

Consett Masterplan Update



Durham County Council

November 2016

Context for Masterplan Update

Masterplan Updates are being developed for the majority of the largest towns in County Durham. This Masterplan Update for Consett is an update to the 2010 Masterplan. It provides an update on what has been delivered across Council services in the recent past and sets out key activities for the future, including in the town centre, housing, retail, leisure and tourism, and in highway infrastructure.

Durham County Council has and will continue to support the development of Consett and the immediate surrounding area with key priorities in respect of:

- The creation of new jobs;
- The provision of new shops;
- The creation of new and enhanced leisure facilities;
- Improvements to the public realm; and
- New green and open spaces.

Profile

Consett is a town in the northwest of County Durham. It is at the centre of a number of transport corridors. The A691 links the north-west of the county with Durham City and the A692 provides connectivity to Gateshead and Newcastle. The A693 links directly to the A692 and provides access to Stanley, Chester le Street and the A1. Consett is home to over 27,000 people. The nearby A68 also provides an alternative route to Scotland.

The C2C national cycle route also runs through the town. It was opened in in 1994 and links Whitehaven in Cumbria to the North East coast at Sunderland. It has an average of between 12,000 and 15,000 cyclists completing the route every year (and literally hundreds of thousands of other doing shorter sections) contributing to the local economy. There are also other recreational routes linking the town to the high quality countryside beyond.

The town has a rich heritage in mining and in particular steel production, which spawned an array of local industries. While the decline of these industries severely impacted upon the town, more than 6,000 jobs have been created since the Steel Works closure in 1980, many through the Genesis Project which was formed after the closure to regenerate the site and bring jobs and investment to the town. Today more than 200 different companies operate in and around the town and employment rates are above the county average. The town has a good supply of employment land and accommodation, however there remains a need to boost local skills and support local business start-ups and growth.

Significant new developments and investments have improved the economic stability of Consett. Recent schemes include the edge of centre retail and service developments at Genesis and the expansion and reconfiguration of the Hermiston Retail Park. The town centre has benefitted from recent environmental improvements and retains a regular market.

Consett has an excellent range of amenities including new leisure facilities incorporated within a new Academy. The town has a lively evening economy with a good array of restaurants and pubs. The Empire theatre and cinema is also a popular attraction.

The Derwent Reservoir is located just west of the town and is a popular leisure attraction and beauty spot. The town has good access to the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Derwent Valley to the north.



Consett is well-served in terms of bus provision and is linked to a reliable network across the county.

What has been delivered?

Community Projects

- In the 2015/2016 financial year the Derwent Valley Area Action Partnership approved 31 projects and awarded over £265,000 in grants. Match funding of over £127,000 was achieved.
- Projects include amongst other things:
 - a physical activity programme for children and young people
 - a community transport scheme and arts and music project for older people
 - a range of business and employment projects
 - heritage promotion
 - events support
 - £22,000 was given in 14 local projects which offered a variety of activities across the area

Housing

- Consett has proved to be a popular location for new housing in recent times, delivering around 500 new homes in the last five years. Over 190 of these have been built in the past couple of years alone. Key sites in Shotley Bridge, Berry Edge, Templetown/Delves Lane and Moorside have been completed bringing new housing stock and choice for residents.

Business

- A range of initiatives have been delivered in the Consett area to improve employability, employment levels and aid businesses. Since 2014, 121 residents who were previously unemployed have been supported to move back into employment by securing them apprenticeship opportunities with local businesses.
- The County Council has also led on a Targeted Building Improvements programme in the town centre, which is focused on supporting town centre businesses, targeting derelict and underused premises, new business enterprise and private sector investment. The Council invested just over £30,000 in the project which generated significant private investment between 2014 and 2016, supporting 8 businesses.
- Many firms in the area are benefitting from support from a range of agencies including Business Durham. New development has been delivered at Consett Business Park benefiting from £115,000 Council investment.

Retail

- The County Council have focussed on a range of improvements to the town centre to improve the visual quality of the shopping environment. Over £600,000 of public

realm improvements have been delivered including new paving, lighting, street furniture and planting areas, as well as three additional time-limited parking spaces.

- Environmental improvements have been delivered within Shotley Bridge, including new heritage lighting, planting and seating areas.
- A range of new retail units have been added to the reconfigured Hermiston Retail Park which have, alongside developments at Berry Edge, improved the comparison offer in the town helping to capture more local spend.

Tourism, Leisure & Recreation

- £44m has been invested into the co-location of Leisure Centre and Consett Academy which included the re-location of the local football club. The Academy opened in 2015, bringing together former school facilities at Blackfyne and Moorside onto a new state-of-the-art complex in the town centre.
- Facilities comprise two swimming pools with moveable floors, gym with consultation rooms, studio, squash courts and sports hall. Externally, there is a full-size 3G pitch for rugby and football.
- Consett FC were also fully relocated into a state-of-the-art stadium facility with supporting changing and function facilities at Crookhall. Investment was also made into the Consett RFC, with significant improvements to changing provision and pitches.
- Investment has been made to facilities and pitches at Consett Rugby Club linked to Consett Academy/Leisure Centre project. Around £80,000 has been invested in changing rooms and car park at Consett Cricket Club to facilitate use by other clubs following closure of Blackfyne School.
- A £85,000 upgraded skate park has opened at the Consett academy and Leisure Centre.

Project Genesis

- Significant new housing has been delivered at Berry Edge. Work is ongoing at Berry Edge South delivering a range of family housing, as well as bungalows, commercial space and allotments. Improvement works are being carried out to the recreation pathways.
- Fawcett Park was opened in 2014, which includes a recreation area and art works celebrating the town's industrial past. A key feature of the park is the Genesis Circle which is an 18m diameter steel structure at the west section of the park which also links the Coast to Coast route.

- The project has delivered new business space including an innovation centre aimed at supporting local start-up businesses.
- A large supermarket and restaurant/drive-through have also been delivered on the site.

Infrastructure

- Significant investment has been directed into the realignment and configuration of the Villa Real carriageway and former bridge. Artworks have been added to Puddlers Corner Roundabout, while a range of transport improvements have been delivered including localised car parking and footpath improvements. There have also been improvements to Consett Bus station and to the information displays.
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- Significant improvements have been made at Northlands Roundabout and Junction 63 of the A1 (M) in Chester-le- Street to ease congestion. Costing over £5m and delivered by the County Council in consultation with Highways England and Government funding, these works have improved access along the A693 economic corridor in North Durham (identified as a priority in LTP3) from Consett allowing for more efficient access for commuters and freight who wish to access the A1 (M).
 - As a result of the Digital Durham project supported by the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, British Telecom and the Council most areas in and around Consett should experience an improvement in the quality and speed of Broadband services through the roll out of fibre services.
 - Significant investment has been made in schooling facilities in Consett in recent years. A raft of improvement works and extensions have been undertaken throughout the area in recent years, including at Moorside Primary School and Delves Lane Primary School. Improvements to the fabric and creation of an additional classroom at Shotley Bridge Primary School have been completed in September 2016.
 - A recent £2m investment at Crookhall Sewage Treatment Works has resolved capacity problems in the Crookhall and Leadgate areas.

Health

Within the town there is provision of:

- Crees (based on the Australian “men’s sheds “model).
- Contraception and Sexual Health Services.
- Healthy Living Pharmacies.
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centres.
- Mindfulness courses and refresher days.
- Targeted Health Trainer and Health Visitor support onsite to members of the GRT community.

The following countywide provision is also being delivered within the town:

- If U Care Share, based in Great Lumley this provides support for people affected by suicide.
- The Social Prescribing Programme.

What will be delivered?

- New housing will continue to be delivered in and around the town, with planning permission for 1040 units currently in place.
- Dunlop BTL, which is based in Ashford, Kent, has been awarded a £250,000 ‘Let’s Grow’ grant to allow it to expand into the former KP crisps factory in Consett creating around 60 new jobs. The company, which manufactures and distributes bearings, power transmission and motion transfer linkage products, is expanding into the North East following a £2.2m investment.
- The Targeted Building Improvements fund will be completed in Consett town centre – this project has so far created 2 full time jobs
- New bus stops, bus stop improvements and bus shelter accommodation works will be completed in Consett, The Grove, Shotley Bridge, Blackhill, Bridgehill, Leadgate and Medomsley.
- Completion of the Villa Real road improvements.
- Investment to former Blackfyne School running track refurbishment and licence to Blackhill Bounders Running Club.
- Continuation of the Land of Oak & Iron Landscape Partnership programme which aims to enhance and promote the heritage and outstanding natural features within an area stretching from the Derwent Reservoir to the River Tyne to showcase the landscape and industrial and cultural heritage, attracting more visitors and boosting the local economy. This is a Heritage Lottery Fund and partnership funded Landscape

Partnership. The Derwent Valley AAP has contributed £3000 to develop The Lodge in Blackhill and Consett Park as a Satellite Heritage Centre for the Land of Oak and Iron.

- Construction of replacement football changing rooms at Pemberton Road, Bridgehill.