 design complete – Oct 2020</li> <li>• Procure contractor – July 2020</li> <li>• Works begin – Sept 2021</li> <li>• Project complete – April 2023</li> </ul>	<b>Northgate House &amp; North Road</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition of building – Dec 2020</li> <li>• RIBA stage 3 design complete – Feb 2022</li> <li>• Procure contractor – Aug 2022</li> <li>• Works begin – May 2023</li> <li>• Scheme complete – Aug 2024</li> </ul>
<b>Edward Pease House</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition of building – April 2021</li> <li>• RIBA stage 3 design complete – Oct 2021</li> <li>• Procure contractor – Oct 2021</li> <li>• Works begin – Aug 2022</li> <li>• Scheme complete – Nov 2023</li> </ul>	<b>Linear Park &amp; River Skerne</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RIBA stage 3 design complete – Sept 2021</li> <li>• Procure contractor – May 2022</li> <li>• Works begin – Aug 2022</li> <li>• Project complete – May 2024</li> </ul>
<b>Victoria Road</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works begin – Sept 2020</li> <li>• Project complete – June 2022</li> </ul>	<b>Bank Top Rail Station and Cattle Mart</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RIBA stage 3 design complete – May 2021</li> <li>• Works begin – Sept 2021</li> <li>• Project complete – Nov 2023</li> </ul>
<b>Skinnergate and The Yards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works begin – Sept 2020</li> <li>• Scheme complete – July 2022</li> </ul>	<b>Adult learning space</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RIBA stage 3 design complete – Aug 2021</li> <li>• Procure contractor – Dec 2021</li> <li>• Works begin – Feb 2022</li> <li>• Scheme complete – Aug 2022</li> </ul>
<b>Specialist T Levels teaching space</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RIBA stage 3 design complete – June 2021</li> <li>• Procure contractor – April 2021</li> <li>• Works begin – Nov 2021</li> <li>• Scheme complete – Dec 2022</li> </ul>	

A high-level forecast expenditure programme is provided within **Annex 4**. Identifying the overall programme for each intervention and the anticipated Towns Fund/Co-Funding expenditure.

Darlington has partnered with developers/contractors with a proven track record in the successful delivery of similar schemes.

Including those referred to in the Context Analysis Section.

Darlington propose to deliver interventions via a mix of procurement and delivery methods, which will include; public private partnerships, seeking to establish further long-term

partnerships to ensure sustained growth in the town; Competitive tendering; Existing Frameworks; procurement of private developers. It will not be one approach fits all, rather a developing and stakeholder led approach to maximise benefits.

We will build on the Council's track record of delivering regeneration schemes in partnership with private sector developers. Including housing schemes delivery across the borough, such as:

- Scholars Park – Darlington Brough Council and Esh Homes delivered 60 new homes.

A dedicated project monitoring framework will be set up for the projects, which will set out how performance on the project will be monitored.

# Darlington Borough Council

## Towns Investment Plan

### Annexes:

#### **Annex 1: Maps**

- Darlington Town Boundary
- Towns Fund All Areas
- North Road Gateway
- Victoria Road Gateway
- Town Centre
- Northgate Conservation Area

#### **Annex 2: Intervention Projects**

- Interventions Summary
- Prioritisation Matrix

#### **Annex 3: Project Timelines**

- Intervention Projects; Gannt Charts

#### **Annex 4: Project Costs**

- Project cost estimates and funding/spend profile

#### **Annex 5: Project Information**

- Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter Extract
- Masterplan RHQ
- Bank Top Rail Station Plan
- Bank Top Business Case – Executive Summary
- Skinnergate residential proposals
- Future High Street Fund proposals
- Lower Northgate Building Ownerships
- Edward Pease House
- Cattle Market Aerial View
- Darlington Local Plan Engagement Strategy
- Linear Park visuals

**Annex 6: Skinnergate and The Yards**

- 'Project Darling' Phase 1
- 'Project Darling' Phase 2

**Annex 7: Theory of Change**

**Annex 8: Stakeholder Engagement Plan**

**Annex 9: Historic England, Draft Masterplan Proposal**

**Annex 10: Letters of Support**

**Annex 11: Forward Funding Letter**