

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Question 39

Do you agree with our proposed strategy to conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment? Can you suggest any alternatives?

Paragraphs 4.136 to 4.141 clearly scope the issues and show a willingness to conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment. This we welcome. The actions set out in paragraph 4.142 are equally welcome.

This is an area where the policies in the withdrawn Plan met with broad agreement. The City of Durham Trust's concern is with the historic environment and, with a couple of caveats, we approved of policies 44 and 45 of the earlier Plan. We suggest that these, or something based on them, should find a place in the refreshed Plan.

Policy 44 dealt with the historic environment generally, and included "Development which would lead to substantial harm to, or total loss of significance of, a designated heritage asset will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is proven to be necessary to achieve substantial overriding public benefits". This is a provision that covers Grade II, Grade II* and Grade I listed buildings. Grade I listed buildings are classified on a national register as "buildings of exceptional interest", and make up a mere 3% of total listed structures. They surely should stand above this blanket condition and we hope that the redrawn policy addresses this issue.

Policy 45 protected the Outstanding Universal Value of the Durham Cathedral and Castle World Heritage Site. It included the sentence "Proposals will also need to demonstrate that the development will cause no harm to the significance of the WHS (including cumulative or consequential harm) including through impacts on its appearance, fabric, character or setting." We hope this sentence reappears in the new policy, and that it is not qualified in any way elsewhere in the policy or in the supporting text.