

Milburngate House Site, Durham City

Design and Development Brief for Consultation

Summary for Public Consultation

INTRODUCTION TO THE BRIEF

Background

The Milburngate House site is a large and prominent City Centre site. It offers great potential for redevelopment and through this, an opportunity to enhance the City of Durham's image and character.

The intention of the current central government owners National Savings and Investments (NS&I) is to relocate operations from this building, which has reached the end of its functional life, and to move to a nearby City Centre site, thus facilitating new development on their current site. This provides a unique redevelopment opportunity and a chance to attract investment and economic development into the City.

The future of this important site is the focus of the Design and Development Brief, which is summarised in this document.

Purpose of the Brief

The Design and Development Brief sets the agenda for site redevelopment. It promotes high quality design and a contextually sensitive approach to architecture and place-making. Future development needs to be relevant to Durham and should contribute positively to the City. Redevelopment will have a profound impact on Durham and the riverside and should leave a legacy development, which is of exemplary quality.

NS&I will be selling the site on the open market so the purpose of the brief is to help achieve vision and value, by establishing appropriate design principles for the site.

This consultation document is not the full/detailed brief. It is a summary document which includes the key principles and parameters for consultation. The full brief is available from Durham County Council.



Milburngate House overlooking the Riverside

VISION AND KEY PRINCIPLES

The vision for the Milburngate site is to create a new place which is distinctive to Durham and which contributes to the vitality and quality of life within the City. New development will embrace the riverside and open up the site to public access and greater connectivity. The public realm will be refreshed and enhanced, with new streets and spaces created. Uses will bring new life and activity to the site and develop a commercially viable and deliverable scheme over the short, medium and long term. Delivery to high design standards is also a fundamental part of the vision, as development will need to stand the test of time.

The following design **principles** set the expectations at a strategic level;

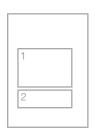
- Development will be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, ensuring a robustness and flexibility. The best developments offer a rich variety and are adaptable so that they can endure over many years. These qualities need to be designed into new development from the outset.
- 2. Building design and specification will reflect the aspiration for a development which will be long lasting. Timeless qualities of urban design and architecture rather than high fashion are required on this important site. This does not require buildings to look old. It does require an appreciation of the grain, character and architecture of Durham and for new development to respond positively to this and the unique site opportunities.
- 3. A building which is identified as a detractor to the City's internationally recognised historic urban fabric will be removed and a new **townscape** created. This townscape will be memorable and appropriate to Durham. Creating a family of well related and complementary buildings which belong together, rather than one large architectural statement, will achieve the desired effect.

- 4. The **riverside** will be revitalised and pedestrian access to it will be improved. The river at this point will become a more integral part of the City Centre with better pedestrian links from the higher mid-town level. New uses will generate activity and footfall through the day and into the evening. Development will create a new and more positive relationship with the riverside, recognising flood risk, but creating a striking and attractive waterside setting.
- 5. New streets and spaces will open-up the site and create places for public enjoyment within and around the site. Investment in a high quality and long lasting public realm is seen as an integral part of the redevelopment of the site. These works will need to relate positively to the wider **public realm** across Durham City Centre and recent improvement schemes.
- 6. Uses and activities should be varied and mixed.

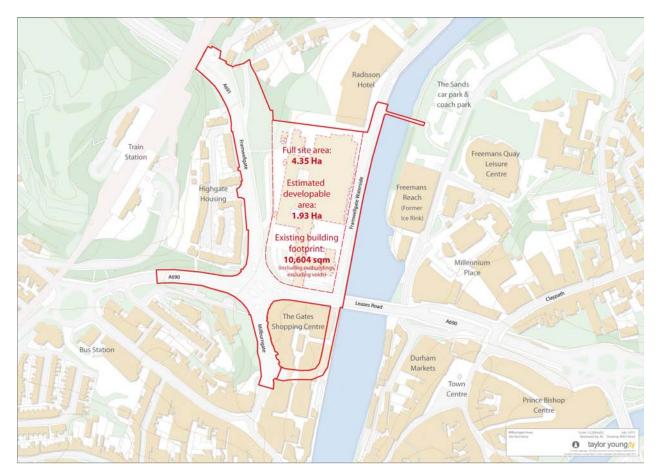
 Redevelopment brings an opportunity for new investment in the City, and a chance to develop new uses which are presently missing or under represented, within a world class heritage city. How this site relates to and complements other sites and parts of the City Centre needs exploration. The mix of uses will need to address both commercial viability and also the evolving planning framework for the City and this site.

THE SITE AND ITS CONTEXT

The site is situated to the north of Durham City Centre on the western bank of the River Wear, extending from Leazes Road to the south, Framwellgate to the west, the River to the east and to the Radisson Hotel to the north. The existing building footprint is approximately 10,600sqm and the estimated developable area is 1.93 Ha. The document covers an extended site boundary which includes surrounding pedestrian and vehicle access ways.



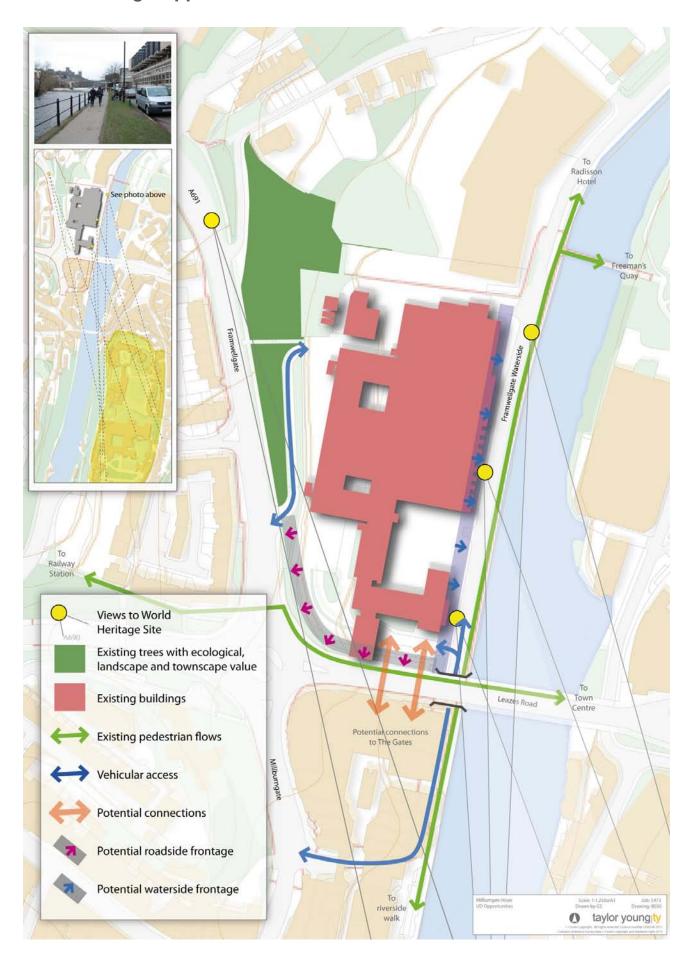
- 1. Site area and context
- 2. Aerial Photograph of site







Urban Design Opportunities

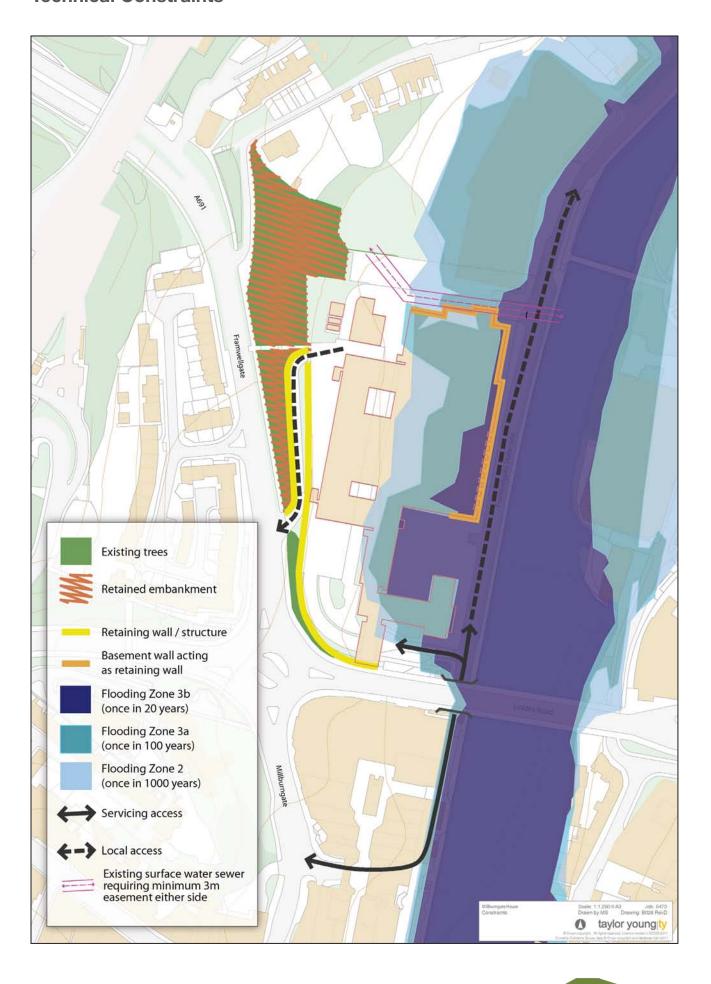


Opportunities include the following:

- Recreating Durham's townscape By removing
 Milburngate House there is great potential to
 create a more appropriately scaled and designed
 building which is more sensitively related to the
 site and context. The nature of the site means
 that it can accommodate large and tall buildings
 but clear principles are required to guide the form,
 mass and skyline.
- Views of the World Heritage Site (WHS) –
 New buildings offer great potential to create
 views of the WHS from within the building and
 from external spaces. Existing views should
 be maintained and enhanced where possible,
 particularly views from Framwellgate and
 Framwellgate Waterside.
- Trees and Landscape The existing trees that separate Framwellgate from the site perform a number of functions including ecological and screening qualities as well as adding landscape and townscape character to the site. To the southern corner of the site and Framwellgate there is an opportunity to replace some of these trees with built frontages.
- Potential frontages There is great potential for new frontages to exist along Framwellgate Waterside and on Leazes Road and the southern portion of Framwellgate at the corner of leazes Road and Framwellgate. These should help animate the public realm.
- Relationship with The Gates and the retail core –
 The direct adjacency with The Gates Shopping Centre
 offers the potential to connect into the retail core,
 however the barrier of the A690 and the orientation of
 the current Gates building make this difficult. Current
 pedestrian access is unattractive from Milburngate
 House and under Milburngate Bridge.

- Potential relationship with Millennium Place
- Recently developed leisure and cultural destination at Walkergate and Millennium Place offers opportunities to expand Durham's cultural quarter by linking over and across the river via the Millennium (Pennyferry) bridge, via an improved pedestrian realm along Leazes Road or by a new bridge from Millennium Place.
- Pedestrian connections and footfall The site has potential to draw from existing footfall flows along Leazes Road and Framwellgate Waterside. Redevelopment or refurbishment would also offer the opportunity to enhance these pedestrian routes. The key issue is to reduce the impact of fast moving traffic along Leazes Road and the junction of Leazes Road / Milburngate and Highgate.
- Vehicular access / egress Vehicular access
 is currently provided by driving under The Gates
 Shopping Centre onto Framwellgate Waterside.
 There is no direct access from Framwellgate but
 there is an existing egress from the site onto
 this road. Opportunities to improve vehicular
 access should be sought within the demonstrated
 constraints of the highway infrastructure / network.
- Panoramic and exceptional views out –
 There are fantastic views out from the site as facilitated by the existing building which give a hint at the quality of outlook from a developed site through new architectural forms. This is a unique site which offers great potential to create a development which is both internally and externally exceptional in terms of space, views and architecture.

Technical Constraints



EXISTING CONSULTATION CONTEXT ON THE DESIGN BRIEF

The preparation of this document was subject to a public consultation process, which helped to guide and refine content and approach. This took the form of a two day public exhibition and the display of information boards in the Town Hall in Durham and on the internet.

This exhibition was focused mainly on design and development principles and different development options which gave examples of how the site could be regenerated based on these principles. The consultation took place on Friday 20th and Saturday 21st May 2011. Boards were presented displaying proposed design principles and a series of potential approaches to the site's redevelopment. The views of the attendees were gathered using a feedback form. Full analysis of the results is available separately and will be included in the final Brief.





The headline points are as follows:

- 112 people attended the consultation and 44 people filled in feedback forms.
- 93% of those filling in a feedback form supported the redevelopment of the site.
- 16 out of the 17 design principles suggested were largely supported by those responding.
- As a result of the public consultation changes were made to the design principles and recommended approaches to land-use.
- The following principles were less favourably received. These have been considered in more detail since the consultation (see below):
 - Allowing vehicular access from
 Framwellgate (16 agreed, 14 disagreed).
 This is 'too close' to draw any specific
 conclusion but given there are mixed views
 on this subject, it has been considered in
 further detail in preparing this document.
 - 2. Removal of trees nearest the roundabout (3 agree, 21 disagree). There was a preference to retain these trees and in general trees should be retained. However, in this case there is a powerful urban design rationale to reintroduce the historic building frontage which was lost many years ago.

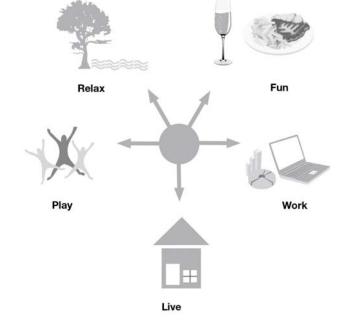


- 1. The public exhibition
- 2. People filling in feedback forms

DESIGN PARAMETERS

A series of design parameters provide the controlling framework for redeveloping the site. The parameters set the ground rules and guidelines for prospective developers of the site. These are very important and should shape the key aspects of any design. Within this context there is great potential for interpretation and a variety of design solutions. The parameters are based around the following key themes:

- Land use parameters
- · Connections and access parameters
- Open space, public realm and landscape parameters
- Development form parameters
- Street frontage parameters
- Materials parameters



Land Use Parameters

Development of the site should include a mix of uses. The uses listed below have been tested with Durham County Council in terms of Planning and Highways. These uses also present a realistic commercial proposition as verified through property market review. These uses have also been reviewed as part of public consultation. This is not a definitive list of acceptable planning uses and other uses may be appropriate and acceptable. It is advised that consultation with the Central Strategic Planning Team and with site owners NS&I take place as ideas about use are generated by developers, investors and design teams.

- Residential uses including higher density apartments and also houses.
- Retail or other town centre uses which could include one retail unit or a collection of retail units.
- Leisure and in particular, restaurants, cafes and bars.
- It is envisaged that the retail and leisure uses either together or individually would form part of a wider mixed use approach.

Car parking provision and the impact of new development and uses upon traffic levels on Framwellgate, Milburngate and the A690 should also be considered for all uses and the highway context may have implications for site capacity. The current position is that this road infrastructure is nearing capacity. The site already includes significant car parking and has approval for substantial office space, notwithstanding the building is operating well below this level.

The baseline for traffic levels on site is the existing approved use. It should be noted that this is a sustainable site close to rail and bus infrastructure and so sustainable travel to and from the site will be encouraged.

The brief does not prescribe specific land uses. The previous consultation identified example schemes which could be acceptable to the Council and in moving this forward, it is sensible to consolidate these uses into the list above. The balance of any uses and the exact split between these would need to be agreed in the context of this brief.

Connections and Access Parameters

Pedestrian access principles

- This is a town centre site and as such it is vital that it is designed to provide much improved pedestrian accessibility and connectivity.
- A strong pedestrian connection should be maintained along Framwellgate Waterside as part of a riverside promenade. Road and pedestrian movements should be balanced and pedestrians and cyclists prioritised.
- The most challenging requirement in respect of pedestrian connections will be to establish an accessible, legible and well-overlooked pedestrian route from Leazes Road at the higher (mid town) level to the lower level at Framwellgate Waterside.
- Also the connection to The Gates Shopping Centre under the road bridge will need improvement.
- The feasibility of an additional footbridge to Freemans Reach, Walkergate and Millennium Place should be considered. However given the prevailing economic climate the viability of any such bridge may be difficult and so this link is clearly aspirational and not a requirement.

Vehicular Access / Traffic principles

- Primary vehicular access should be provided from Framwellgate Waterside, accessed from the existing access point underneath The Gates Shopping Centre via Milburngate.
- There is potential to use the existing ramped egress from the site onto Framwellgate as has historically been the case.
- The impact of proposed uses on the site on the A690 will be a key consideration defining the appropriate amount of development. This issue was highlighted when constraints were described and it was noted that at this stage there is not definitive advice from the Highway Authority as to the capacity within the existing network locally.

Cycle Access principles

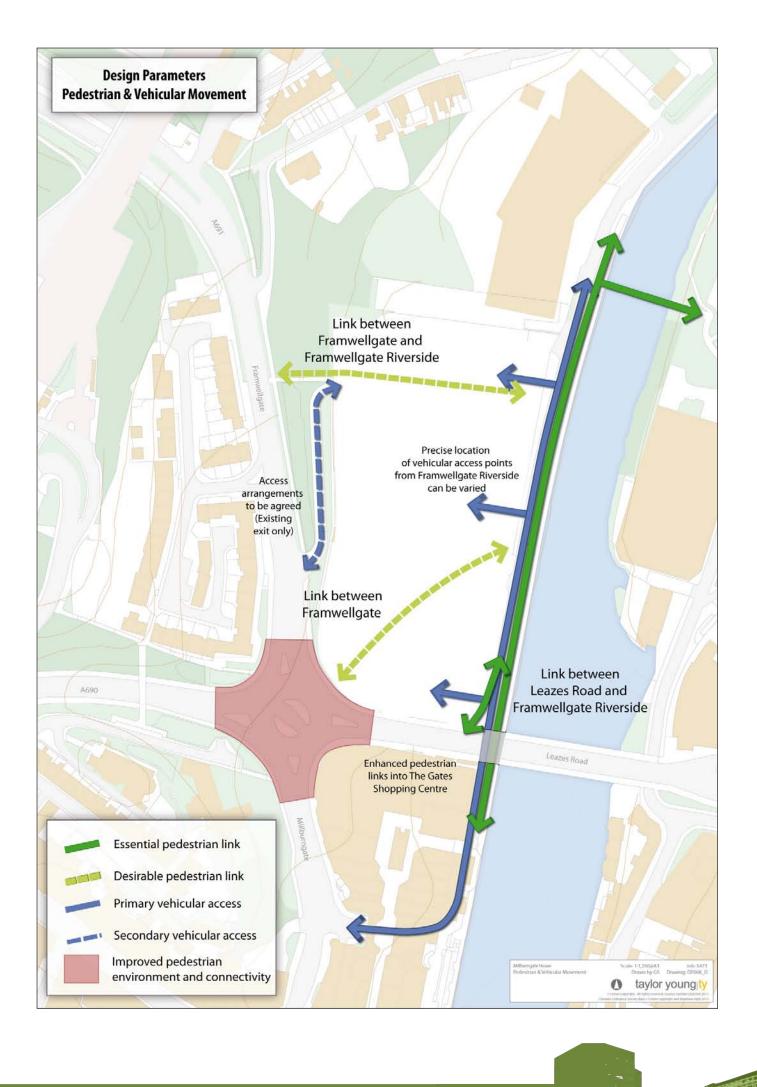
- New cycle facilities for secure covered storage at appropriate locations and with adequate provision of stands will be required to encourage and support bicycle journeys to the site and Town Centre.
- New development should also ensure adequate facilities are designed in for cycle storage and associated facilities.







- Poor pedestrian access to The Gates Shopping Centre
- 2. Traffic impacts on the pedestrian environment along Leazes Road



Open Space, Public Realm and Landscape Parameters

Public Realm principles

- A well designed, high quality and pedestrian friendly public realm should be created across and throughout the site.
- The public realm should be fully accessible and the site levels do present a challenge to this, which will need to be creatively addressed. Design solutions should consider historical solutions to changes in levels and street design.
- Where accessible gradients are not achievable along streets to link the mid town and riverside levels, mechanical solutions will be required and these should be provided through and managed by the development (e.g. lifts or travelators).
- The footway and public realm along Leazes Road and the southern portion of Framwellgate is also an area for improvement, particularly in terms of pedestrian safety and traffic impact.
- Framwellgate Waterside is a key area for action and improvement. New development should include the land right up to the riverside in terms of the public realm envelope of the scheme and make provision for the significant improvement of this area as a public space.
- The existing road along the riverside should be retained in its broad location but should be narrowed through changes to parking arrangements and carriageway designed within a pedestrian priority scheme.







- 1
- 3
- An underutilised riverside, designed for car parking rather than for people
- 2. An example of a more vibrant and pedestrian friendly riverside in Chester
- 3. Existing public space but poorly designed and used

Open Space principles

- A number of spaces should be created within the development serving a variety of functions ranging from small incidental spaces to larger more formal squares. There is flexibility about how this network of spaces is delivered but the need for a series of linked places within the development is underlined as a requirement.
- A centrepiece open space should be created within the site and this should have a relationship with the riverside, set back slightly from the riverside and supported by activity generating uses. The exact position of the space can be varied, however its location should respond to uses and movement routes. It is likely that this key public space will need to help resolve levels across the site and this should be an important aspect of the brief for the design of this space.

Approach to Trees

- The belt of trees to the north-west of the site alongside Framwellgate and occupying the retaining slopes adjacent to it should be retained.
 Appropriate management and thinning of this area of trees may be necessary. The collective value of these trees is the important feature.
- It may be appropriate / possible to extend this green character across the site towards the riverside through new tree planting and landscaped areas. This concept should be explored through site masterplanning.
- The belt of existing trees by the Framwellgate / Leazes Road junction could be thinned or removed to enable the creation of a new street frontage. New formal / structural tree planting could be designed into a refurbished street environment.
- Avenue planting is promoted along the waterside to create a much greener and more convivial landscape character and microclimate species choice and spacing will be important as the intention should be to add value to the waterside and not to screen the river from development. Existing and future services along Framwellgate waterside will need to be considered in terms of street tree planting.







- 2 3
- 1. Typical small informal Durham space
- 2. Trees retained to Framwellgate
- 3. Trees opposite The Gates Shopping Centre

Development Form Parameters

Approach to Key Views

Site analysis identifies a series of important views of the site from around the town. In particular, views of the site and the World Heritage Site have been identified as most important. These views comprise lower level views from Framwellgate Waterside and higher level views from Framwellgate.

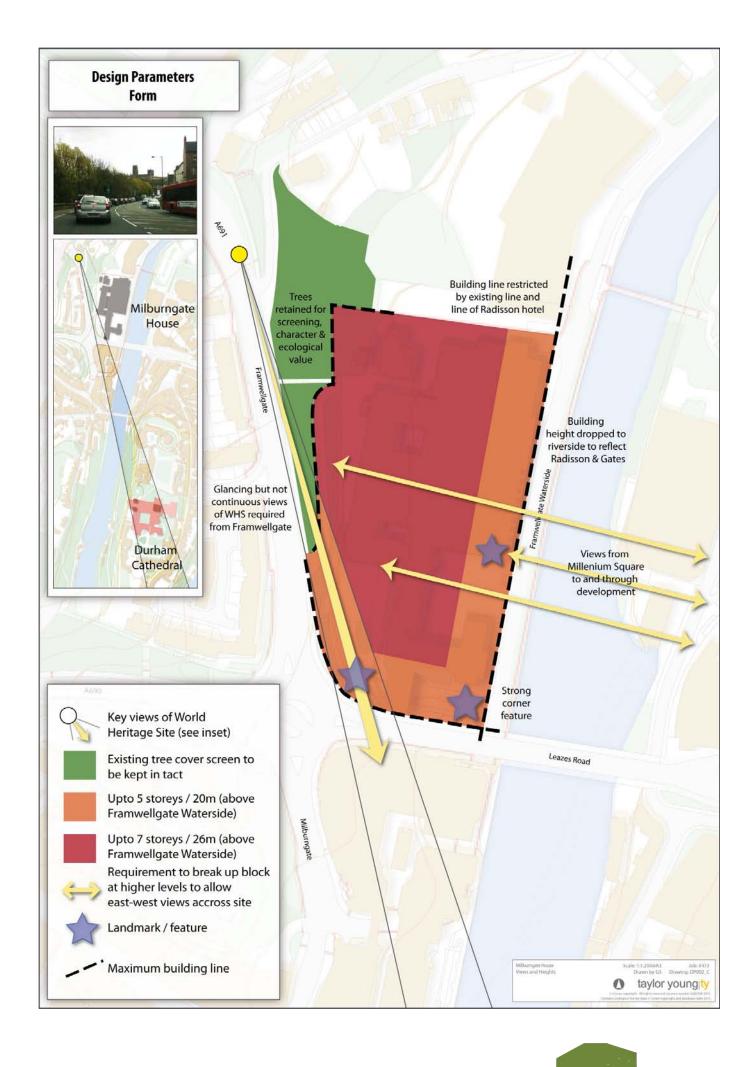
Discussions with English Heritage confirmed that the view of Durham Cathedral (WHS), from Framwellgate is key as this street forms a gateway and approach to Durham City Centre. Redevelopment of Milburngate House must respect this view corridor and ensure that it is retained.

Trees and buildings currently obscure and soften part of this view and so improvements will be possible in places through redevelopment. In seeking improvements to this view corridor, it is not necessary to maintain constant and unbroken views to the Cathedral along the full length of Framwellgate. Rather new views and glimpses can be created / retained to ensure the prominence and visibility of the Cathedral (WHS) is maintained. Views should not be substantially reduced and detailed assessment will be required as schemes are designed in detail. Controls over building height will help retain these long views.

The views to the WHS from the redevelopment of Milburngate House will be impacted less at the lower waterside level as building lines will be set back from the river. Hence there will be building line controls rather than height controls in this location.

Building lines principles

- As defined elsewhere, new buildings are encouraged at the corner of Framwellgate and Leazes Road to strengthen this important corner location. By introducing buildings at this location the local view to the WHS may be interrupted but this is acceptable providing other long distance views are provided along Framwellgate. That is, providing the design is complementary to the WHS being included in the view.
- New buildings frontages are also required at the waterside. This should not however be a solid wall of development. Break points in the building line will be appropriate, to create new streets and spaces and a more human scaled riverside promenade. The new building line should relate well to the Radisson Hotel.
- Building lines at the riverside could step back from the riverside to accommodate public realm and to accommodate flood mitigation and water storage areas. However, the need to enable enclosure of the river dictates that maximum set back distances for the greater proportion of buildings will be not more than 20 metres.
- Where possible the building line to the south and south-east should be brought forward to the edge of the footway / public realm to improve enclosure and develop a city scale and street scene.
 Pedestrian footways could be widened at this location to create a more comfortable pedestrian street (with greater space between pedestrians and cars).
- It is envisaged that the building line to the north-west should not go beyond the existing retaining wall structures and should not encroach onto the existing trees and embankment. Whilst this part of the development will be less visible, good quality frontages and architecture will be necessary and buildings should not turn their back on Framwellgate.



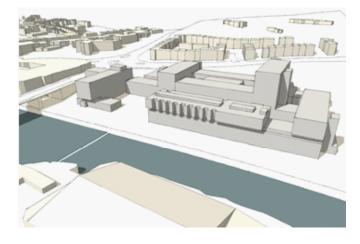
Building Heights principles

- Controls on building heights are identified to ensure an appropriately scaled design response and to protect views of the World Heritage Site.
- New development should reflect and respond to the form, height and roofline of Durham
 City Centre. Notwithstanding this, the site can accommodate tall development and the height controls placed on development reflect this, creating buildings of appropriate scale and stature for the site.
- An envelope has been identified within which new buildings will need to be accommodated.
 This has been defined to simply convey the key requirements for redevelopment in relation to the existing building and context.
- Across the site, buildings up to 5 storeys or 20 metres will be acceptable (to ridge or equivalent) as measured from the base of buildings at the riverside. At the riverside, this control limits buildings in so that they are broadly in line with both the Radisson Hotel and The Gates Shopping Centre. This control also protects the long range views along Framwellgate to the WHS.
- The building height should be varied along the length of the riverside frontage in particular and around the site more generally to create a varied impression and an interesting skyline.



- 1. Massing zone at Riverside
- 2. 3D model of existing building
- 3. Massing zone at Framwellgate
- 4. Massing zone at Leazes Road









- Deeper into the site, taller buildings will be acceptable and this zone is indicated on the associated plan. The upper limit for taller buildings in this location is 7 storeys or 26 metres to ridge.
 Taller buildings in this location are encouraged to create a tiered effect to the buildings on site (see next bullet).
- Typically, buildings reflect the terrain in Durham and so there is often the visual impression of buildings stepping up and across rising / falling ground. Whilst this site is essentially a flat site, with a level plinth created across the site, there is an opportunity for new buildings to reflect this stepping effect through careful and controlled use of building heights, and this approach is encouraged.
- The height control of up to 26 metres will be low enough to make visible the retained trees along Framwellgate. These trees are an important feature when viewing new development from Millennium Place. This green backcloth to the City

- (at this location) is important and hence building heights are controlled here to ensure new development is set below the crest of the tree canopy. The interplay of buildings and trees is a characteristic part of Durham's townscape.
- A signature building could be acceptable rising above 26 metres providing it does not impact adversely on views of the WHS. Any such building should be iconic, slender and of the highest quality. The height of this building will be judged on its townscape merits.
- Any such signature building should have a maximum height of no greater than the existing building. This suggests that new building at no greater height than 34metres.



- 1. Existing townscape stepping up the hill
- 2. Building rising up from the Riverside
- 3. Massing zones from Walkergate
- 4. Massing zone from Riverside towards WHS



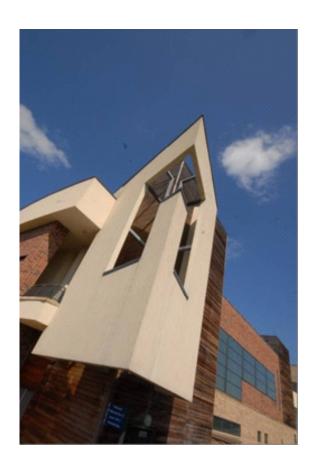






Approach to Landmarks / Landmark Features

- Landmark features should be used to define key corners and vista points within the site. At these locations taller buildings and/or feature elements may be appropriate to reinforce legibility, but these remain governed by the overall height controls.
- Skyline features may be part of this architectural approach but again the maximum height controls apply. It should be noted that landmark features can comprise many forms and do not necessarily require added height to generate the desired impact.
- Durham's historic townscape provide numerous examples of locally distinctive townscape features which can provide inspiration for designers on this site. See photograph (below)
- More modern development in the City also highlights different ways to create points of interest through architectural forms. See photograph (right)
- There is scope for a tall landmark / skyline building set within a wider townscape fabric. This will echo the traditional grain of the city, with lower buildings punctuated by spires and towers.





Street Frontage Parameters

Frontages and Enclosure principles

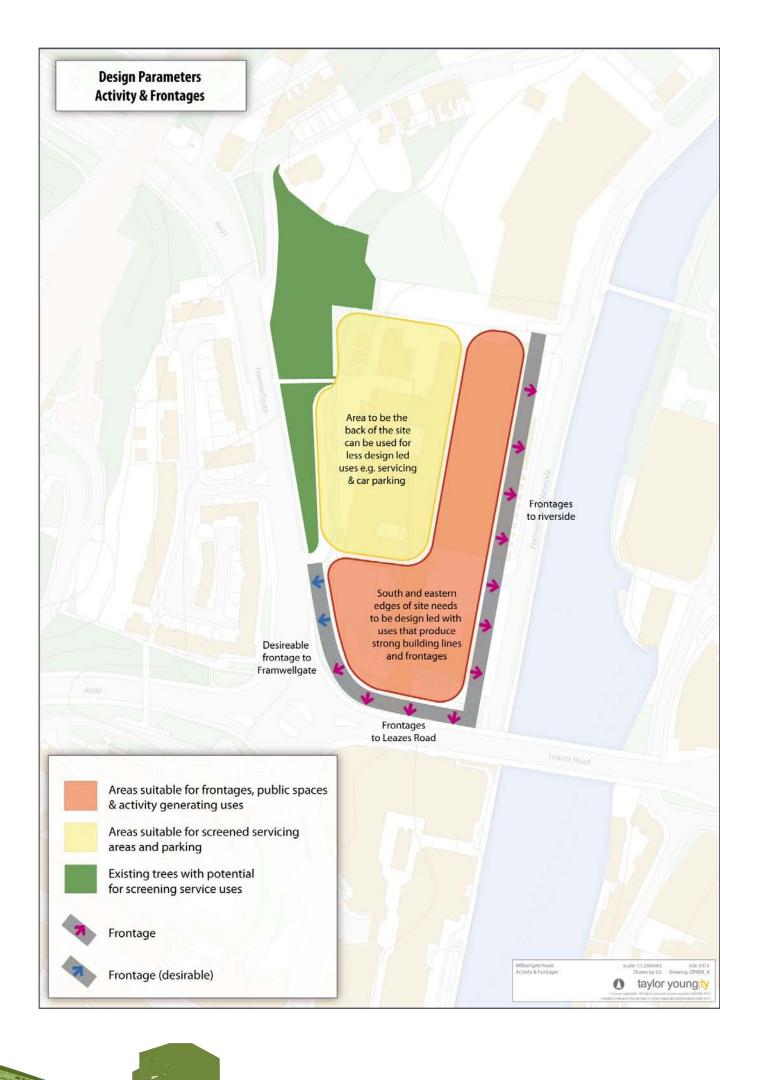
- Strong new built frontages should be created addressing the waterside and Leazes Road, including the corner at Leazes Road and Framwellgate. A built frontage is also desirable and encouraged along the southern portion of Framwellgate.
- Strong frontages require enclosure and continuity of street space through buildings of appropriate scale and design quality.
- There may be scope to break these frontages to allow access into the site and to break down the grain of the site and define individual plots.

Street Level / Ground Floor Activity principles

- A key design challenge for this site is to create active street level frontages across the site whilst also resolving the change in level between the riverside and Leazes Road. This should be achieved through buildings and public realm designed together.
- Design solutions need to recognise that there are two key street levels within the site - the waterside and Leazes Road. These will be linked (in some way) and the two levels and linking streets / spaces designed to include lively and active frontages.
- A distinction is made between buildings which are activity generators; for example shops, restaurants and so on and other uses such as houses, which generate far less activity by way of coming and going.
- Activity generating uses should be located towards the south and east of the site, benefitting from movement routes and greater levels of existing footfall. These should invite people into the site and develop footfall flows into the site and towards the riverside. See photograph (right).

- At the riverside, flood risk mitigation will dictate that the finished floor level to buildings will be set higher than existing public realm. The design of the riverside space should avoid the need to set building frontages high above the street level.
- It will be desirable for some buildings to provide multi-level access and frontages (and entrances) at different storey, but this should be in addition to public / external connections within the wider public realm.
- Service, private access areas and/or areas of open parking should be located to the north and west of the site, where they can be screened by existing trees, by changes in level and by new buildings (or a combination of these).





Street / Building Proportions

- The aim in the new development is to create streets which are of a scale and proportion that naturally fit within Durham City Centre. Vertical proportions through plot and building sub-division is characteristic of Durham Streets. Controlled variety along the street and vertical proportions are required. See photograph (right).
- Strong street enclosure in traditional Durham streets with taller buildings and intimate spaces. This overall approach and effect of proportion should be replicated through new development. See photograph (right).
- Recent development at Highgate replicates traditional proportions. The architectural treatment need not however be traditional in development of similar proportion at Milburngate House.
- The gentle sweep of the street up and around the sloping ground is also characteristic to Durham working together. The design of the street to accommodate a change in level in this way could provide inspiration for addressing the change in level at Milburngate House. See photograph (right and below).
- New development should replicate these proportions irrespective of the architectural style employed. Contemporary or traditional buildings can adopt this Durham scale and proportion.









Material Parameters

- A family of traditional building materials, colours and finishes make Durham's historic buildings and streets distinctive and generate an overall impression which is both familiar and place specific. Materials for buildings and public realm should draw upon this family or palette of materials in a sensitive and creative manner to achieve a continuation in Durham's distinct sense of place. This is equally important whether or not the architectural style is traditional (as at Highgate) or contemporary. See photograph (Below right).
- Materials must have a sense of coherence and integrity as part of the building and its architecture. The form and articulation of a building, of a street or a series of buildings can be translated through a carefully specified palette of materials which contrast and complement together and within the overall coordinating framework of Durham's existing townscape. This is not about dressing new buildings up to look old. It is about ensuring that whatever the style of building the overall theme is one which belongs in Durham.
- Strong and deliberate contrast from the prevailing palette of materials will generally be discouraged, other than, where this is used subtly to provide accentuation to key elements, for example to highlight a key corner, prominent elevation or entrance. For these important features careful consideration should be given to the colour, nature and finish of these accent materials.
- Colour is particularly important in dealing with this sensitive site. Light colours with reflective surfaces can prove very detrimental to the creation of a harmonious and settled townscape, which has a sense of permanence, appropriateness and contextual relevance. Typically darker and more recessive colours picking up local stone and brick tones for walling and dark slates for roofing should be a baseline position.

- There should be a clear narrative and evidence as to why materials, colours and finishes for all aspects of buildings and public realm are selected set against this approach.
- Materials must be fit for purpose, robust and be specified, constructed and detailed to stand the test of time.
- Materials for buildings and public realm should respond positively to the wider City Centre.





SUMMARY

This brief establishes numerous requirements for development at Milburngate House. The intention is to set key controls and to promote a highly context specific approach.

Despite the amount of information, there remains scope to be innovative and creative through site design and masterplanning. To understand how proposals will be assessed against the brief, the following section includes a design review table which may be used to assess proposals.

Each of the key aspects of the brief is summarised to enable qualitative design review. As a reminder of the key issues within the document the following table is provided.

Vision and Key Principles

Parameters

- Land Use Parameters
- Connections and Access Parameters
- Open Space, Public Realm and Landscape Parameters
- Development Form Parameters
- Frontages, enclosure and activity at street level
- Street Frontage Parameters
- Street Building Proportions
- Materials for buildings and public realm

FEEDBACK ON THIS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Views and feedback are now sought on this consultation document. Do the principles fit with your own aspirations for the site and will they promote high and appropriate design standards for the site within the Durham context?

Consultation feedback is required by Friday 11th November 2011 and should be directed to:

support@durhamcityvison.com

taylor youngity

