



DURHAM INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

Investment Prospectus

WELCOME TO DURHAM

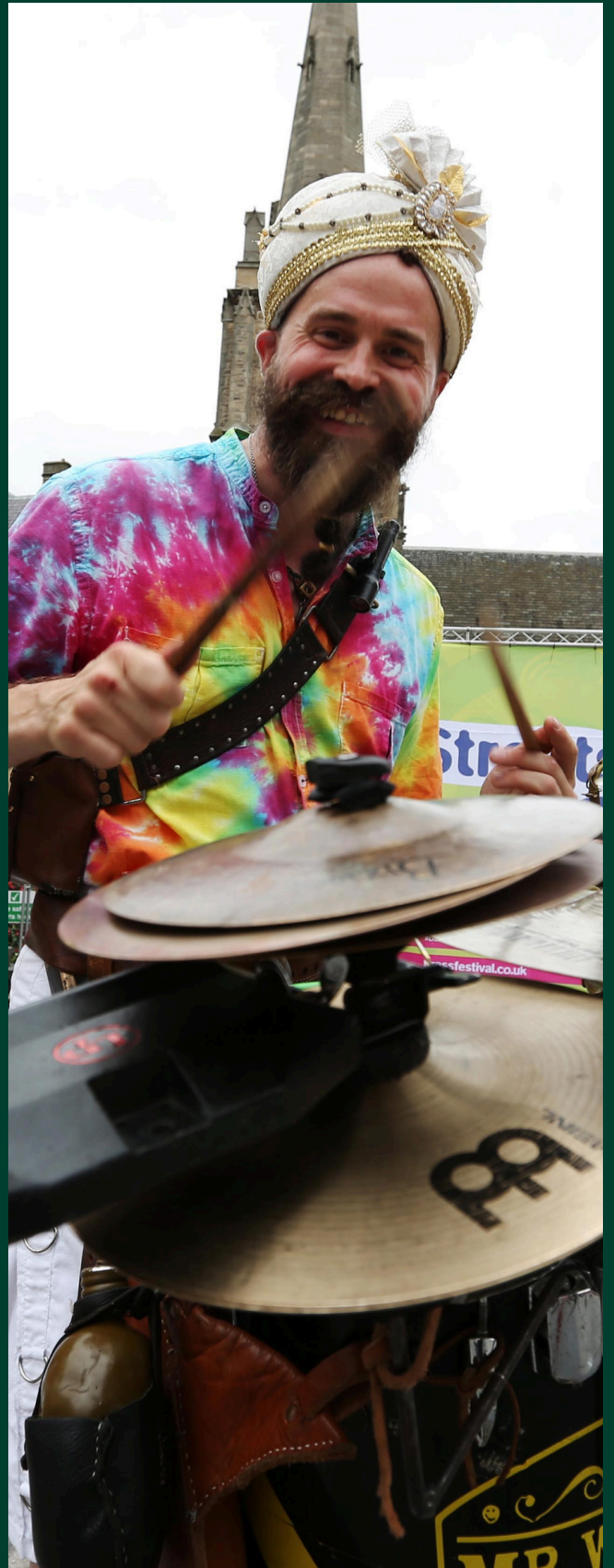
Driving green, inclusive growth across Durham by tapping into our innovation, entrepreneurialism and creativity

Durham is an inspiring place to live, work, invest, visit, and study. Boasting a world-famous city, a stunning coastline, and a rich heritage, the county seamlessly blends natural beauty with commercial ambition. Having pioneered the first railway network in 1825, Durham is once again leading a technological revolution.

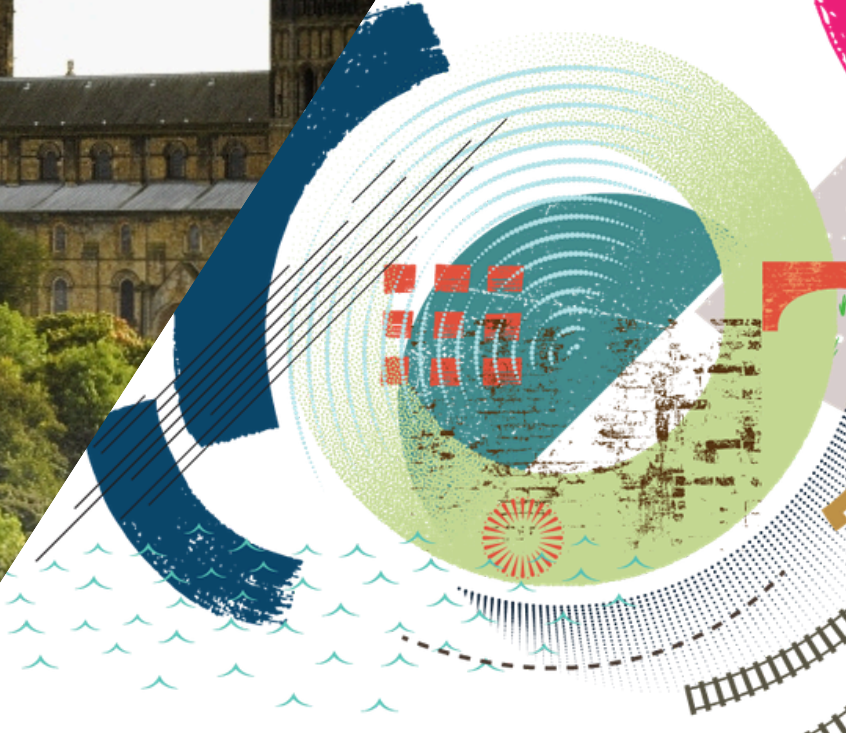
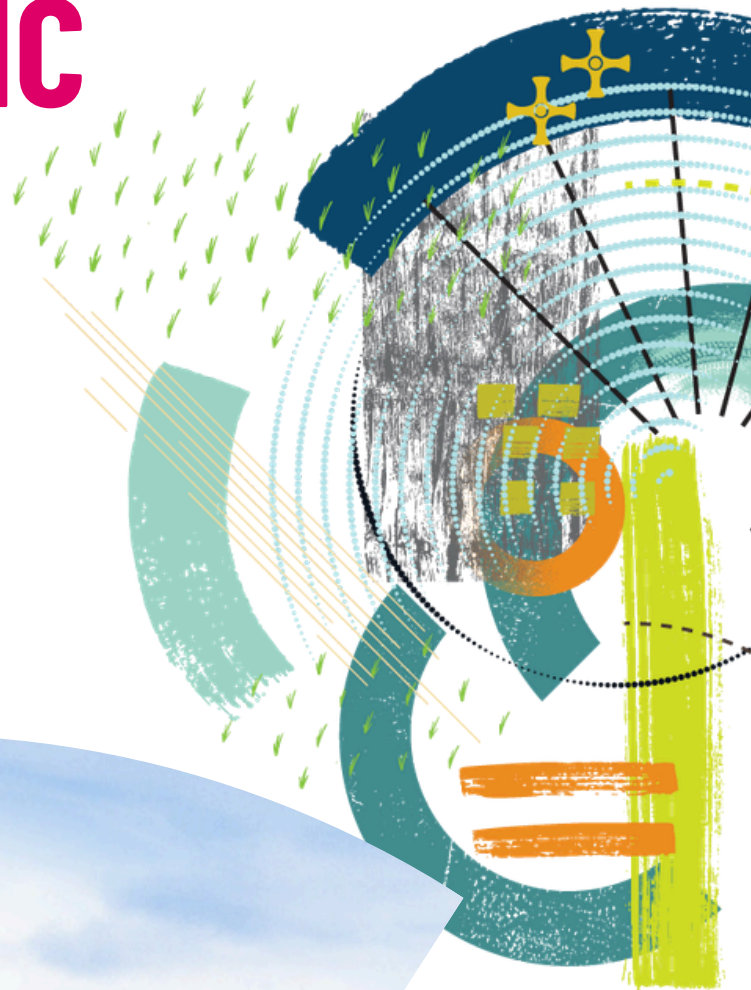
Today, it stands as a premier hub for advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, space applications, and life sciences, positioning the county as the primary innovation engine for the North East.

With a talent pool of 1.5 million people within easy reach, a world-class university, coupled with a highly supportive business environment, Durham provides companies with the space and tools they need to scale. Connected, ambitious, and forward-looking, this is a place where heritage fuels pioneering industries and ideas have the space to grow.

We invite potential investment partners to join us on this journey, capitalising on our robust project pipeline and propelling Durham forward into a prosperous future.



OUR ECONOMIC STRENGTHS



County Durham is a major economic contributor in the region, with a total GVA of £12.1 billion (2023). It accounts for nearly ¼ of the total economic output of the North East Combined Authority area. Durham's recent GVA growth of nearly 15% (2023), in a single year, reflects its ever-expanding economic base, strengthening long-term jobs, supply chains, and wider economic activity across the North East.

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering

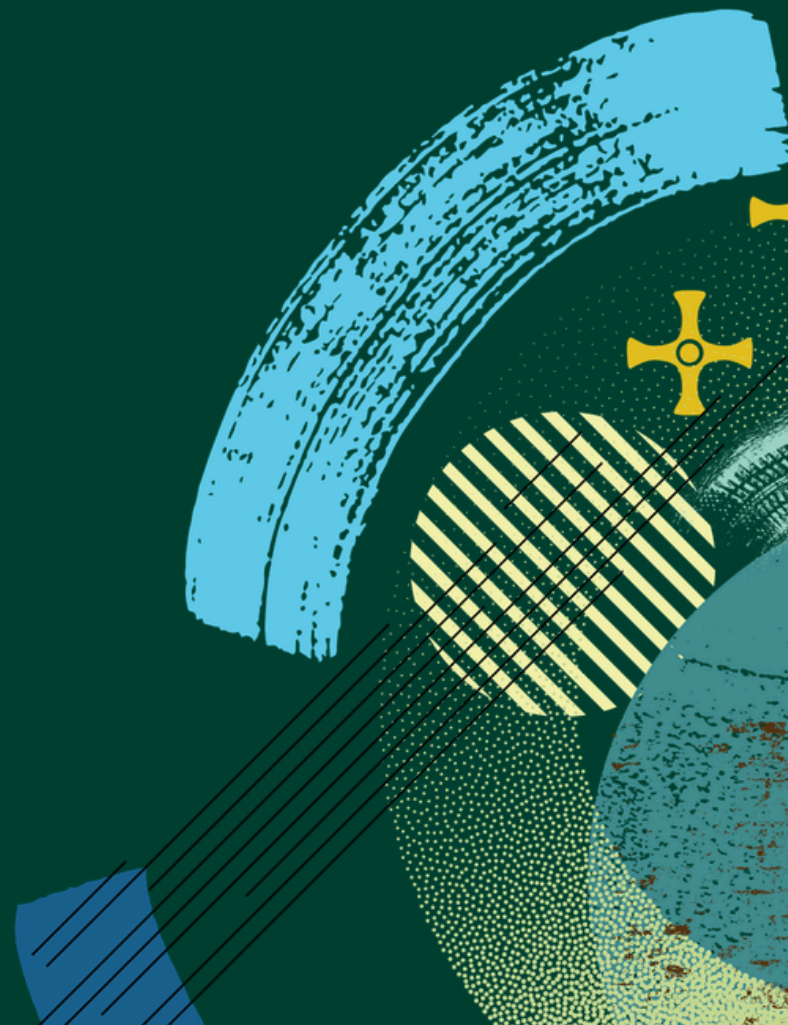
As one of the North East's largest manufacturing hubs, Durham employs around 10,000 people in high-value engineering. Our deep industrial roots have attracted global heavyweights, including rail giant Hitachi and automotive powerhouse Caterpillar, as well as cutting-edge pioneers such as Power Roll, who are actively reshaping the sector's clean-energy future.

Semiconductors and Advanced Materials Electronics

Durham hosts a rapidly expanding cluster of electronics, photonics, and compound semiconductors. Backed by world-class academic research and a highly skilled technical workforce, leading innovators such as Kromek, Filtronic, Pragmatic, Oetric, and Tridonic choose Durham to develop next-generation hardware and advanced supply chains.

Space and Satellites

We specialise in resilient communications, Earth observation, and software. By hosting Space North East England, a collaborative body linking industry, academia, and the UK space and defence community, the county is central to a regional drive to expand the space sector workforce to 10,000 jobs by 2030. This momentum is also unlocking broader green tech op.





Digital and AI

Durham is a prime location for digital businesses operating at the forefront of software development, AI, defence, cyber security and resilient communications, supported by a highly skilled workforce and a strong innovation ecosystem. Durham's digital sector includes digital consultancy Waterstons, payments provider Easology and deep-tech giant Kromek, giving it a diverse and growing digital economy. Similarly, Durham Headquartered Northumbrian Water Ltd has a vast pool of engineers and an innovation department leading the way in digitalisation.

Life Sciences

A major employer in Durham, offering opportunities across biopharma, health-tech, and clinical R&D. Durham offers a collaborative triple helix environment in which business, education, and public partners thrive. NETPark is a premier national landmark for this sector, home to more than 1,000 specialists, three innovation centres, and two National Catapult Centres. From innovative SMEs and emerging spinouts to the global bio-manufacturer GSK, Durham is creating a dynamic environment that supports cutting-edge discovery, commercialisation and large-scale manufacturing.

COMPELLING PLACES TO WORK, LIVE, AND VISIT



A thriving economy requires an equal commitment to quality of life. By revitalising our historic town centres, expanding the range of housing options, and improving home energy efficiency, we are creating sustainable, inclusive communities that attract and retain global talent. Leveraging our reputation as a major cultural destination, we are transforming our historic assets into a contemporary portfolio of experiences spanning our city, coast, and countryside.

The Light

Opening in summer 2026 at the heart of the Durham Innovation District, The Light is a dynamic, multi-use cultural venue that brings new life to the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery. This welcoming hub is designed to challenge traditional gallery spaces by blending art, science, and the region's historical connection to light through collaborative exhibitions developed with global partners.

The transformed and significantly extended building will host a state-of-the-art

temporary gallery alongside a dedicated DLI gallery, honouring the legacy of the Durham Light Infantry. Complete with beautifully landscaped grounds, a ground-floor cafe, a design-led retail shop, and versatile conference facilities, The Light is projected to attract up to 100,000 visitors annually, working in tandem with its sister venue, The Story, to cement County Durham's position as a premier cultural destination.



The Story

Housed in the beautifully restored Grade II-listed Mount Oswald Manor House, The Story is a world-class gateway to County Durham's heritage, blending historic preservation with modern public services. Opened in June 2024, it brings together five major collections under one roof for the first time: more than 900 years of county archives; archaeological discoveries from the Historic Environment Record; local studies; historic birth, death, and marriage registers; and the newly reunited Durham Light Infantry Collection and Archive.

Free to explore, The Story invites visitors of all ages to engage with permanent and temporary exhibitions, use state-of-the-art research spaces to trace family histories, or hold civil ceremonies in its elegant wedding venues. Combining high-performance passive storage that preserves miles of precious records with a light-filled public glass pavilion, on-site cafe, and active learning studios, The Story serves as both a vibrant local gathering space and a benchmark national destination for heritage tourism.



Bishop Auckland Regeneration

Backed by over £192 million in combined public and private funding, the Bishop Auckland Masterplan is driving a comprehensive urban renaissance, transforming this historic destination into a bustling twenty-first-century market town. Anchored by strategic collaborations between Durham County Council, The Auckland Project, and 11Arches, the regeneration programme comprises 16 core initiatives to elevate local infrastructure, diversify the high street, and celebrate the town's unique natural landscape. Key physical developments, including the major £15.7 million Bishop Gateway access scheme, such as the modernised transport hub, are carefully designed to accommodate a projected influx of more than one million visitors each year. By breathing new life into vacant commercial properties, creating ninety thousand square feet of new business space, and delivering up to 3,750 sustainable jobs alongside extensive youth training opportunities, the masterplan establishes a resilient, green foundation for long-term economic growth across the Durham Dales.



PRIDE IN OUR PLACE, CULTURE, AND PEOPLE





Gateway to the North East

Home to over 530,000 people, County Durham, in the heart of North East England, is a vital geographic link connecting 2.5 million regional residents to the rest of the UK. With Newcastle and Teesside airports within an hour's drive, direct rail links to London in under two and a half hours, and major deep-water ports (Teessport, Port of Tyne, and Port of Sunderland) nearby, Durham is exceptionally well connected to global markets.

World Leading Education

Our academic ecosystem is a formidable economic asset. Durham University is globally renowned, hosting 10 University Research Institutes and more than 80 specialist research centres. Complementing this is a powerhouse further education network, including New College Durham, which the Department for Education nationally recognises as an Advanced Manufacturing Technical Excellence College (TEC), and the North East Institute of Technology, which delivers industry-ready skills.

Investment Opportunities

Durham has a strong track record of attracting inward investment and driving economic growth. The county's approach, which combines public-sector leadership, private-sector collaboration and academic engagement, has created the ideal conditions for sustained, long-term economic growth. Working alongside Muse Place and Durham University at Aykley Heads / Durham Innovation District, and applying the collaborative triple helix model at NETPark, demonstrate how different partnership approaches can be applied to strategic opportunities, underpinned by the same principle: shared ambition and shared delivery. Staying flexible and adaptable has helped transform the county's economic profile, positioning Durham as a competitive location for high-value investment and innovation-led growth.



Heritage and Culture

From the iconic UNESCO World Heritage site of Durham Cathedral and Castle to the spectacular outdoor show Kynren, Durham's cultural capital is immense. In 2025, we celebrated the bicentenary of the modern passenger railway, which was born here in 1825. This rich heritage continues to pay dividends, with the visitor economy welcoming 21.56 million people and generating £1.38 billion in tourism expenditure in 2024.

Quality of Life

Durham offers an unparalleled balance of lifestyle and quality of life. Residents enjoy the dramatic landscapes of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, over 20 miles of heritage coastline, and a remarkably affordable cost of living. With excellent transport links and proximity to major northern cities, it is the ideal location for forward-thinking businesses to attract and retain elite talent.



CONNECTING OUR TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES

Investing in
Durham's Transport
Infrastructure



A robust and efficient rail network is essential to Durham's economic prosperity and North East England's economic growth.

As the gateway to the North East, Durham boasts excellent connectivity. Three main rail lines provide swift access across the UK, including a 12-minute journey to Newcastle and under two and a half hours to London. Recent announcements about transport in the North highlight significant infrastructure upgrades, notably the restoration of the Leamside Line. This development plays a pivotal role in bolstering the North East economy by connecting more parts of the region to Newcastle, Sunderland, and Teesside.

The restoration of the Leamside Line will be transformational, linking major employment sites at Integra 61, the Durham Innovation District, and NETPark. It will unlock new employment opportunities for local people, enhance leisure and cultural inclusion, and create a healthier, more connected, and more prosperous county.

These investments enhance connectivity across Durham and beyond while improving public health, reducing carbon emissions, and expanding opportunities for work, training, and education for our young people and communities.

Durham also benefits from robust road connectivity, with two major strategic corridors, the A1(M) and A19. By investing in our corridors and dualling the A66, we are enhancing our road network capacity and unlocking opportunities for commercial and regeneration development.

To manage this growth sustainably, Durham's Park and Ride network supports residents' everyday travel needs. These strategic sites in Durham City are encouraging people to switch from car journeys into the city centre to reliable, frequent public transport.



LEAMSIDE LINE

Project Description

The reopening of the disused Leamside Line will connect parts of the North East currently without rail access to Newcastle, Sunderland, and Teesside. This major infrastructure project will link residents to major regional employers, including Nissan, Hitachi, and Amazon, driving regional economic growth. Running from Ferryhill to Newcastle, the line will increase capacity on the East Coast Main Line and create opportunities for a £745m extension of the Tyne and Wear Metro, a light rail rapid transit system.

Collaborative partners include Transport North East, the Department for Transport, and Network Rail, with strong cross-party political backing across the region.

Project Status

The UK Government announced plans to reopen the Leamside Line as part of the November 2023 Network North programme. The Outline Business Case for the Washington Metro Loop, led by Nexus, began in April and includes engineering and feasibility studies, as well as a full cost assessment. The business case is estimated at £7m and is on track to be finalised in spring 2026.

Benefits and Rationale

- The reopening of the Leamside Line is the most critical transport infrastructure project for the North East's economic future.
- The line will significantly improve public health, reduce carbon emissions, and expand access to work, training, and education for young people and local communities.
- Using existing, safeguarded infrastructure minimises initial construction costs, allowing the region to harness the line's economic potential at the earliest opportunity.



DURHAM INNOVATION DISTRICT: AYKLEY HEADS

Project Overview

The Durham Innovation District is a major, nationally significant city centre development. Its primary engine is the Aykley Heads campus, a first-class site, and offering high-quality facilities within a beautifully landscaped, mature woodland setting yet located in the City. Designed to enhance and bring together the existing knowledge, research, talent, and resources, this vibrant campus targets high-growth sectors such as data science, AI, defence, business and professional services.

The site is only a few minutes' walk from Durham railway station, served by the East Coast Mainline, CrossCountry and TransPennine services, and is accessible by car from the A1(M) in under 10 minutes. Aykley Heads acts as a physical catalyst for growth across the wider district, housing established innovators such as Waterstons alongside the Durham City Incubator, which actively nurtures university spin-outs and high-growth start-ups.



DURHAM INNOVATION DISTRICT: AYKLEY HEADS

Investment Opportunity

Development finance, co-investment, and occupier pre-lets.

Benefits and Rationale

- City Centre location with high-quality offices in a natural woodland setting, within walking distance of the main railway station and under 10 minutes from the A1(M).
- Expected to generate up to 3,700 knowledge-intensive jobs in key future industries.
- Supported by a formal collaboration agreement with Durham University, including consented plans for an on-site supercomputer.
- Expands the pipeline of specialist, high-tier talent for the regional labour market and increases city-centre footfall, supporting local retail and hospitality.

Partners

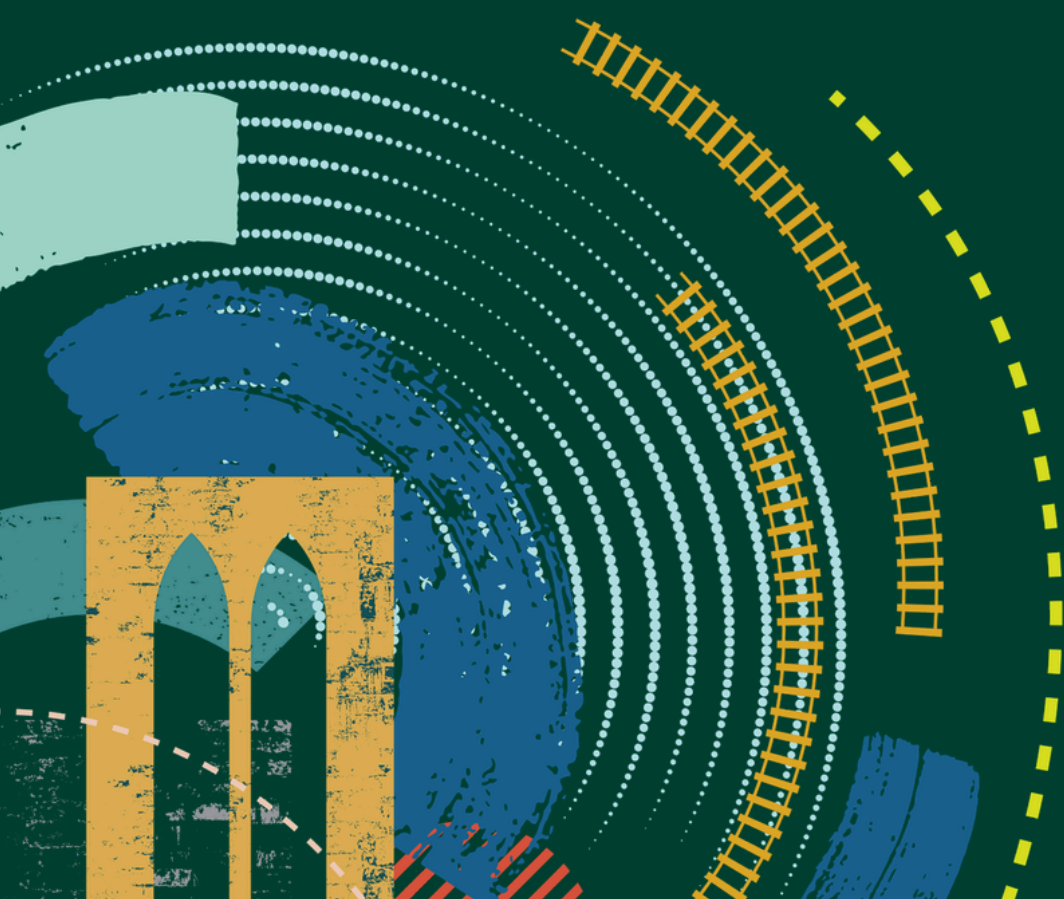
Durham County Council, Durham University, alongside the joint venture partner Muse Places.

Project Status

The site secured Mayoral Development Zone status in March 2026, unlocking £27m in funding from the North East Combined Authority. Hybrid planning consent has been granted for the masterplan.

Size

Up to 400,000 sq. ft. of commercial floor space on a 62 ha site, owned by Durham County Council.



NETPARK: THE NORTH EAST TECHNOLOGY PARK

Project Overview

Opened in 2004, NETPark is a premier, nationally significant science park. It operates on a collaborative triple helix model, bringing together Durham County Council, Durham University, the Centre for Process Innovation (CPI), alongside high-growth businesses to drive research-led commercialisation.

The park is a leading hub for advanced technologies, spanning space, defence, advanced materials, and life sciences. To accommodate rapid business growth, the park offers premier incubator and grow-on spaces, including the landmark Plexus, Discovery, and Explorer developments, which provide flexible environments for companies to scale from initial research to full commercial production.

Project Status

Phases 1, 2, and 3(a) are fully delivered. Phase 3(a) was completed in 2026, delivering 11 new state-of-the-art units ranging from 22,000 to 35,000 sq. ft., totalling 230,000 sq. ft. of space. The flagship initial occupier of Phase 3 is Filtronic, which has established its new 44,000 sq. ft. headquarters and manufacturing facility on the site, significantly scaling its production capabilities.

To secure future expansion, up to 40 ha of additional development land has been reserved for Phase 3(b) and Phase 4.



NETPARK: THE NORTH EAST TECHNOLOGY PARK

Investment Opportunity

Development finance, co-investment, and land sales for bespoke design-and-build facilities.

Benefits and Rationale

- Delivers highly competitive, affordable production and product development floor space, alongside advanced laboratories for scientific research at the design stage.
- Provides companies with direct access to elite innovation support networks and accelerates product commercialisation.
- The park currently supports over 1,000 specialist jobs on site, with Phase 3 projected to create an additional 1,250 high-value roles.
- Located 10 minutes from the A1(M).
- Campus setting located 10 minutes' drive from the A1(M) and 20 minutes' drive to Darlington or Durham Train Stations, both of which are connected to the East Coast Main Line and the wider rail network.

Innovation Ecosystem Anchors

The park's global reputation is underpinned by outstanding facilities permanently based on site:

- The National Innovation Centre for Printable Electronics.
- The National Innovation Centre for Formulations.
- The National Innovation Centre for Healthcare Photonics.
- The High Value Manufacturing Catapult.
- The Satellite Applications Catapult.

Size

- Phase 3 offers over 230,000 sq. ft. of laboratory, cleanroom, and premium office space.
- Phase 3(b) comprises 10.10 ha of additional land, safeguarded within the County Durham Plan for future expansion.
- Phase 4 provides an additional 30.41 ha of land reserved for follow-on development.



INTEGRA 61

Project Overview

Integra 61 is a premier mixed-use industrial and logistics development. Already home to a major Amazon logistics hub, the site offers immediate early-phase development opportunities across approximately 18 acres of employment land. Positioned 4 miles from Durham City, the site has direct access to the A688 and A1, with an estimated 50,000 vehicles passing through daily. Designed as a sustainable live-work environment, the wider scheme integrates a residential development of 260 houses, a 73-bed care home, and local retail services to support a balanced, multi-generational community.

Investment Opportunity

Occupiers, institutional investors, and development funders.

Partners

Citrus Group, Sunrise Real Estate, Durham County Council, and Business Durham.

Benefits and Rationale

- Strategically positioned to serve advanced manufacturers, e-commerce retailers, and large-scale logistics providers.
- Access to a substantial regional labour market, with 740,000 people living within a 30-minute drive of the site.
- The completed development is expected to generate over 5,000 jobs and deliver 300 new homes, driving sustainable, localised economic growth.
- Situated on the proposed new Leamside Line, which will connect a large, talented workforce to the development.

Project Status

Five industrial units totalling 640,000 sq. ft. have been delivered, with individual layouts ranging from 43,000 to 298,000 sq. ft. Phase 1, there remains 300,000 sq. ft. of development capacity. Phase 2 planning approval was secured in 2026, thereby greenlighting an additional 3,100,000 sq. ft. of industrial space on adjacent land.

Size

An expansive 82 ha masterplan.



FORREST PARK

Project Description

Forrest Park is a major extension of Aycliffe Business Park, the North East's largest industrial estate. The site provides zero-mile access to the A1(M) at Junction 59, the region's primary supply-chain spine. Major international employers, including Hitachi, Lidl, Nissan, and Argos, operate nearby. With regional ports, rail freight hubs, and two international airports all within 30 miles, the site offers superb national and global logistics connections.

Investment Opportunity

Joint-venture development funding, co-investment, and occupier pre-lets.

Benefits and Rationale

- Represents one of the largest single industrial development opportunities in the North East of England.
- Excellent accessibility, with a working-age population of 1.5 million and a customer base of 2.5 million within a 60-minute drive.
- The completed scheme is projected to support 3,000 long-term jobs, acting as a major economic anchor for the southern corridor of the county.

Size

A prominent 55 ha development site with buildings available in sizes from 40,000 to 1,000,000 sq. ft.

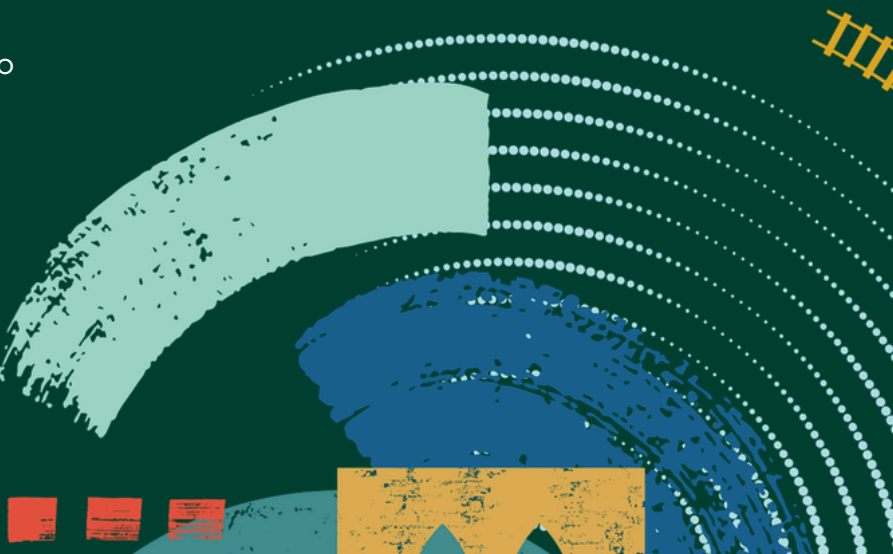
Partners

A joint venture between Durham County Council and the Forrest Family, with Barberry Richardson appointed as the development partner.

Project Status

Planning permission has been secured for Phases 1 and 2, enabling up to 1.75 million sq. ft. of industrial accommodation.

- Phase 1 planning consent covers seven units. The first facility, a 63,000 sq. ft. distribution hub for DPD, is scheduled for completion in summer 2026. The remaining six units range from 10,000 to 243,200 sq. ft.
- Phase 2 holds outline planning consent for five units ranging from 71,300 to 573,500 sq. ft., with the flexibility to accommodate a single flagship building of 1,000,000 sq. ft.



JADE BUSINESS PARK

Project Description

Jade Business Park Phase 1, funded by Durham County Council and completed in 2020, delivered 150,000 sq. ft. of modern industrial space for advanced manufacturing and logistics. It was fully occupied within 18 months of completion.

Following this success, Phase 2 represents a premier private-sector investment opportunity to deliver additional growth space for advanced manufacturing, green technologies, and other emerging sectors.

Partners

Durham County Council, the North East Combined Authority, with Buckinghamshire Properties serving as the development partner.

Project Status

Phase 1 is fully let. Planning approval for Phase 2 was secured in February 2026, granting permission for three industrial units to provide more than 222,000 sq. ft. of Class B2 and B8 industrial, storage, and distribution floor space.



JADE BUSINESS PARK

Benefits and Rationale

- Located directly on the A19 transport corridor, just 12 miles from the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP).
- A proven incubator for clean growth, with Phase 1 hosting green innovators such as Power Roll and Earthshot Prize finalist Low Carbon Materials.
- Strengthened by regional energy initiatives, including EGL (Strategic Electricity Grid and Energy Infrastructure) and collaboration with The Morven Project to expand grid capacity. These developments provide future-proofed energy infrastructure to attract energy-intensive, net-zero industries.

Investment Opportunity

Developer equity partners, institutional investors, and occupiers.

Size

- The total site area is 18.85 ha. Phase 2 will deliver over 222,000 sq. ft. of space, with an additional 105,000 sq. ft. of expansion land safeguarded for Phase 3.



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

**Durham University's
Role in Regional
Economic Growth**



Research Strengths

Ranked 94th in the world in the QS World University Rankings 2026, Durham University has remained in the global top 100 every year since 2010. The institution hosts more than 3,000 researchers across science, technology, engineering, and the social sciences, and has pioneered discoveries in quantum computing, electronics, and renewable energy.

Through the Durham Energy Institute, the university translates deep expertise in geothermal energy into practical applications, collaborating with local authorities to deliver low-carbon heat directly into regional homes.

The university's commercial research ecosystem is anchored by major specialist centres, including:

- The Institute for Computational Cosmology.
- The Biophysical Sciences Institute.
- The Durham Energy Institute.
- The Centre for Advanced Instrumentation.
- Over 80 specialist research centres supporting industry-linked innovation.

Services and Activities Supporting Innovation

- Orbit: The university's dedicated enterprise hub provides high-quality incubation workspace, facilities, and business support to translate academic research into high-growth start-ups and corporate partnerships.
- Northern Accelerator: A highly successful collaboration among Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland, Teesside, and York Universities. This initiative has transformed the commercialisation of academic research across the North East, creating sustainable spin-out businesses and high-value jobs that strengthen the regional knowledge economy.

Economic and Business Impact

According to the latest independent BiGGAR Economics Impact Assessment, Durham University generates £1.9bn in GVA and supports 17,000 jobs throughout the UK. This includes £700m of GVA and 11,000 jobs in the North East, of which £500m of GVA and 8,000 jobs are concentrated directly in County Durham. The university's spin-out and start-up businesses support more than 1,800 jobs nationally, including 500 in the North East and 380 in Durham. For every £1 the university receives in income, it generates £4.80 in economic impact across the UK.



SKILLS BUILT HERE

**Durham's Colleges
Supporting
Investment Success**



County Durham combines academic excellence with highly responsive, industry-led technical training. Employers work directly with our further education providers to design curricula and training pathways, ensuring investors have immediate access to a highly skilled, loyal, and adaptable workforce.

New College Durham

New College Durham is widely recognised as one of the UK's premier further education colleges for apprenticeships and corporate training. It ranks among the top 10% of colleges nationally for overall achievement and is top in the North East. Recognising its technical excellence, the Department for Education has designated it as one of only four Advanced Manufacturing Technical Excellence Colleges (TEC) in the country.

Bishop Auckland College

Bishop Auckland College delivers a job-ready workforce precisely aligned with local industry requirements. The college works closely with corporate partners to design flexible training programmes and rapid upskilling initiatives, providing incoming investors with immediate access to a reliable, skilled labour pipeline.

East Durham College

Featuring modern, industry-standard facilities and flexible apprenticeship pathways, East Durham College builds a direct skills pipeline to support sustainable business growth. The college collaborates with businesses to provide tailored training routes aligned with the county's major growth sectors.

North East Institute of Technology

The North East Institute of Technology (NEIoT) is a powerhouse collaborative partnership linking further education colleges, universities, and leading regional employers. Led by New College Durham, the principal further education partner, and by Newcastle University, the higher education and research anchor, the partnership includes major employers such as Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK and Esh Group. NEIoT specialises in advanced manufacturing, engineering, construction, and digital technologies. Its curriculum focuses on high-level technical qualifications, including Higher Technical Qualifications and higher apprenticeships, equipping learners with the advanced technical skills required to sustain twenty-first-century industries.



BUSINESS DURHAM



Business Durham, Durham County Council's business support service, serves as the gateway for companies seeking to establish, expand, or relocate within our vibrant County. Our mission is to build a highly competitive, inclusive economy by bridging ambitious enterprises with the vital resources they need to scale. We connect commercial partners with tailor-made solutions that combine funding streams, growth programmes, and specialist networks, ensuring that Durham remains an attractive destination for high growth businesses.

We manage an extensive, highly versatile commercial property portfolio across more than 30 sites throughout Durham, comprising over 300 units, including modern office spaces, laboratories, and industrial workspaces. Our tenants benefit from direct access to our broader business advisory services, enabling smooth scaling transitions, hassle-free expansion pathways, and immediate integration into local supply chains.

Rebecca Hall

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We manage one of the United Kingdom's most technologically advanced sites, the nationally significant NETPark science and technology park. This globally recognised hub brings together academic research, public-sector support, and private industry to commercialise groundbreaking science. High-growth sectors based there include advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, space technology, and the life sciences.

Our collaborative approach with elite regional institutions, including Durham University, all five County Durham colleges, and the North East Institute of Technology, ensure our business partners benefit from an exceptional, industry-ready workforce.

We cater to every step of the business journey, from entrepreneurs seeking early-stage incubation to multinational developers and investors seeking a strategically connected site. Business Durham provides the collaborative, long-term partnership required to secure sustainable commercial success.

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