

Stockton & Darlington Railway: Middleton St George (Fighting Cocks)

Conservation Area Appraisal
Public Consultation Draft (December 2024)

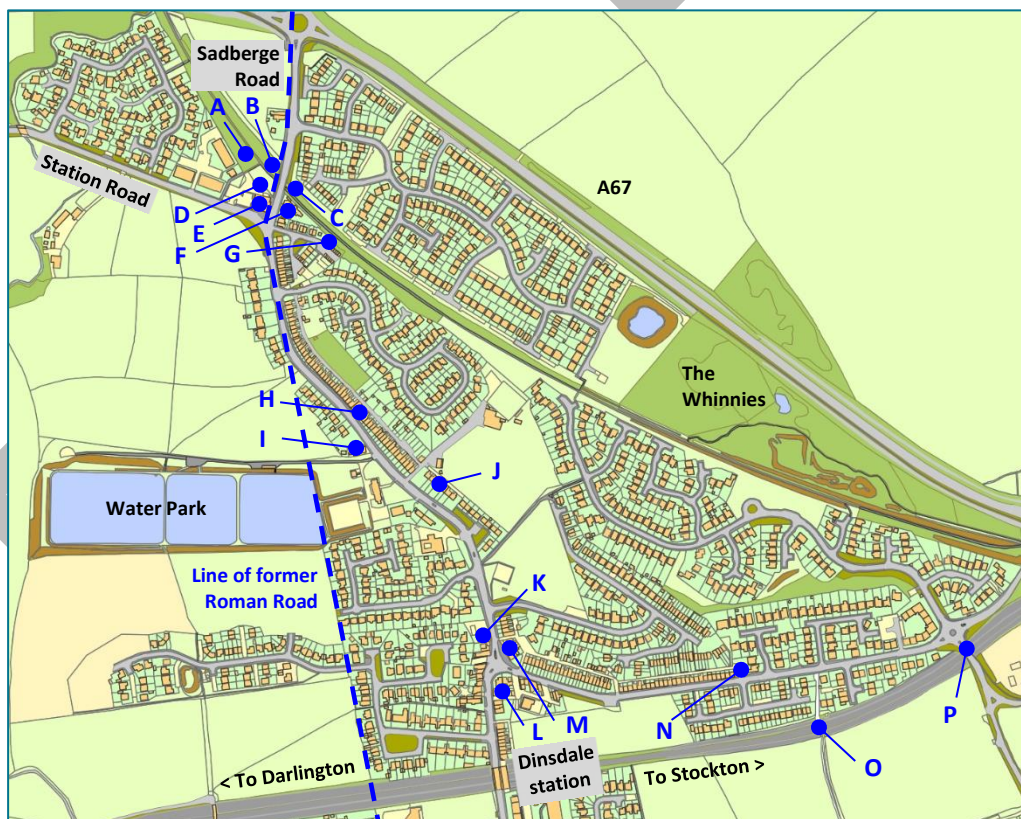
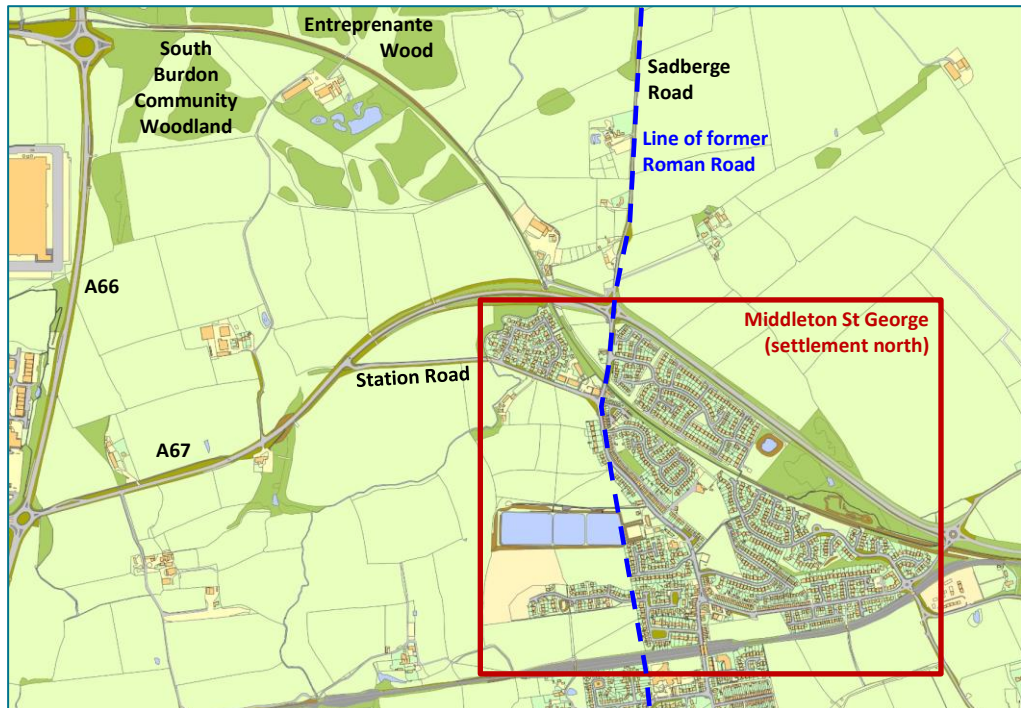


DARLINGTON
Borough Council

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Maps of the Assessment Area



Top: Extent of the assessment area. Bottom: Settlement north (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024.)

Structures of interest (referred to their original use): [A] Crane Base and Platform (remains). [B] DRDC Loading Dock. [C] Waiting Shed (remains). [D] Coal Depot (remains). [E] Fighting Cocks Inn. [F] Station Master's House and Station Building. [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor (remains). [H] Undenominational Mission Hall. [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. [J] Cocks Memorial Homes. [K] Havelock Arms Hotel. [L] Co-op and Stable. [M] Killinghall Arms. [N] Middleton Iron Works (remains). [O] Masonry Railway Bridge. [P] Metal Railway Bridge.

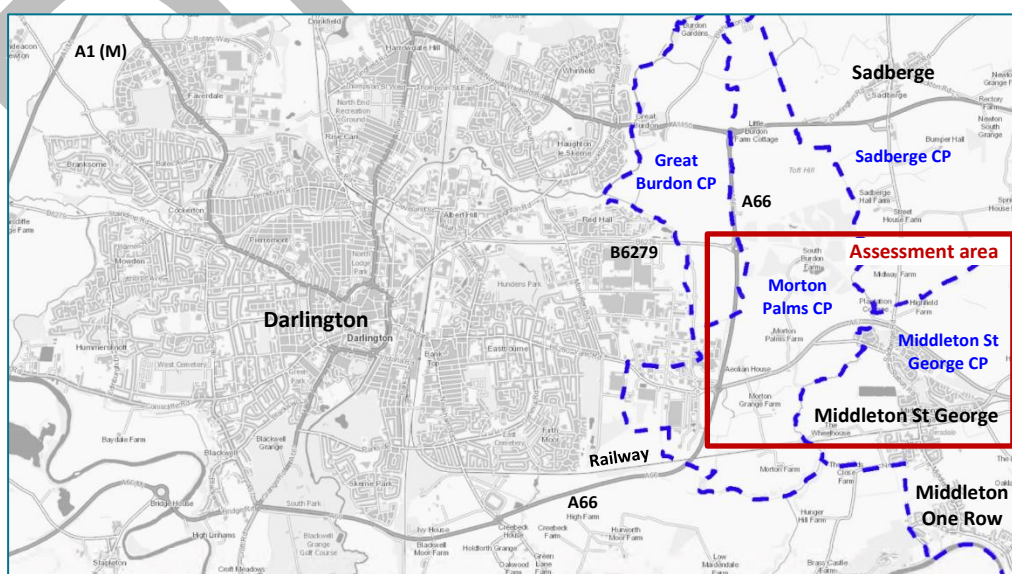
1.0 Introduction

A character appraisal assesses the **special interest** of an existing or proposed new conservation area that merits designation. It describes and evaluates the contribution made by the tangible (visible) aspects of its special interest which define the area's **character and appearance**. An appraisal aims to be informative and educational about our cultural heritage and raise public awareness and support. Adopted documents provide an evidence base for managing change and will be a material consideration in the planning process. They can also identify opportunities for enhancement and assist if funding is sought for larger regeneration schemes, such as heritage action zones.

At the time of review, there is no existing conservation area for Middleton St George, although some of the village's southern part (outside the assessment area) is within the Middleton One Row Conservation Area boundary¹. Designation within the northern part of the settlement had previously been considered in July 2022, when Durham County Council suggested a conservation area boundary for Middleton St George in their document *Conservation Area Assessments – Route of the former Stockton & Darlington Railway, Darlington & Middleton St. George* (see chapter 5.0).

1.1 The Area

Middleton St George is a large village approximately five miles to the east of Darlington, County Durham, in the Northeast of England. The area that is being assessed mainly concerns the former route of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR), although its wider setting will also be taken into account for context. The **assessment area** subject of this appraisal is bordered by the A66 to the west up to the roundabout with the B6279 in the north, the live railway line to the south and its former junction with the S&DR to the east (see section 3.2). Whilst its character is mainly rural, much of the village is of a suburban nature. The area currently lies in the Sadberge & Middleton St George ward, and the Middleton St George, Morton Palms, Great Burdon and Sadberge parishes.



Location of the assessment area. Parish boundaries in royal blue, dashed (Map contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2024. Licence Number 100023728 2024.)

¹ <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/1959/middleton-web-map.pdf>

At the time of review, there are seventeen conservation areas within Darlington Borough, with Middleton St George now proposed to be the eighteenth such designation. Further information on our conservation areas can be found on the Council's website ([see section 7.3](#)).

1.2 The Appraisal

This document was drafted between March and June 2024 by the Darlington Borough Council Conservation Officer, Gaby Rose, and provides an assessment of Middleton St George and its surroundings. Whilst the suggested conservation area boundary line is based on Durham County Council's proposal of 2022 ([see section 1.1](#)), it has been amended where deemed justified.

The appraisal is an opportunity to assess the area in accordance with current planning policy and guidance, providing a robust document that can be of greater influence in the planning process ([see chapter 2.0](#)). Whilst it tries to cover the main aspects of Middleton St George, it cannot be completely comprehensive. Omission of particular buildings, features or spaces does not imply that they are of no interest. The appraisal focusses on the following aspects:

- The special architectural and historic interest of the area ([see chapter 3.0](#))
- The current condition of the area, any problems or threats to it, and opportunities for beneficial change ([see chapter 4.0](#))
- The proposed boundary line ([see chapter 5.0](#))

The draft is now available for public consultation on the Council's website from 13 January until 17:00 on 24 February 2025, along with a feedback form which we would like you to complete. Paper copies of the document (read only) and feedback form are available at the Town Hall (by appointment only – email conservation@darlington.gov.uk), and at the Crown Street and Cockerton libraries during normal opening hours². We have directly approached individuals, groups and organisations that are likely to have a particular interest in the Middleton St George Conservation Area. Following the consultation period, the draft will be reviewed in light of the comments received and finalised before being adopted by the Council.

The author would like to thank Ross Chisholm and Peter Bainbridge for their time and providing additional information.

² <https://www2.darlington.gov.uk/our-libraries>

2.0 Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPPF) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This includes an environmental objective to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment³. Some of the policies under *16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment* specifically refer to conservation areas or ‘**designated heritage assets**’, **which also include all heritage assets inside conservation areas**. A heritage asset is a *building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest*⁴. Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, which forms the basis for all plan-making and decision-making.

The Darlington Local Plan⁵ is compliant with the NPPF. The following policies specifically apply to the Middleton St George assessment area (see map at the beginning of this document) – please refer to the Local Plan for the full wording:

Policy SH1 Settlement Hierarchy (2) Service Villages. Will be maintained as villages that offer a range of facilities and services, where a level of development will meet local needs and facilitate economic diversification of rural areas. Development should safeguard and reinforce the distinctive character of each settlement and not detract from their landscape setting.

Policy H1 Housing Requirement – Middleton St George: 860 units. Housing will be delivered to meet a minimum requirement of dwellings per annum. It is anticipated that the sites will be delivered in accordance with the housing trajectory which indicates that a continuous five-year supply of housing will be maintained throughout the plan period.

Policy H2 Housing Allocations. The land to the south and west of Station Road (plot 99, Maxgate Farm) is allocated for housing development, as identified on the Policies Map, to help meet the requirement set out in Policy H1.

Policy H3 Development Limits. Development within the limits identified on the Policies Map will be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant national and local policies.

Policy H5 Affordable Housing – affordable requirement: 20% (of which 50% affordable rent and 50% affordable home ownership). In order to meet the needs of people who are not able to access the general housing market, the provision of affordable housing will be expected in residential development schemes of 10 or more dwellings.

Policy ENV 2 Stockton and Darlington Railway. Proposals that conserve and enhance elements which contribute to the significance of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and its setting will be supported. Proposals will be supported where they include measures that preserve any physical remains

³ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities 2023, page 5

⁴ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities 2023, page 70

⁵ Darlington Borough Council 2022

along the route, include site interpretation and where appropriate reinstate a legible route where those remains no longer exist.

Policy ENV 3 Local Landscape Character. The character and local distinctiveness of the urban area, villages and rural area will be protected and improved by (A.1) retaining the openness and green infrastructure functions of rural gaps, and (B.2) retaining and enhancing the length, continuity, biodiversity, amenity and heritage value of the historic routes of the Darlington/Middleton St George/A66/A67/Stockton Corridor.

Policy ENV4 Green and Blue Infrastructure. Will be protected, and where appropriate, improved and extended to provide a quality, safe and accessible network of well connected, multi-functional open spaces for recreation and play and to enhance visual amenity, biodiversity, landscape and productivity.

Policy ENV6 Local Green Space. Development will not be permitted within a Local Green Space, designated either within the Darlington Borough Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan, unless it is consistent with the National Policy approach for Green Belts. Sites LGS16 (Middleton St George Playing Field) and LSG17 (Water Park, Middleton St George) are identified on the Policies Map.

Policy ENV7 Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Development. The Council will ensure that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance are given full and appropriate recognition and protection. The Council will also permit proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity where they accord with other relevant policies in the Plan. Development will be refused if significant adverse effects to biodiversity or geodiversity, either alone or in combination, cannot in the first instance be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for.

In addition, if the appraisal results in conservation area designation, the following policies will also apply – please refer to the Local Plan for the full wording:

Policy ENV 1 Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Darlington's Historic Environment (A) Designated Heritage Assets. Proposals should conserve those elements which contribute to such asset's significance, including any contribution made by their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm.

Policy ENV 1 Protecting, Enhancing and Promoting Darlington's Historic Environment (B) Conservation Areas. Proposals affecting a conservation area should preserve and enhance those elements identified in any conservation area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the significance of that area. Development will not be permitted that would lead to the loss of public or private open spaces within or adjacent to conservation areas where the existing openness makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area or its setting unless the public benefit demonstrably outweighs the harm.

In 2022, the *Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan (2022-2036)*⁶, which is compliant with the Darlington Local Plan, was made by the Council in line with the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The plan area comprises of the parish of Middleton St George but excludes land at Teesside International Airport. This includes the central, southern and eastern parts of the assessment area. Decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Objective 1 (quality of life) sets out that new development should maintain and enhance local distinctiveness and contribute positively to the built, historic and natural environment. The following policies affect the historical environment – please refer to the Neighbourhood Plan for the full wording:

Policy MSG1: Sustainable development (d) It will be necessary to demonstrate how development would protect or enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings.

Policy MSG2: Design (c) Development will be supported where it conserves and, where possible, enhances the significance of heritage assets and their setting.

Policy MSG3: Embedding energy efficiency and renewable energy (f) Consideration should be given to how development reduces energy demands of historic buildings, subject to compliance with other relevant policies on historic assets.

Policy MSG4: Green Infrastructure. New development should seek to protect and, where practical, improve and extend green infrastructure of the historic route of the Stockton Darlington Railway.

Policy MSG8: Heritage assets. Where development may impact on a heritage asset, applicants should provide information that describes the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting. In the determination of development proposals: (a) Great weight will be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset and any harm or loss to its significance will require clear and convincing justification in accordance with national policy; and (b) A balanced judgment will be required to fully consider the effects of any development proposals affecting a non-designated heritage asset, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Policy MSG13: Tourism and leisure (a) Development will be supported where the siting, scale, materials and design respect the character of the surrounding area and conserve and, where possible, enhance heritage assets and their setting.

2.1 Conservation Area Designation

Under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, “the Act”, conservation areas are *areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*. They

⁶ Middleton St George Parish Council 2022

are **designated heritage assets**. Their boundaries are not the same as any development limits boundaries (policy H3) shown on the Darlington Local Plan Policies Maps⁷ and have a different function, although in places they may coincide.

Section 69 of the Act requires the Council to determine which parts of the borough are areas of special interest and designate them as conservation areas. When considering designation, the Council should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack interest⁸. The courts have held it legitimate to include within a conservation area the setting of buildings that form the heart of that area⁹. Examples of types of special architectural and historic interest which justify designation include areas¹⁰:

- with a high number of nationally or locally designated heritage assets and a variety of architectural styles and historic associations
- which are linked to a particular individual, industry, custom or pastime with a particular local interest
- where an earlier, historically significant layout is visible in the modern street pattern
- where a particular style of architecture or traditional building materials predominate
- with a quality of the public realm or a spatial element, such as a design form or settlement pattern, green spaces which are an essential component of a wider historic area, and historic parks and gardens and other designed landscapes, including those on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest

Conservation area designation (as well as the reassessment of an existing area) is generally carried out by providing a draft appraisal which will go out to public consultation, although there is no legal requirement to do so. In the light of any comments received, the document will then be amended, finalised and formally adopted by the Council. All adopted appraisals can be found on our website ([see section 7.3](#)).

2.2 Implications for the Council

Following designation, the Council has a **duty to review** Darlington's conservation area boundaries from time to time and make amendments where necessary¹¹ ([see chapters 5.0 & 6.0](#)). In addition, section 71 of the Act requires us from time to time to **formulate proposals for the preservation and enhancement of our conservation areas and consult the public on them**. Our duty to prepare and review conservation area appraisals and management plans, which may set out a variety of measures to help safeguard and improve a conservation area, is also reflected in the Darlington Local Plan¹², forming part of our proactive approach towards protecting the borough's heritage assets.

⁷ Darlington Borough Council 2022

⁸ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities 2023, paragraph 197

⁹ Historic England 2017b, page 4

¹⁰ Historic England 2019, page 27

¹¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 69

¹² Darlington Borough Council 2022, paragraphs 9.1.14.c & 9.1.19

In the exercise of planning functions, the Council shall pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the significance¹³ as well as the character or appearance of our conservation areas¹⁴. Planning functions include both the formulation of robust conservation policies (Local Plan) and the determination of applications for planning permission or advertisement consent, helping us manage change within an area and its setting. The Council should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and their setting to enhance or better reveal their significance¹⁵. Although character appraisals will inform planning decisions, they alone do not determine whether development would be acceptable or not. The impact of proposed development upon a conservation area, or its setting, will be weighed against other material considerations when reaching a decision.

National planning policy requires us to have up-to-date evidence about our historical environment and assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment, and make this information publicly available¹⁶. This appraisal of Middleton St George provides such assessment (see chapter 3.0) and is published on our website (see section 7.3).

Finally, the Council is also required to regularly assess Darlington's conservation areas with regards to their condition (see section 4.1). Reviewed character appraisals or shorter surveys identifying threats and opportunities can be developed into management plans specific to an area's needs¹⁷. If a conservation area is considered to be 'at risk', the Council will liaise with Historic England. If confirmed to be in poor condition, the area will be put on the national Heritage at Risk Register¹⁸. We will then work with Historic England to find solutions to remove the conservation area from the register.

2.3 Implications for the Public

Conservation area status results in additional planning controls:

Demolition. Under section 196D of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, it is an offence to cause, carry out or permit demolition of buildings inside conservation areas without the required planning permission.

Permitted development rights. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, "the Order", defines conservation areas as article 2(3) land. Schedule 2 of the Order outlines which permitted development rights have been removed from article 2(3) land. This means that planning permission will be required to carry out those types of development within conservation areas. Further permitted development rights can be removed by the Council imposing directions under article 4(1) of the Order. Consequently, planning permission will be required for the types of development specified in that direction. Article 4 directions can be useful tools, as they can prevent further decline of an area or even revert harm that has already been caused.

¹³ Darlington Borough Council 2022, paragraph 9.1.18

¹⁴ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 72

¹⁵ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities 2023, paragraph 206

¹⁶ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities 2023, paragraphs 192-193

¹⁷ Historic England 2019, page 29

¹⁸ Available on Historic England's website

Works to trees. Section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that anyone intending to carry out works to a tree in a conservation area must give at least six weeks notice to the Council. This gives us the opportunity to consider whether to make a Tree Preservation Order. The work may go ahead before the end of the six-week period if the Council gives consent. With regard to works to a dead or dangerous tree, unless there is an immediate risk of serious harm, a notice of five days must be given before carrying out the works.

The additional planning controls as well as improvement measures set out in a management plan help to ensure that existing and future generations can enjoy the benefits a conservation area can offer. Conservation areas that are well preserved can enhance economic well-being and quality of life, as well as offer a certain amount of continuity and stability. Likewise, conservation-led change based on informed decisions can make a positive contribution enabling communities to regenerate. The value of a conservation area can be beneficial to both property owners/occupiers and developers, and estate agents may put increasing emphasis on such a location when advertising properties.

2.4 Other Designated Heritage Assets within the Area

There are none at the time of review.

3.0 Assessing Significance

Conservation areas are designated for their special architectural and historic interest (see section 2.1). Most areas have both, although one may be considered more prominent than the other. Nevertheless, when appraising an existing or proposed new conservation area, we also need to look at the wider interests of a place in order to better understand its dynamics. It is therefore helpful to use the cultural and natural heritage values provided in *Conservation Principles. Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* for the assessment¹⁹:

- **Evidential value:** the physical remains of past human activity (e.g. surviving structures and features) (See sections 3.2 to 3.5)
- **Historical value:** the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected to a place; this tends to be illustrative or associative (See sections 3.2 & 3.3)
- **Aesthetic value:** the sensory and intellectual stimulation people draw from a place; it can be the result of the design of a place or its development over time (See sections 3.4 & 3.5)
- **Communal value:** the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it (e.g. residents and other stakeholders) (See section 3.6)

Note that elements can possess more than one heritage value.

The sum of all heritage values/interests defines the significance of a place. Only by defining the significance of an area is it possible to assess how its character and appearance is vulnerable to harm or loss. This also helps reduce potential uncertainty for owners and others when investment or development in the area is considered. Moreover, the understanding of significance provides the basis for developing and implementing local policies (see chapter 2.0) and management strategies that will sustain the heritage values of a place in its setting²⁰.

3.1 Summary

The proposed Middleton St George Conservation Area (see chapter 5.0) comprises the following elements of significance:

Roman route: Cade's Road was built by the Romans between 138 and 161 AD. It continued to be an important route northward until the fifteenth century and marked the parish boundary between Middleton St George and Dinsdale until January 2016. The route of the Roman road is still retained in the northern-most stretch of Station Road (before it turns west) and the full length of Sadberge Road.

The Cocks family: In the nineteenth century, the Cocks were the last holders of the manor of Middleton St George, which had been passed down through various families from the mid-twelfth century on. Their name appears in Fighting Cocks, which has been applied to the area around the northern road junction even prior to the arrival of the railway. It could also be found in Cocks Memorial Homes, which were alms-houses constructed from money that

¹⁹ English Heritage 2008, page 27ff

²⁰ English Heritage 2008, page 14

Henry Cocks, the final owner of the manor, had left behind after his death in 1894. Today, the name Fighting Cocks is still used to identify the area around the former station.

Historic railway & industrial settlement: The birth of the village of Middleton St George was triggered by the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) on 27 September 1825, the world's first public railway on which a locomotive hauled passengers. The original 26-mile line of the S&DR, which passed through Fighting Cocks, is now regarded as the prototype for all modern railways²¹. For Middleton St George, the impact of the S&DR was the establishment of an industrial settlement, with the Middleton Iron Works playing a key role in the early development of the village. The former route of the line is now a popular public right of way and green corridor, and evidence of the former industries, including the iron works, still survives in places.

Part of original mineral network along the S&DR: To deliver the region's natural produce from mines, quarries or lime kilns to depots for local sale (landsale) or to the coast for export further afield efficiently, the S&DR developed a system of depots along the mainline (as well as at the termini of the branch lines) where freight could be weighed, sorted, stored and sold²². The original coal depot at Middleton St George was the first S&DR structure to be built at Fighting Cocks, shortly after the opening of the railway. Evidence survives in the form of the remains of possibly original boundary walling and later-phase coal cells. The extant loading platform and crane base are linked to the later operation of the depot, when it had become a goods station.

Early railway station: One of the many ways the S&DR influenced the development of the worldwide railway network was in the provision of station facilities, including depots²³. Whilst only fragments of walling of the 1830/31 Railway Lodge survive in the later station building, it is significant that Fighting Cocks, being not much more than a road junction at the time, did have a station building that dealt with passengers, parcels, coal, etc.

Pease brick buildings: Notable buildings at Fighting Cocks are faced in this buff-coloured brick type, which was manufactured by the company of Joseph Pease, son of S&DR founder Edward Pease²⁴, and had become popular for the use on public buildings by the 1860s²⁵.

Fighting Cocks: The grouping of the inn, station buildings, railway corridor, and the remains of the depot and loading dock presents an important ensemble associated with their origins in the pioneering days of the railway²⁶.

Water park: The former reservoirs were part of the early development of the village and are now a distinct recreational asset of community value.

The following sections provide more detail.

²¹ Flynn 1987, pages 39-40

²² Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 5

²³ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 1

²⁴ <http://www.solwaypast.co.uk/index.php/bricks/2-uncategorised/30-h-co-brick>

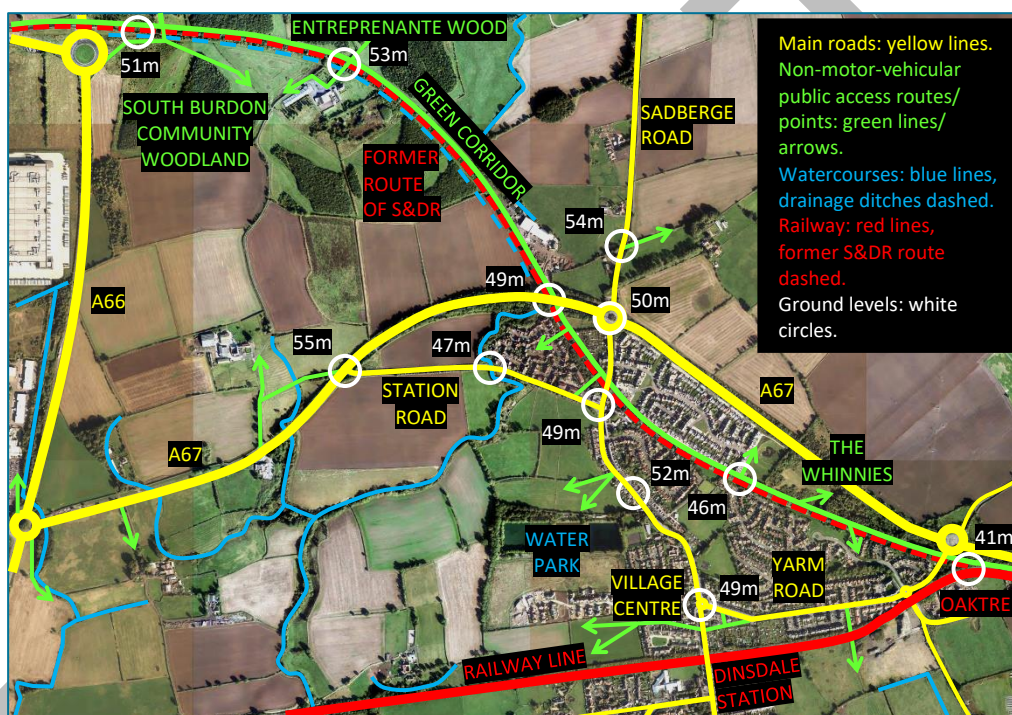
²⁵ Cookson (ed) 2003, page 129

²⁶ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 2 & 30

3.2 Layout, Planform and Setting

This section provides some of the evidential value of the area (i.e. the existing layout, etc.) as well as some of its historical value (i.e. former building locations).

Middleton St George lies to the east of Darlington, just beyond the outer ring road (A66). The assessment area comprises a plateau-like area to the north above the steep banks of the river Tees, with a generally flat or very gently undulating topography²⁷. The underlying bedrock is mainly made of the Sherwood sandstone group overlaid by glacial till, although there are also pockets containing clay and silt sediments. To the west of the village is an area of calcareous mudstone bedrock with superficial glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits²⁸.



Layout of Middleton St George assessment area. (Graphics by Gaby Rose)

Its setting of the village is largely agricultural land – both arable and pastoral – with isolated farmsteads. The fields are of medium size, irregularly shaped and often lined by hedges, shrubs and/or trees. The assessment area also includes nature reserves – The Whinnies, Entreprenante Wood and South Burdon Community Woodland – as well as the Middleton St George Water Park comprising three former reservoir basins. There is a good network of public rights of way in the countryside, with several of them originating in the village²⁹. A series of minor streams crosses through fields or defines their boundaries, particularly in the western part of the assessment area. The remains of historical drainage ditches³⁰ can be found along the southern side of the former route of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) between the A66 and A67, which is now a bridleway and part of National Cycle Route 14 connecting Darlington with South Shields.

²⁷ Land Use Consultants 2015, pages 45 & 47

²⁸ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/building-stones-england>

²⁹ <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/rights-of-way/where-are-rights-of-way/>

³⁰ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 16

The A66 is at the west end of the assessment area, confining the outskirts of Darlington. The A67 sweeps to the north of Middleton St George linking Darlington with Yarm. Both are busy main roads emitting an almost constant noise level that can be heard from a distance. This is most noticeable in tranquil areas just outside the village, such as the water park and the bridleway mentioned above, which passes under the A67 through a short concrete tunnel in an embankment that carries the road. To the south of the assessment area is a live railway line connecting Darlington and Saltburn via Middlesborough, with Dinsdale station located on the eastern side of the main road (Middleton Lane).

A spine road meanders through the length of the village in a roughly north-south direction. To the north of the railway station is a historical village centre at a three-road roundabout, with Yarm Road heading east and eventually exiting the settlement. At this junction, one part of the spine road (Middleton Lane) crosses the railway line into the southern part of Middleton St George which is outside the assessment area. The other part (Station Road) heads to the north of the village where there is another three-road junction, with Station Road turning west and the spine road continuing north (Sadberge Road), both shortly exiting the settlement.

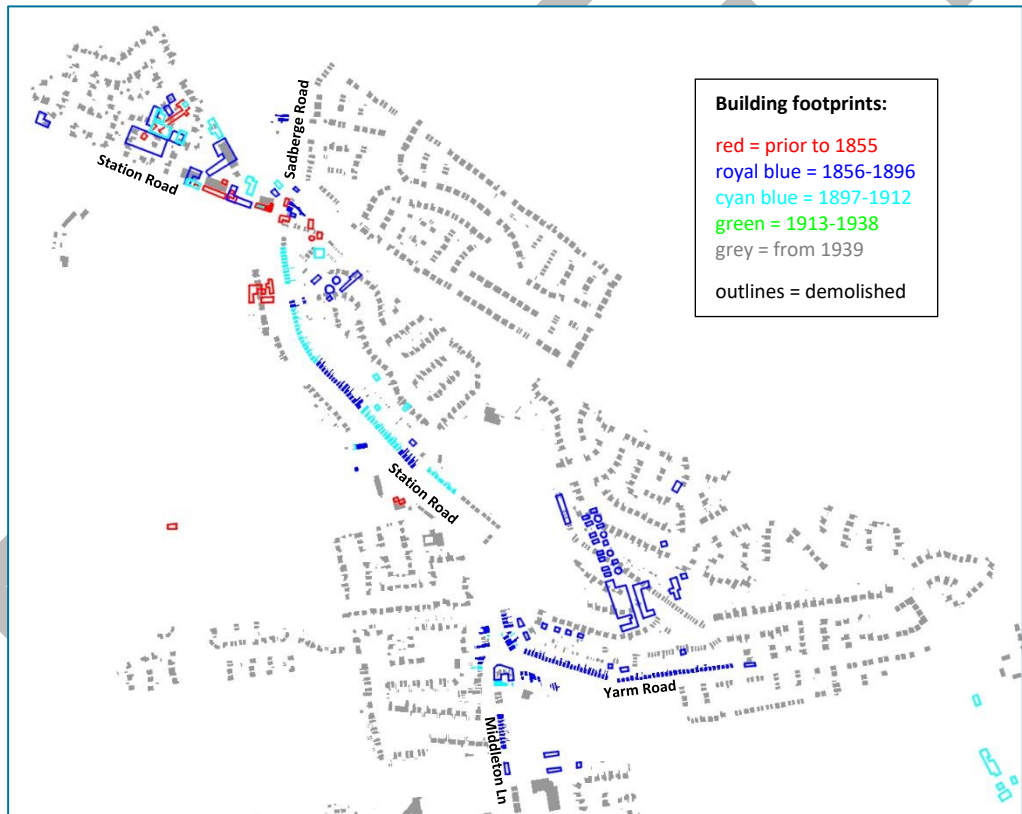
The line of the historic S&DR used to pass through the northern part of the village on a gentle curve, with a level crossing over Sadberge Road, but the tracks are now gone. The route has however been retained as a green corridor³¹, including a stretch of National Cycle Route 14 and, to the west of Sadberge Road, there is also a bridleway. The former railway corridor leads from what used to be Oaktree junction with the still-live railway line at the eastern end of the village to the A66, and beyond to Darlington. Overall, the land rises steadily from 41m at the former junction to around 49m at the northern and northwestern ends of the village. There are however variations around the former S&DR route which mostly lies in cutting but is embanked when approaching the location of Oaktree Junction. Yarm Road cuts through this embankment. As the green corridor exits the settlement in a northwestern direction, the ground levels remain fairly constant, with the highest point being 53m near the entrance to Entreprenante Wood, before dropping down to 51m³² just before the bridleway slopes up on a modern embankment to cross the A66 over a green metal bridge.

The live railway line is embanked at the former Oaktree Junction, and in cutting at Dinsdale Station and to the west. There are two original railway bridges between the station and former junction. The road bridge over the line carrying Middleton Lane is a modern replacement. To the west of the station there is another minor road bridge, as well as two level crossings with public footpaths crossing the live line.

The map regression (below) shows the northern part of the village of Middleton St George and its surrounding farmsteads, most of which have pre-1855 origins (red building footprints). Historically, rows of houses lined the main roads (now Station Road, Middleton Lane and Yarm Road) of the village. In addition, there used to be more loosely configured industrial sites away from the main roads, but these have all been demolished. Since the mid-1990s, considerable amounts of housing development have not only increased the size of the village significantly (see section 3.3) but also changed it from a dispersed linear layout into a suburban sprawl (grey footprints).

³¹ Also see Darlington Policies Map 'Key Diagram' of *Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036*

³² <https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/map-kb57/England/>



Planform – map regression. *Top*: Assessment area. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north (Graphics by Gaby Rose)

3.3 Historical Development

This section describes the historical value of the area using information retrieved from secondary sources (see chapter 7.0). Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

Early human activity involved the construction and use of Cade's Road from the Humber Estuary northwards to the River Tyne by the Romans, which is believed to have been built between 138 and 161 AD. The road crossed the river Tees over a supposed stone bridge, emerging up the steep bank just west of what would become the village of Middleton One Row. It is likely that there would have been a Roman control point at such a commanding position. The route then headed north into the assessment area, following the northern-most stretch of today's Station Road (before it turns west) and the full length of Sadberge Road, and beyond to Sedgefield where there was a Roman settlement³³.

It is possible that the church of St George, which lies around two miles to the southeast outside the assessment area, marks an Anglo-Saxon site. A pre-Conquest sundial used to be incorporated in the former outer chancel wall until its Victorian rebuilding when it was relocated to the newly constructed church at Middleton One Row. Moreover, a historical record suggests an earlier dedication to Saint Gregory, which would coincide with time of the saint's popularity³⁴.

Being located to the north of the river Tees, Middleton St George was not subject to the Domesday survey of 1086, a record made at the behest of King William I of the value and extent of each settlement within his recently conquered realm. This remote area was considered a buffer zone against the inroads of the Scots, so viceregal powers had been conferred to the bishops of Durham, which gave them the authority to levy taxes, coin money, grant markets and fairs, and raise an army³⁵. Nevertheless, the Wapentake of Sadberge, which Middleton St George lay in, was still under the jurisdiction of the king. This changed in 1189 when Richard I (the Lionheart) sold it to the bishop of Durham, Hugh Puiset, to help finance his crusades.

The first occurrence of the parish of Middleton St George, which was in two moieties (parts), is in the return of 1166. One moiety was the manor of **Over Middleton (Middleton One Row)** (partially within the assessment area), which lay to the east of the former Roman road, held by William son of Siward who was also lord of the neighbouring Dinsdale manor (partially within the assessment area) to the west of Cade's Road. The other was the manor of **Nether or Low Middleton (Middleton St George)** (also partially within the assessment area) to the east and southeast comprising two unequal moieties held by Roland and Godfrey Baard. In 1416, John Killinghall held the main, 'Roland Baard' portion of the manor of Low Middleton in socage, i.e. by payment of rent to the bishop. In 1569, it was sold by the Killinghall family to Ralph Tailbois who sold it to the Johnson family in 1573. After other changes in ownership, it passed back into the Killinghall family in c.1606, when the former two moieties of the manor of Low Middleton were united as one estate, albeit without the West Hartburn land (see below). At John Killinghall's death in 1762, he passed it on to his cousin William Pemberton whose son bequeathed it to his maternal aunts, Elizabeth and Sally Cocks of Plymouth Dock, on his death in 1801. The Cocks moved here to live on the estate and were succeeded by their brother Elisha. His son Henry inherited the estate in 1833 and held it until 1895. The tithe entries show that by 1837 the parish of Middleton St George had split into nine ownerships, with Henry Cocks owning a third of land^{36 37}.

³³ <https://www.roman-britain.co.uk/places/cades-road/>

³⁴ Pallister 2007a, pages 22-24 & 42

³⁵ Flynn 1987, page 15

³⁶ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/durham/vol3/pp293-299#fnn11>

³⁷ Pallister 2007a, pages 25-26, 32-34, 40, 52-53, 70, 109 & 115

A medieval manor was a self-contained administrative unit granted by the sovereign to a nobleman (lord) in exchange for military and other forms of service. It typically consisted of a manor house, village, church, mill, as well as arable and common lands. Despite its potentially earlier origins mentioned above, the present building of the church of St George³⁸ originates from the thirteenth century, although the font basin is from c.1160, when the Baards were first recorded to hold the manor. The church lies in a very prominent location on raised ground overlooking a large dip in the landscape including the manor house and (now deserted) village of Low Middleton, which are around half a mile to the south of it, near the banks of the river Tees. The manor house was Low Middleton Hall³⁹, the present building first constructed by Cuthbert Johnson in 1587, replacing a medieval manor house on or near the site. The house has a keystone over the former main entrance bearing the Killinghall coat of arms and the date of 1670 when the house was remodelled and re-fronted, and a rainwater head dated 1721 commemorating Robert and Jane Killinghall⁴⁰. In 1963, earthworks of the medieval village were still visible and thought to represent two or three toft enclosures in a row⁴¹. Today only a longitudinal, indented area to the northeast of Low Middleton Hall can be seen on LiDAR imagery⁴² suggesting the location of the former village.

A reconstructed map of the parish of Middleton St George at c.1200 (not reproduced here) shows the manor of Over Middleton stretching from the river Tees northwards along the eastern side of the former Roman road, apart from a minor deviation, and the manor of Low Middleton to the southeast and West Hartburn to the east; the latter was a subordinate unit of the manor of Low Middleton and also split into the two moieties. The map indicates the village locations of Low Middleton, Over Middleton (now Middleton One Row) and West Hartburn, all outside the assessment area. Although the two manors were quite separate, their contiguous location in the parish led to a good deal of cross leasing of lands. Moreover, tenants of Over Middleton were entitled to use land at Stodhoe (within the assessment area) in the neighbouring parish of Dinsdale, which may have already been a separate, self-contained farmstead at the time⁴³.

Physical evidence of early habitation closest to the assessment area are the now deserted medieval village of West Hartburn⁴⁴ to the east of the present settlement of Middleton St George, and Middleton One Row to the south. Remains of West Hartburn are visible as earthworks, surrounded by remnants of a ridge-and-furrow field system. Middleton One Row still retains the mound of a Norman motte-and-bailey defensive castle⁴⁵, possibly built by William son of Siward who held the manors of Over Middleton and Dinsdale in the mid-twelfth century, overlooking the bridge across the river Tees, which was still part of a main route (Cade's Road) northwards and an important point of entry into the bishopric until the fifteenth century⁴⁶. Judging from the partial survival of a ridge-and-furrow field system in the eastern part of Middleton One Row, behind the old houses facing south to the river⁴⁷, the existing settlement appears to directly overlie the medieval village.

³⁸ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1299460>

³⁹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185935>

⁴⁰ Ryder 2016, pages 1, 5-6 & 15-16

⁴¹ Durham County Council Historic Environment Record: DCC PRN H7818

⁴² <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map?ref=NZ3658810981>

⁴³ Pallister 2007a, pages 26, 29, 38, 40 & 56

⁴⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1011257>

⁴⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1011072>

⁴⁶ Pallister 2007a, pages 39 & 47-48

⁴⁷ <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map?ref=NZ3523012415>

Whilst there is no clear evidence of early settlements in the assessment area, the 'Keys to the Past' website, a basic version of the historic environment records for County Durham and Northumberland, has entries of crop marks that may indicate buried remains of Roman, Iron Age and even Neolithic or Bronze Age structures within the area, most of them to the west of the former Roman road. In addition, LiDAR imagery⁴⁸ shows earthworks of ridge-and-furrow field systems indicating medieval farming activities. Prominent examples survive in fields that have not been overploughed, such as land at the A67/Sadberge Road roundabout and to the north of the Middleton St George Water Park.

Over the centuries, changes in agrarian practises contributed to the undermining of the feudal system and its manorial structure. By c.1630, all the formerly open arable fields of the parish had been enclosed and converted from growing corn to mainly cattle grazing; only in the second half of the eighteenth century would the balance between cattle and corn become more even, due to the need to feed the rapidly growing urban populations. **Enclosure** often contributed to depopulation and desertion of villages, such as those at Low Middleton and West Hartburn, which had been abandoned around 1550. At Middleton One Row, the substantial crofts (strips of land) behind each tenement must have contributed significantly to the livelihood of the tenants, making it less necessary from them to move out to the new self-contained farms that had been established with enclosure. This new pattern of dispersed farmsteads is still very prominent within the assessment area. White House Farm, in the northeast corner of the assessment area, is an early example of the move out of West Hartburn village into the new farms created with enclosure.

The hearth tax return of 1666 for the parish shows that William Killinghall, lord of the manor of Low Middleton, possessed the grandest house (Low Middleton Hall) with ten hearths, and that the lord of the manor of Over Middleton, James Askew, 'only' had five. Although the loss of the feudal element in their role as lords of the manor had an impact on the Killinghalls, they remained the major landowner in the parish and retained a position of authority as well as the patronage of the church including a share of the tithes. In contrast, the lords of the manor of Over Middleton, who never had a part in the control of the church, had lost far more power when the medieval manor was transformed into commercial farms and estates. Little more than the title remained, and that seems to have disappeared after 1720.

By 1700, Middleton One Row was the only substantial assemblage of buildings in Middleton St George parish, although a few cottages had sprung up at Oak Tree, to the east outside the assessment area; it would become a sizeable hamlet in the second half of the eighteenth century⁴⁹.

A map of John Rontree's Farm⁵⁰ (not reproduced here), which was surveyed as part of the Killinghall estate in 1757⁵¹, depicts the northern road junction in the location of the present village of Middleton St George, with the routes going north, south and west, like today. Only four structures are shown on the map; none of them have survived. On the north side of the junction was a small single-storey structure next to an access point to a footpath through Mr Rontree's fields to the west of Sadberge Road, in Dinsdale parish. Some distance to the north, between the footpath and road, was what would be known as Dinsdale Moor House, presumably Mr Rontree's

⁴⁸ <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map?ref=NZ3420014392>

⁴⁹ Pallister 2007a, pages 56-58, 62-63, 70, 79, 83, 87, 127 & 140

⁵⁰ <https://archiveshop.northyorks.gov.uk/historic-maps/ZDG-A-IV1-9-2.html>

⁵¹ Pallister 2007a, pages 7, 79 & 81

home, judging from its detailed depiction. To the south of the junction was Palmtree House, also along the western side of the road (now Station Road), and further to the south along the eastern side of the road was the Killinghall farm, in Middleton St George parish.

In 1798, a sulphurous spring was discovered about half a mile to the west of Middleton One Row, in Dinsdale parish outside the assessment area, marking the birth of the Dinsdale Spa. When in 1797 better facilities were provided, visitors started arriving from a wider area. This also had an increasing impact on Middleton St George parish; for example, the church of St George was partially rebuilt in 1805 to accommodate the growing numbers of residents and spa visitors. By 1828, three quarters of Middleton One Row had been rebuilt and new houses constructed so that the village could provide improved and increased visitor accommodation. A year later, a large hotel opened adjacent to the spa⁵²; this had been designed by architect Ignatius Bonomi⁵³, who had created the iconic Skerne Bridge for the **Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR)** just a few years earlier.

In 1818, Edward Pease, a Quaker and retired wool merchant from Darlington who would later become known as the ‘father of the railways’, and a group of businessmen formed the S&DR company⁵⁴. In May 1821, a new committee was formed with Reverend William Addison Fountaine, rector of Middleton St George since 1798, being one of the members. The reverend owned Forster Field Farm, which partially lay on the southeastern fringe of the assessment area. He would later profit significantly from his railway interests, enabling him to expand his estate so that he would become the second most extensive landowner in the parish, also owning White House Farm in the northeastern corner of the assessment area⁵⁵.

A survey map of 1822/23 for the proposed route of the railway line (not reproduced here) mainly shows dispersed ‘buildings’ within the assessment area, which are also identified on the map regression (see section 3.2): Ripon House (later South Burdon Farm), Morton Palms (farm), Wheat Sheaf (inn), Morton (Palms Grange – here three buildings are depicted, so this may have been a small hamlet by that time) and Stodda (High Stodhoe Farm, no longer extant). In the location of the present village of Middleton St George, Palmtree House (farm) and Dinsdale Moor House (farm) are the only buildings shown. Besides the northern road junction there is also another, southern three-road junction in the location of the present village-centre roundabout, with the main route turning east. On the map, the northern road junction is marked as ‘**Fighting Cocks**’ referring to the now illegal sport of cock fighting, which was popular in the area from at least the eighteenth century⁵⁶. Moreover, the name is associated with the major landowning Cocks family (see above).

The 1822/23 map also shows that the originally proposed route of the S&DR by Welsh engineer George Overton in 1821 would have bypassed Fighting Cocks some distance to the south, along the fringe of the assessment area. This proposal was however superseded by the new route put forward by English engineer George Stephenson in 1823 which was eventually built, passing just north of the Fighting Cocks road junction. The land that the new railway would go through in the eastern

⁵² Pallister 2007a, pages 88-89, 112 & 120

⁵³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185930>

⁵⁴ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway 2021, page 8

⁵⁵ Pallister 2007a, pages 109-110, 112-113, 115 & 121

⁵⁶ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, p. 3, 18-19

half of the assessment area belonged to Elisha Cocks (Dinsdale Moor House and Palmtree farms) and Revered W A Fountaine (Forster Field Farm)^{57 58}.

The S&DR opened on 27 September 1825, with the 26-mile main line running from the coal mines near Witton Park to the river Tees at Stockton, via Darlington and Yarm where there were two branch lines⁵⁹. Early stopping places of the S&DR were mostly where the line crossed existing roads, such as at Fighting Cocks, although there were initially no platform or station facilities⁶⁰. In the first five years of railway use, the level crossing over Sadberge Road was a simple affair with the sleepers set into the ground to avoid obstructing road users. On approaching, the driver would sound a horn to warn traffic of the oncoming train⁶¹.



Remains of southern boundary wall of the original [D] Coal Depot constructed in squared sandstone. *Left:* Viewed looking north with Sadberge Road to the right. *Right:* Viewed from the railway corridor looking south. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

After the railway had opened, the first development at Fighting Cocks provided by the S&DR was a [D] Coal Depot to the north of the road junction, as approved in the Committee's meeting of October 1825. Following another S&DR meeting in May 1827, a 'drop' was to be added. Thus, it seems that the original depot was developed in two stages: the first was a railway siding with an unloading area where coal would be shovelled from waggons into sacks for landsale, and the second was the provision of a raised rail track over cells where coal and other minerals could be dropped from bottom-opening waggons more efficiently. In the year 1829-30, over a thousand tons of coal and another thousand of lime and stones were delivered to the Fighting Cocks depot.

The location of the [D] Coal Depot was significant, being at the long-standing junction of the former Roman Road and the lane to Darlington. Moreover, it was just over two miles from the expanding Dinsdale Spa. Passenger coaches brought visitors along the railway to Fighting Cocks for the spa and guest accommodation at Dinsdale and Middleton One Row; in 1828 two coaches travelled daily in each direction. However, the spa and depot not only attracted passengers, depot workers and coal merchants to Fighting Cocks, but also farmers, builders and other tradespeople. Thus, there was a demand for more facilities in this location.

⁵⁷ Pallister 2007a, page 116 Fig.21

⁵⁸ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, p. 3 & 42

⁵⁹ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway 2021, page 5

⁶⁰ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Historical Background' & map XXVIII

⁶¹ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 18

Consequently, the minutes of a S&DR meeting in April 1830 ordered the construction of a 'Cottage for the accommodation of Passengers and Parcels and the sale of Coals Lime etc'. By the end of 1830 or early 1831, the first station building at Fighting Cocks, known as Railway Lodge, was completed to the east of Sadberge Road and south of the railway track. At that time, the station was in the same management as the [D] Coal Depot across the road. In December 1831, it was occupied by John Clayton and Elizabeth Bedford. John had earlier (1829) held the tenancy of the S&DR Company brewery at Darlington. He asked the S&DR in late 1830 if he could take over the new station being built at Fighting Cocks after losing his job at the brewery. One of the tasks he would do at the station was selling coals from the depot. By 1832, John had given up his occupation as a coal dealer. At the end of 1839, the S&DR Company proposed to have the running of the depot being handed over to a third party, marking a departure of the combined depot/station functions⁶².



Former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn looking northwest, with remnant of the [D] Coal Depot's southern boundary wall just visible in the background to the right along Sadberge Road. The original inn is the three-bay right-hand return. The additional two-storey bays and lower wing facing the junction (the latter's historical stable, cart house and hayloft functions no longer readable) are later. It is possible that the original building was single storey, as suggested by the lower northern (right-most) bay, which seems to be original. The large double window on the ground floor with leaded coloured glazing and the porch are early-twentieth century insertions. The window opening above and the two small windows on the return are later replacements of former sashes⁶³. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

In June 1832, Henry Cocks inherited the estate of his father Elisha. This included Palmtree House Farm and the plot to the north of the road junction (part of Dinsdale Moor House Farm) upon which the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn was to be constructed shortly. It seems probable that the inn opened at some point between 1832 and May 1834 when it was listed in the trade directory under the management of Mary Woodhouse, wife of William, a farmer, who lived at Palmtree House. It is conceivable that its construction was triggered by the new station congregating potential customers in this location. The change from horse-drawn coaches along the railway track (there was a lack of locomotives in the beginning) to steam-hauled passenger trains and the S&DR Company taking all traffic into their own hands (rather than contracting it out) from 1833 on^{64 65} may have also contributed to its construction. Prior to the opening of the inn, William had already provided refreshments to the

⁶² Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 8-9 & 15

⁶³ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 21 & 27-29

⁶⁴ Pallister 2007a, page 125

⁶⁵ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 5

public since 1828 from his home at Palmtree House. Such 'open kitchen' operations were the origin of many public houses, particularly in rural areas⁶⁶.

The [E] Fighting Cocks Inn was not just used by workers at the [D] Coal Depot. Passenger coaches, collecting and dropping off travellers, and coal trains stopped here in such numbers that a watchman was told to *'put an end to such loose practices'*. Consequently, Fighting Cocks became a regular stop⁶⁷. In 1840, the S&DR made an agreement with Michael Walton the landlord of the inn which bound him to transport all first-class passengers between the railway and Dinsdale Spa⁶⁸.

The 1839 plan drawing of the Fighting Cocks Station area by T Dixon for the S&DR⁶⁹ (not reproduced here) shows the [D] Coal Depot consisting of six cells with a track over served by a siding branching off to the southeast. Across the main line is a small unknown building, approximately in the location of the later [B] DRDC Loading Dock, and a milestone marking the eight-mile point on the opposite side of Sadberge Road; both are no longer extant. To the south of the depot is the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn fronting onto Sadberge Road, drawing its trade from the growing railway operation at the station (Railway Lodge). Further to the east is a mill with circular planform (a windmill) and a building of square footprint right next to it, both also served by a siding coming from the main railway line and no longer extant.

By 1839, between twenty and fifty coal trains were passing through Fighting Cocks on their way to Stockton each day⁷⁰. In April 1840, the average number of tickets sold per day to departing travellers at the station was 32. In February-March 1841, when there were three passenger trains a day in each direction, the average was just fifteen. Similar numbers of passengers would arrive at the station. This would suggest that the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn depended quite significantly for its trade on users of and workers at the [D] Coal Depot and some nearby businesses, besides the modest number of travellers⁷¹. In November 1846, the station was recorded as Middleton & Dinsdale, named after the two nearest villages⁷².

In the 1840s, a George Stephenson (not the famous S&DR engineer mentioned earlier) was the S&DR's Passenger Manager. He lived in Middleton St George and commuted to his office in Darlington from Fighting Cocks each day. A strong churchgoer, he went on to bring pressure on the S&DR to stop using public houses as substitute stations⁷³.

In 1851, the Stockton, Middlesborough and Yarm Water Company was established to serve the growing demands of the Teesside industry. They abstracted water from just outside Darlington and pumped it to a small, square reservoir between the Fighting Cocks and southern road junctions. From here, the water was fed by gravity through a single pipe to Yarm, Stockton and Middlesborough. When a second pipe was installed in 1853, Fighting Cocks was able to be connected to a piped water supply⁷⁴.

⁶⁶ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 13-17

⁶⁷ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 21

⁶⁸ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2019, page 40

⁶⁹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 9-10

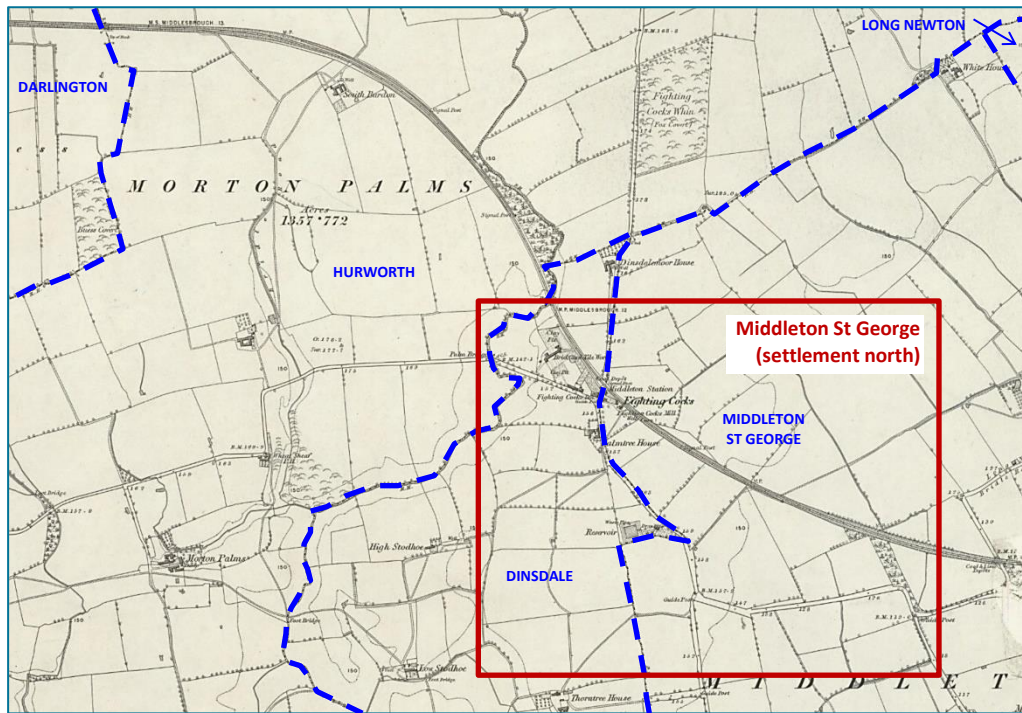
⁷⁰ Pallister 2007a, page 126

⁷¹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 18

⁷² Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXVIII

⁷³ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 24

⁷⁴ Pallister 2007a, page 139

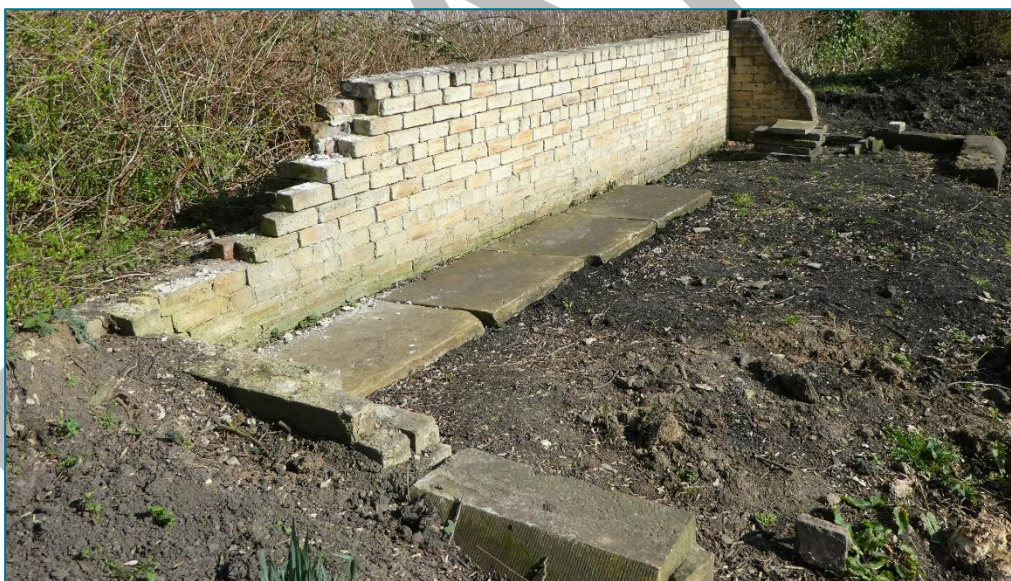


1855 six-inch OS map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (maps.nls.uk). *Top*: Assessment area. Parish names and boundaries at the time are shown in royal blue (**NB: these are not the current parish names/boundaries**). In the area of the reservoir, the boundary between the Dinsdale and Middleton St George parishes did not follow the line of the former Roman road. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north.

The 1855 six-inch OS map of the assessment area (see above) shows that the line of the former Roman road (see map at the front of this document) had been retained as field boundaries to the south of Palmtree House. The reservoir is depicted between that line and what would become the spine road through the later village. The overall setting of the assessment area appears predominantly rural with dispersed

farmsteads as well as the Wheat Sheaf public house near Morton Palms hamlet. The reverse S-shape of the S&DR cut across the countryside and over Sadberge Road to the north of the Fighting Cocks road junction. At the [D] Coal Depot, the end cell of the coal drop seems to have been converted into a building, possibly a weigh house. The [E] Fighting Cocks Inn had been substantially extended to the west by expanding the pub and providing an attached lower-height three-stalled stable block with coach house and loft over. A historical photo⁷⁵ shows that these extensions are faced in Pease brick. On the map, Railway Lodge is now named Middleton Station and the windmill to process corn identified. Further buildings had been constructed since the 1839 plan drawing along the lane to Darlington (today's Station Road) and near the mill, as well as the Brick and Tile Works to the northwest of Fighting Cocks. The works presumably supplied building materials for the new houses to be (re)built in the immediate area⁷⁶ and generated more traffic for the railway and a requirement for coal to fuel the kilns⁷⁷. In the southeastern corner of the assessment area, in the location of the later Oaktree Junction, there was a coal and lime depot immediately to the south of the S&DR.

Sometime between 1855 (OS map) and 1875 (print of station, see below), the [C] Waiting Shed was built on the platform opposite the station, across the railway track. It was constructed of Pease brick, although the stretchers to the rear are red bricks. The shed was originally open fronted⁷⁸.



Remains of rear wall of the [C] Waiting Shed built with Pease brick in English Garden Wall bond. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

In 1860, the [F] Station Master's House and Station Building were constructed in the location of the old station in order to provide improved passenger services, retaining some of the stonework of the earlier building in the new rear walling⁷⁹. Whilst the two-storey Station Master's House faced onto Sadberge Road and the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn on the opposite side, the attached, single-storey Station Building lined the platform along the southern railway track. A Neo-Gothic arched sash window could

⁷⁵ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 11 & 18-19

⁷⁶ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 20

⁷⁷ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, pages 10-11

⁷⁸ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 24

⁷⁹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 19

be opened to serve customers across a counter⁸⁰. The station was renamed (by the NER, see below) Fighting Cocks on 1 September 1866⁸¹.



[F] Station Master's House (right) and Station Building at former Sadberge Road level crossing with former railway corridor to the left. Built in Pease brick although the former Station Building is now painted white. The Neo-Gothic window is behind the modern garage which is in the location of the former southern platform. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

Also in 1860, the Dinsdale Moor Iron Works (no longer extant) opened to the west of the [D] Coal Depot. They were established by a group of businessmen including local landowner Henry Cocks, a Darlington colliery owner and representatives of the Pease family. Iron ore first discovered in the Cleveland Hills in 1859 and coal from Shildon were brought here for the manufacture of iron and steel⁸².

In 1863, the North Eastern Railway (NER) company took over the S&DR.

In 1864, the [N] Middleton Iron Works were constructed to the east of the southern road junction on land that belonged to Henry Cocks (once part of Palmtree House Farm), served by a siding off the railway line. They produced pig iron and operated initially two, and from 1875⁸³ on four, blast furnaces powered by a stationary steam engine and had an internal narrow-gauge railway system for moving slag. Whilst their location was well suited to the availability of raw materials, there was no substantial source of labour in the locality to meet the demands of the industry. Therefore, workers needed to be brought in from elsewhere; many came from Yorkshire but many others also from much further away. The first houses to be built for them were a long terrace along the southern boundary of the works, along the road to Yarm. Henry Cocks called it Killinghall Row, after his forebearers who held the manor of Low Middleton. The same principle was applied for the naming of Pemberton Terrace (with generous front gardens) to the west of it, close to the southern road junction which became to be known as the Square^{84 85}. Other houses built around that time still bear their builders' names: Harts Buildings, Browns Buildings and Hansons Buildings [sic]⁸⁶.

⁸⁰ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 24

⁸¹ Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXVIII

⁸² Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 20

⁸³ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 20

⁸⁴ Pallister 2007a, pages 116 & 133-135

⁸⁵ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Historical Background' & point 75

⁸⁶ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16302438.lawless-middleton-st-george-prison-deal-irish-drunks/>



Top: Remains of southern boundary wall of the [N] Middleton Iron Works, bordering the back lane to Killinghall Row, Yarm Road, the first houses to be built for the increasing workforce. The wall seems to be constructed from rubble limestone, which is an untypical construction material for the area. Limestone was brought in from Weardale and used for forming the slag in smelting⁸⁷. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

The construction of the new housing changed the centre of gravity within the parish in only one decade. The well-established nucleus of population at Middleton One Row was still there and remained the centre for visitors to the spa and some local services but was outweighed by the development around the [N] Middleton Iron Works. The iron-works-centred housing was originally known as Killinghall, but with its continuing expansion that name was lost. Instead, the new village was taking on the name of the parish, Middleton St George⁸⁸.

In 1869, the [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built halfway between the northern and southern road junctions, bordering the northeast corner of the reservoir site.



Former [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel now converted into residential use. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

In 1871, the Gas Works were built to the southeast of the windmill, served by a single railway siding. They were owned by the Middleton and Dinsdale Gas Company and supplied gas for the lighting installed in the later part of the nineteenth century. By 1893, there were 32 public lamps in the parish⁸⁹. In addition, the local availability of gas allowed the NER to light railway signals, including those on the ground⁹⁰.

⁸⁷ Pallister 2007a, page 133

⁸⁸ Pallister 2007a, pages 134 & 137

⁸⁹ Pallister 2007a, page 157

⁹⁰ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 22

In spring 1871, the church of St Lawrence⁹¹ was opened in Middleton One Row. By that time, the inconvenience and inadequacy of the small, remote church of St George had become too apparent, as it was unable to cater for the inhabitants of Middleton One Row, spa visitors and the growing, even more distant, industrial population at Middleton St George.

At the end of July 1871, following the Education Act of the previous year, a new National School (no longer extant) was provided on Chapel Street on the southern fringe of the assessment area, replacing the undersized school at Middleton One Row. The location was chosen due to its proximity to the [N] Middleton Iron Works whilst minimising the distance to Middleton One Row. In addition, the management of the iron works had become alert to the educational and social needs of its workforce and provided a library and reading room on their site.

The 1871 census shows that the total population of the parish had suddenly exploded from roughly 220 people during the mid-seventeenth to mid-nineteenth centuries to 918. Out of this number, 470 people lived at Killinghall and Fighting Cocks. Further housing had been built on the eastern side of the road between the two road junctions and to the south of the Dinsdale Moor Iron Works, along the lane to Darlington. The population of Middleton One Row was 229, which also included workers employed in the industries (with the exemption of the Gas Works which were not included). The railway also contributed to the expansion of the population and housing demand, requiring labourers, clerks, gate keepers, etc. The industrial community now made up over half of the population, with 133 men employed at the iron and brick works. As the housing demand could not keep up with the increasing workforce, families had to share houses with other families or boarders⁹².

A print of 1875 (not reproduced here) shows Fighting Cocks from the level railway/road crossing looking southeast⁹³. In the foreground on the left is the [C] Waiting Shed facing onto the northern platform with two lamps, one of them mounted to the building, the other freestanding. Across the two railway tracks are the [F] Station Master's House and Station Building, the latter facing onto the southern platform with passengers waiting and a signal post to the right, close to the crossing. In the background are the windmill and, further beyond, the smoking chimneys of the [N] Middleton Iron Works.

Because of the large number of 'thirsty' iron workers, two pubs were built at the Square: the [K] Havelock Arms Hotel and, opposite, the [M] Killinghall Arms. Soon the village became noted for its lawlessness due to drunken behaviour. In 1877, a seven-foot-long petition was delivered to Darlington magistrates demanding that the village be equipped with its own prison, the reason being that *'[i]n order to convey a disorderly person to the lock-up in Darlington, the policeman is frequently compelled to leave the locality when his presence is most needed, and it is well known that, in his absence, deplorable scenes are but too common'*. Consequently, one or two houses of a terrace called Central Buildings (no longer extant) on the south side of the Square were converted into a police station with lock-up. It was ideally located, between the two pubs, where most of the drinking took place, and facing the Square, where most of the fighting took place⁹⁴.

⁹¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185932>

⁹² Pallister 2007a, pages 84, 134 & 137-143

⁹³ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 27

⁹⁴ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16302438.lawless-middleton-st-george-prison-deal-irish-drunks/>



Left: [K] Havelock Arms Hotel. Right: The former [M] Killinghall Arms; a historical photo shows the building without render and 2x2 sliding sashes⁹⁵. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

By 1881, Pemberton Terrace had been extended to infill the space between it and Killinghall Row (also known as Old Row). Named New Row, it provided another nineteen houses for iron workers. More houses were built in Chapel Row and elsewhere in the Killinghall area, as well in Middleton One Row and along Middleton Lane, to the south outside the assessment area. The larger houses along Middleton Lane were mainly the homes of prosperous families in commerce and industry, who were no longer constrained to live where they worked⁹⁶.

In 1882, the Dinsdale Wire and Steel Works opened⁹⁷ (no longer extant) between the Brick and Tile Works and Dinsdale Moor Iron Works, using raw material from Sheffield and elsewhere.

In 1883, the [N] Middleton Iron Works were closed down for the remainder of the century. Imports of better-quality ore from Spain and elsewhere were now used, so it was more economical to use blast furnaces closer to port facilities. The parish was hit hard by the loss of its main source of employment. By 1891, the population had fallen to 871 from its census peak of 1103 in 1881. Also, another side effect of the closure of the iron works was that the plans for a Roman Catholic chapel along Chapel Street, hence its name, came to a complete halt and was never built.

At around 1886, a signal box was provided at Fighting Cocks, immediately to the west of the level crossing and along the southern track. It was a 'Type C1b' building, with panelled brickwork on the ground floor. The frame had 19 levers and a separate wheel was provided to operate the crossing gates⁹⁸.

A photograph of 3 June 1887 shows the same view of Fighting Cocks Station as the 1875 print. By that time, however, the windmill no longer had sails, as they had apparently been destroyed in a storm, and was driven by an engine. Little else seems to have changed, with passengers still lining the platform⁹⁹.

⁹⁵ Chapman 1990, page 106

⁹⁶ Pallister 2007a, pages 147-148

⁹⁷ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Haughton Road Industrial Area'

⁹⁸ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 15

⁹⁹ Pallister 2007a, pages 103, 139 & 147-148



Left: [P] Metal Railway Bridge over the historical route to Yarm. Right: [O] Masonry Railway Bridge over access track. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

On 1 July 1887, less than one month after the photo was taken, the NER opened a new passenger line between Darlington's enlarged Bank Top Station and the resulting railway junction with the existing line, forming the western end of the Darlington & Saltburn branch. Oaktree Junction was named after the nearby hamlet. The new line bypassed the original S&DR route through Fighting Cocks, which became known as the **Fighting Cocks branch or loop line**, running between Albert Hill Junction near Darlington's North Road Station and Oaktree Junction¹⁰⁰. It required various bridges, including a [O] Masonry Railway Bridge over an access track to a farmstead and a [P] Metal Railway Bridge over the road to Yarm at the southeast end of the assessment area. The new line also resulted in the provision of a new passenger station for Middleton St George, misleadingly named Dinsdale station, half a mile to the south of Fighting Cocks and close to Killinghall, where most of the recent development had taken place. Consequently, the old line and station concentrated on moving and handling freight, including the serving of the [D] Coal Depot¹⁰¹, as well as excursion trains and diverted services. It is likely that the [C] Waiting Shed was enclosed with a timber front following the transfer of passenger traffic to Dinsdale Station. Its use changed to a paraffin lamp room, storage of pairs of metal ramps (required for pushing derailed waggons back on the track) and a toilet^{102 103}. Besides the new Dinsdale Station offering better passenger facilities, it was also much nearer to the centre of population and thus convenient for commuting to Darlington and Teesside. This opened up a much wider range of employment possibilities for the inhabitants in the parish. Moreover, the dwindling visitors to the spa had been replaced by day-trippers from the nearby towns, with Dinsdale Station being within easy walking distance to Middleton One Row.

Henry Cocks, the last lord of the manor, died in November 1894. He was also the last person to be interred beneath the chancel of St George's church¹⁰⁴. Much of his estate was auctioned off, including the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn in September 1895. Its sale represented the first change of ownership since it was built. The purchaser was the Victoria Brewery of Darlington, also known as Warwick's Brewery Co; they remained owners until 1926. The triangular field adjoining the inn to the west was developed to provide a red brick terrace comprising five houses (no longer extant) following the inn's sale in 1895¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁰ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 16

¹⁰¹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 19

¹⁰² Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 28

¹⁰³ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Historical Background', 'Oak Tree Junction' & '6. Darlington South Junction to Oak Tree Junction via Dinsdale'

¹⁰⁴ Pallister 2007a, pages 148 & 153

¹⁰⁵ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 19

The Local Government Act of 1894 introduced parish councils and brought the village level of government into the pattern we have today. Functions previously carried out by churchwardens and vestries were now taken over by elected councillors. On 4 December, the inaugural meeting of the Middleton St George Parish Council was held at the school on Chapel Street¹⁰⁶.

The 1894 act also introduced rural district councils, establishing Darlington Rural District Council (DRDC) for the area. These inherited the functions of the earlier sanitary districts, but also had wider authority over matters such as local planning, council housing, playgrounds and cemeteries. The council had loading docks served by the old railway line¹⁰⁷ of which the [B] DRDC Loading Dock at Fighting Cocks still survives. It would later be used to load slag tarmacadam for the use in road repair¹⁰⁸.



Remains of [B] DRDC Loading Dock at Fighting Cocks, to northwest of level crossing. The Friends of the S&DR tidied up the area and cleared vegetation growth so that this feature can be better appreciated by the public. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

The 1896 six-inch OS map of the assessment area (see below) identifies the line of the former Roman Road, although it is now disrupted by the three new Fighting Cocks Reservoirs next to the older, smaller basin. Bordering the north of the site is the [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. The terrace on the opposite side of the road includes a post office. Further new buildings are shown along the lane to Darlington (these are no longer extant), as well as a semi-detached house along Sadberge Road a short distance north of the level crossing and two houses opposite Palmtree House, now part of Station Terrace. [F] Station Master's House and Station Building are no longer marked as a station. There has been some expansion of the industry at the northern road junction. However, the windmill is no longer annotated, either as it no longer performed a commercial function or was out of use completely by then. The name Fighting Cocks has been moved from the northern road junction to the south of Palmtree House. New development shown around the southern road junction includes various terraces, [K] Havelock Arms Hotel, [M] Killinghall Arms and another post office. To the northeast is the large site of the [N] Middleton Iron Works, connected via sidings to the original railway line, which was then reserved for the use of industrial activities. The iron works are also linked via a rail track to a site to the south(east), across the road to Yarm and the new passenger railway line. The area between the southern road junction and station is annotated Killinghall. At Dinsdale station, there is an eastbound and a westbound waiting shed. The booking office was located adjacent to the road bridge, at road level above the railway tracks¹⁰⁹. To the east, there are two more bridges along the Darlington & Saltburn line: a [O] Masonry Railway Bridge over an access track to a farmstead and a [P] Metal Railway Bridge

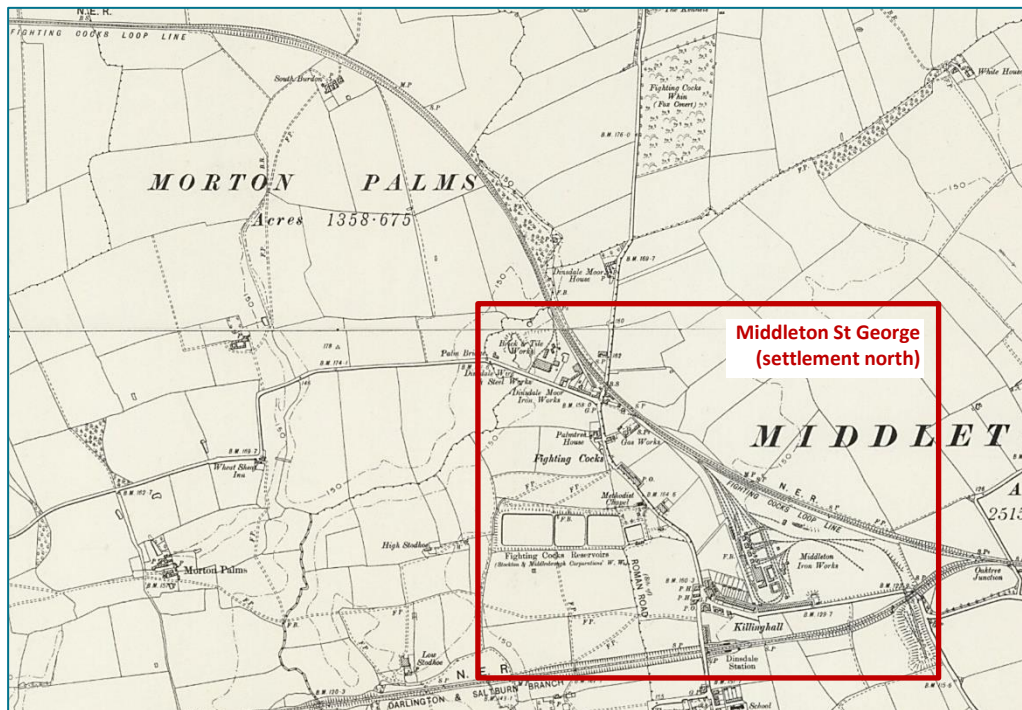
¹⁰⁶ Pallister 2007a, page 153

¹⁰⁷ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Haughton Road Industrial Area'

¹⁰⁸ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), pages 15, 18 & 21

¹⁰⁹ Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXXIV & points 88-90

over the road to Yarm. To the south of the station, along Chapel Street, is the school and more housing. At Oaktree Junction, the passenger line joins onto the track of the former S&DR. The surrounding area is still agricultural with dispersed farmsteads, the Morton Palms hamlet, and the Wheatsheaf Inn along the lane to Darlington.



1896 six-inch OS maps reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (maps.nls.uk). *Top*: Assessment area. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north



Top: Remains of [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor in Pease brick laid in an English Garden Wall bond (like the [C] Waiting Shed) to the north of the former Gas Works and windmill sites; note the 'zigzag' line of wall (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024). *Middle:* Remains of later, southern coal drop walling of the [D] Coal Depot built in stone; the brick walling on top was added when the depot was no longer in use. The wall now forms the boundary to the carpark of the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn. *Bottom:* This feature, judging from its position near the [A] Crane Base and Platform (just outside this view on the right) and on the 1913 map (see below), seems to be related to the ramp carrying the siding track to the coal cells. (Photos © Gaby Rose, April 2024)

The 1896 25-inch OS map (not reproduced here) shows further detail which is of particular interest for the northern road junction. The [E] Fighting Cocks Inn is now referred to as a hotel, and one of the buildings to the west of it, along the Darlington lane, is marked as a smithy. There had been significant railway-related development with multiple tracks in the widened [G] Railway Corridor, which had been enclosed by tall brick walling to the north of the windmill and Gas Works. To the west of Sadberge Road opposite the [C] Waiting Shed (with a boundary stone to the west of it), the [B] DRDC Loading Dock was served by a single siding which stopped short of the road. Across the tracks, there was the signal box at which two sidings terminated. To the

south of it, the [D] Coal Depot had been enlarged and 'shifted' slightly to the west, including former land to the rear of the inn. The number of coal cells had been increased to eleven and the working area widened to permit access on both sides of the cells. A new weighing machine and its office had also been added. This all suggests that the depot had been completely rebuilt and reorganised, perhaps by the NER after its amalgamation with the S&DR¹¹⁰. At Oaktree Junction, there was another signal box to the south of the tracks, which had opened on 1 July 1887 as a consequence of the new passenger railway line.

In 1898, Fighting Cocks was still a busy goods station. Traffic in coal, coke, lime and limestone amounted to 8,548 tons. Goods forwarded totalled 10,495 tons and goods received 12,677 tons. Traffic was handled in three sets of sidings¹¹¹.

Around the turn of the century, the former [N] Middleton Iron Works were reopened after a certain amount of reconstruction by their new owners, the Linthorpe Dinsdale Smelting Company. The furnaces were progressively brought back into production over a number of years. The intention was to allow the use of foreign ore and yield a product more suitable for the making of steel. In 1901, there were complaints about the danger to health and the environment caused by the discharge of smoke and dirt from these operations. In 1904, the company agreed to pay for the erection of a drinking trough combined with a gas lamp in the middle of the Square (the southern road junction), to enhance the centre of the iron works village.



[J] Cocks Memorial Homes. The clock tower over the central part is at odds with the Arts and Crafts style of the rest of the building. In the foreground, the metal boundary railings were likely cut off in the war effort in the 1940s. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

In 1903, six almshouses called the [J] Cocks Memorial Homes were built across the road from the reservoirs with some of the money left by the late Henry Cocks. The linear building includes a central unit which contained rooms meant to be used for parish purposes¹¹².

In 1906, the [L] Co-op and Stable were built at the north end of Middleton Lane, forming a group with Central Buildings (which included the police station and prison) to the south of the Square. The stable building is to the rear of the site and

¹¹⁰ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2020, page 11

¹¹¹ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 18

¹¹² Pallister 2007a, pages 106 & 159-160

comprised three stalls and a hayloft over, accommodating the horses and cart that were used by the shop for home deliveries¹¹³.



Left: Former [L] Co-op along Middleton Lane with detached Stable building in the background. Right: Stable viewed from Yarm Road. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

In 1907, a [H] Undenominational Mission Hall was provided at about the halfway point between the northern and southern road junctions, on the eastern side of the road, in the building that was marked as a post office on the 1896 map. Before the First World War, undenominationalism peaked. Undenominationalists were not attached to any denomination; they considered themselves 'just Christians'¹¹⁴.



Former [H] Undenominational Mission Hall in yellow, with 'Undenominational Mission Hall 1907' commemorated on the fencing. The white building to the left was once a village hall, then temporarily a Catholic church and in 1936 converted into a 265-seater cinema called the Lyric¹¹⁵. Both buildings are now in residential use. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

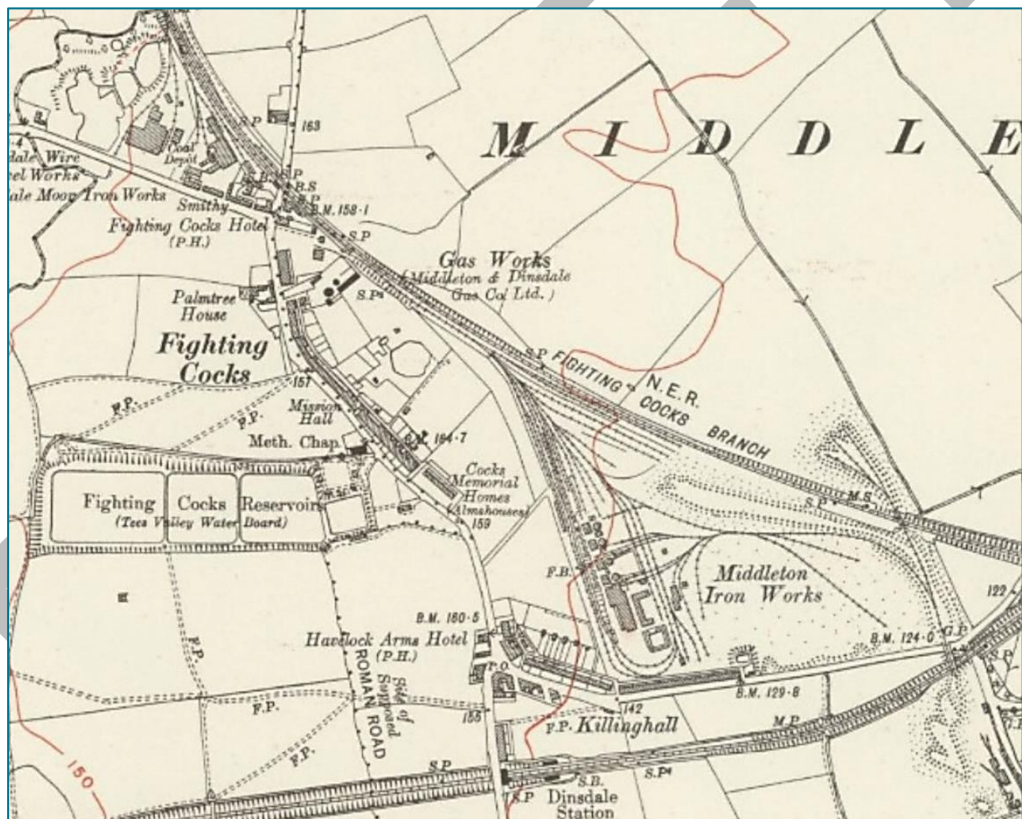
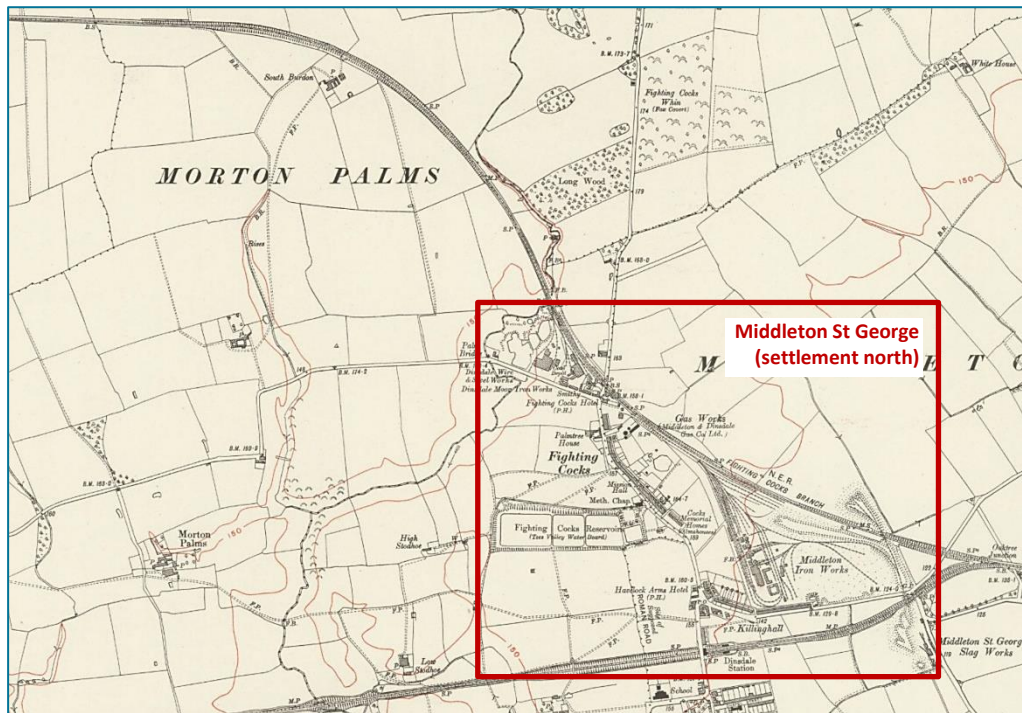
In 1911, a new school (no longer extant) opened along Neasham Road to the northwest of the old school. It provided modern premises with much increased accommodation and improved facilities, serving pupils from the age of five to leaving at the age of fourteen¹¹⁶.

¹¹³ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16388701.memories-middleton-st-george-co-op-ernie-hall-delivered-groceries-horse-cart/>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16388701.memories-middleton-st-george-co-op-ernie-hall-delivered-groceries-horse-cart/>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16388701.memories-middleton-st-george-co-op-ernie-hall-delivered-groceries-horse-cart/>

¹¹⁶ Pallister 2007a, page 161



1912-14 six-inch OS map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (maps.nls.uk). *Top*: Assessment area. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north

The 1912-14 six-inch OS map of the assessment area (see above) shows further expansion of the industrial areas at Fighting Cocks and the former [N] Middleton Iron Works. The latter were no longer connected to the site to the south(east) across the road to Yarm and passenger railway line, which had become occupied by the Middleton St George Slag Works in the meantime. Instead, a new rail connection had been established from the iron works to a site across the Fighting Cocks branch line. In addition, a new road to Long Newton had been constructed branching off the road

to Yarm where it turns south towards the [P] Metal Railway Bridge, heading outside the settlement in a northeastern direction, cutting through the embankment of the Fighting Cocks branch to the west of Oaktree Junction. There had been further provision of terraced housing between the northern and southern road junctions, and along Chapel Street. The new school is shown to the south of the passenger railway line, bordering the line of the former Roman Road, which is still annotated. The map names a number of buildings in the settlement, including a smithy to the west of the northern road junction, the [D] Coal Depot, [E] Fighting Cocks Inn (still hotel), [H] (Undenominational) Mission Hall, [J] Cocks Memorial Homes, the [K] Havelock Arms Hotel and [I] (Wesleyan) Methodist Chapel. It seems that the former [M] Killinghall Arms was not used as a pub at the time, as it is not mentioned. The surrounding area is still agricultural with dispersed farmsteads and the Morton Palms hamlet; the former Wheatsheaf Inn along the lane to Darlington is also no longer named and may have been a farmhouse at the time, as implied by its current name (Old Farmhouse).

The corresponding 1913 25-inch OS map (not reproduced here) shows further detail for the Fighting Cocks industrial sites. At the [D] Coal Depot, the former eleven coal drop cells had been increased to twelve, possibly by subdivision of one cell. At their northeastern end, between the track over the cells and the siding stopping short of the signal box, a [A] Crane Base is shown with a small building right next to it (the latter is no longer extant) and a line which seems to symbolise an adjoining Platform, which partially survives. The weighing machine had been relocated slightly to the north to allow freer access in and out of the depot, presumably by larger vehicles. A new weighing office seems to have been built adjoining the signal box to the southeast, with the previous building now demolished. To the west, the sites of the Dinsdale Wire & Steel Works and Dinsdale Moor Iron Works now had their own coal depots which were served by sidings from the main line. To the east across Sadberge Road, the former windmill seems to have been demolished.

In 1914, the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building at Fighting Cocks were sold for residential use¹¹⁷.

In 1915 and, again, in 1923 there were further complaints about alleged smoke pollution emitted from the former [N] Middleton Iron Works¹¹⁸.

From 1921 to 1945, the Gas Works sidings were taken over by Charles Ingram, railway wagon builder and repairer¹¹⁹.

In 1925, the stretch of line between Goosepool and Faverdale (Darlington), which included the Fighting Cocks branch, was used as part of the locomotive parade in the 100th birthday celebrations of the opening of the S&DR where locomotives and waggons went on static display¹²⁰. In the same year, the former school building along Chapel Street was taken over by the parochial church council and became known as Parochial Hall. Apart from providing for the Sunday School, it was also used for dances and other community activities.

¹¹⁷ Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXXIV

¹¹⁸ Pallister 2007a, pages 163-164

¹¹⁹ Darsley, Lovett 2023, point 75

¹²⁰ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2019, page 43



[A] Crane Base (top) and Platform (bottom). *Top*: Looking northwest, the platform is behind the crane base within the undergrowth; its alignment shown on the 1913 map is indicated by the yellow line. The rail tracks coming from the main railway line would have been to the righthand side. *Bottom*: Remnants of former platform viewed from the bridlepath looking southwest, with the walling stones now largely dislodged. The crane base is to the left just outside the view. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

In 1931, the former [N] Middleton Iron Works were closed down for good due to a wider depression in the country, and unemployment was rife in the parish. Consequently, the huge mountain of slag left over from the smelting process was partly used for road making¹²¹. In the same year, the site of the former Dinsdale Wire & Steel Works was turned into a scrapyards with new sidings provided. During the 1960s, many ex-British-Rail engines would be scrapped there¹²², marking this stretch of the original 1825 railway line as one that not only witnessed the birth but also the final demise of the public steam locomotive¹²³.

¹²¹ Pallister 2007a, page 165

¹²² Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Haughton Road Industrial Area'

¹²³ Pallister 2007a, page 170

A photo of the former Fighting Cocks station of 1933¹²⁴ (not reproduced here), taken from a similar location as the 1875 print, shows the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building next to the live goods-traffic railway line, with the passenger platform now removed. A wooden barrier is on the level crossing to allow road traffic pass. The former [N] Middleton Iron Works are in the far background.

In 1936, the Lyric cinema opened next to the [H] Undenominational Mission Hall.

In late 1938, with the prospect of war, construction of the Royal Air Force (RAF) aerodrome had begun in the southeast of the parish, extending right up to the church of St George. This transformed a large area of landscape outside the assessment area (and partly within the neighbouring Long Newton parish). It also brought about an interface and social intermingling with the local population. The slag heaps left from the former [N] Middleton Iron Works contributed towards the base material for runways. A large force of employment was required, which boosted the local economy¹²⁵.

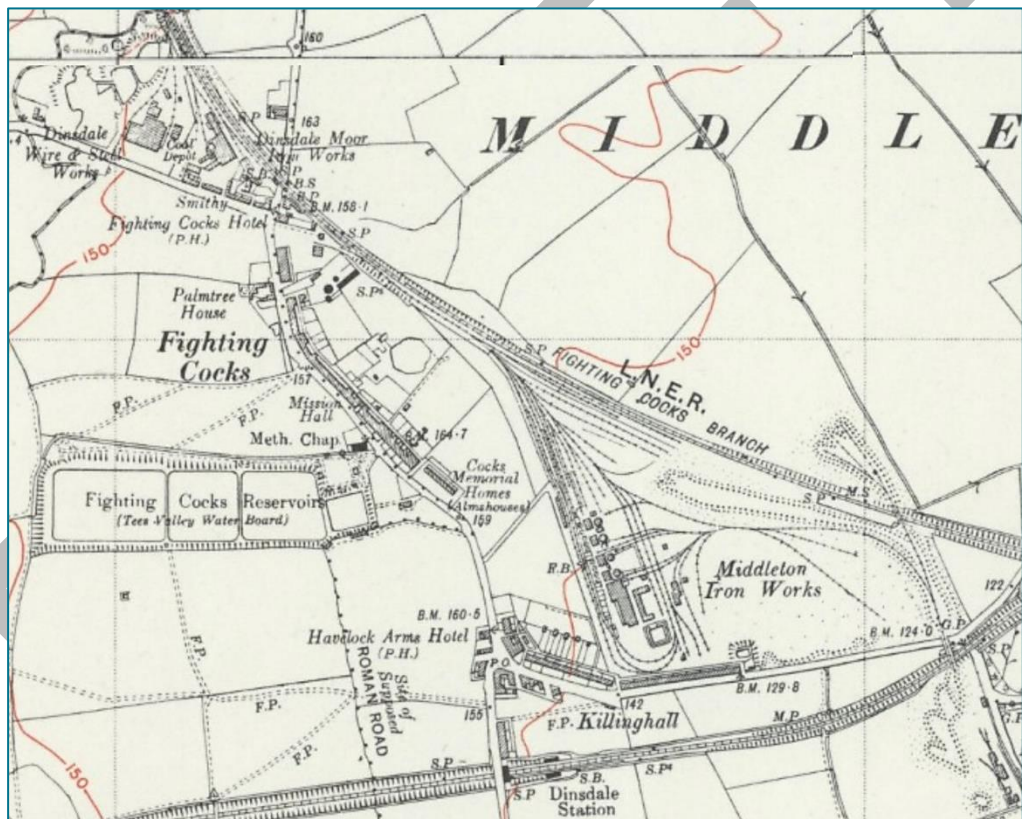
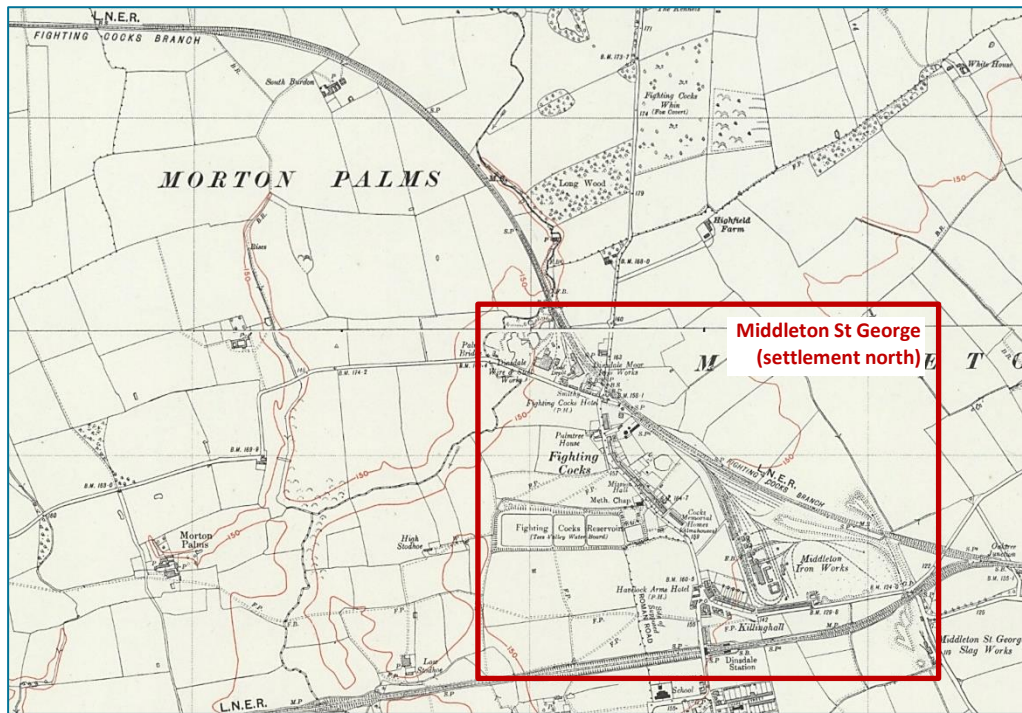
The 1938 six-inch OS map of the assessment area (see below) shows very little change to the previous map, although the Fighting Cocks branch line is now owned by the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). The location names Fighting Cocks and Killinghall are still provided. The Gas Works no longer exist.

The corresponding 25-inch OS map is one year later (not reproduced here), from 1939. It shows that within the last year the council houses which had already been planned for Middleton St George in the early 1920s had eventually been built to the west of the school along a new cul-de-sac called Thorntree Gardens, in the Dinsdale parish at the southern fringe of the assessment area. The delay in construction had been due to the alleged smoke nuisance associated with the former [N] Middleton Iron Works, which had resulted in the originally planned site being rejected¹²⁶. Between 1938 and 1939, semi-detached houses had been provided to the north of the [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, and another mission hall (no longer extant) had been built to the north of the [K] Havelock Arms Hotel. The map also identifies the Parochial Hall, which used to be the old school building. At the top end of the village, the grounds of the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn (still a hotel) had been expanded to the rear (north), maybe to provide a car park. To the north of the railway line, an agricultural field had been turned into allotment gardens, helping feed families through home food production during the depression, and again later during the rationing years of the Second World War.

¹²⁴ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 19

¹²⁵ Pallister 2007a, page 165

¹²⁶ Pallister 2007a, page 164



1938 six-inch OS maps reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (maps.nls.uk). *Top*: Assessment area. *Bottom*: Middleton St George settlement north

The RAF Middleton St George officially opened on 15 January 1941. A wireless station was established in a field opposite the slag works in the southeastern corner of the assessment area, with a number of high, lattice construction radio masts. From 1942 until the end of the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Air Force assumed duties providing most of the ground staff and aircrew flying bombers over Germany and occupied Europe. Bombs, armaments, and other equipment were delivered by rail to Fighting Cocks goods station, including the former [D] Coal Depot, and from there by road to the aerodrome. The [H] Undenominational Mission Hall received a new lease

of life when evangelical services were organised by Canadian airmen, which were also well attended by people from the village and Darlington. In their spare time, staff often socialised outside the airfield, frequenting the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn, [K] Havelock Arms Hotel and [M] Killinghall Arms. Dances at the Parochial Hall were also well attended. Moreover, the Lyric cinema proved hugely popular with airmen stationed at the airfield.

In 1947, demolition of the former [N] Middleton Iron Works started; only the blowing engine house would remain and be adapted for other usage. Around the same time, the smithy at Fighting Cocks and the houses and cottages beyond it along the road to Darlington were also demolished¹²⁷.

A photo of the former Fighting Cocks station of 1949¹²⁸ (not reproduced here), taken from a similar location as the 1875 print, shows a residential hedge planted around the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building, next to the live goods-traffic railway line. A wooden barrier is on the level crossing to allow road traffic pass. The [C] Waiting Shed is still intact. The industrial buildings have disappeared from the background.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the Parochial Hall was the home of the Middleton St George Operatic and Dramatic Society; their productions always played to full houses. In the late 1950s, the Lyric closed due to falling attendances brought about by television and changing lifestyles.

In 1954, the Dinsdale Moor Iron Works, which had flourished during the war years and continued to be a major employer in the village, closed resulting in further loss of railway traffic along the Fighting Cocks branch line. As a result, the adjacent scrap yard on the site of the former Dinsdale Wire & Steel Works were then able to expand and fill the void¹²⁹.

In 1958, the Dinsdale Rail Welding Depot opened on the site of the former [N] Middleton Iron Works and was used as a British Railways facility for the production of long-welded rails for track renewals¹³⁰.

A photo of the former Fighting Cocks passenger station of 1960¹³¹ (not reproduced here), taken from the location of the former [D] Coal Depot shows the brick-built signal box, the former [B] DRDC Loading Dock, by then out of use and overgrown, as well as parts of the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building and [C] Waiting Shed; the latter seemed still intact.

After a public enquiry in 1962, most of the remaining gap between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row had been built over. The housing expansion and resulting population increase carried on regardless of the slow decline of the village's services¹³².

¹²⁷ Pallister 2007a, pages 100 & 165-170

¹²⁸ Darsley, Lovett 2023, point 74

¹²⁹ Pallister 2007a, page 169

¹³⁰ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 26

¹³¹ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 26

¹³² Pallister 2007a, page 170

In 1963, the Central Buildings terrace to the south of the Square, which included the old police station and a lock-up, was replaced by a new pair of semi-detached police houses and a single-storey police hut (still extant but no longer in its original use)¹³³.

The former [D] Coal Depot, which had continued as the Fighting Cocks goods station, closed in March 1964¹³⁴. In the same year, following a change in defence requirements, the RAF aerodrome closed too. The airfield was then converted into a civil airport, with flights to Heathrow commencing at the end of the same year¹³⁵.

The Fighting Cocks branch line closed as a through route in May 1967. One track was lifted, but the other remained in place so that traffic could still be worked from Oaktree Junction to Patons & Baldwins factory just outside Darlington and the Dinsdale Rail Welding Depot; the line to the west of the factory was severed. The Fighting Cocks signal box was demolished in November that year¹³⁶.

In the late 1960s, the [L] Co-op (and Stable) closed¹³⁷.

In 1972, the Oaktree Junction signal box was abolished¹³⁸. Around 1973, the historical Dinsdale station buildings were demolished, although the station has remained in use.

In 1983, metal manufacture on the former site of Dinsdale Wire & Steel Works ceased, resulting in another loss of employment within the village¹³⁹.

In 1988, the Dinsdale Rail Welding Depot closed, following the closure of Patons & Baldwins in the early 1970s. The Fighting Cocks branch line had now shut down completely. The part of the route to the west outside the assessment area was subsequently built on to form the B6279, whilst the part within the assessment area became a public right of way¹⁴⁰.

In the mid-1990s, Middleton St George had a population of approximately 1,800. Due to the demise of industry and the availability of brownfield sites, the population grew rapidly to the current level of approximately 4,600¹⁴¹.

By the end of twentieth century, a by-pass (A67) had been provided around the northern end of the village, removing the disturbance of the ever-increasing through-traffic and affording much better access to the airport. At the same time, the opportunity was taken to provide a direct link from the main road to Long Newton, cutting out the previous route via West Hartburn, which became a dead-end farm access only.

¹³³ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16302438.lawless-middleton-st-george-prison-deal-irish-drunks/>

¹³⁴ Darsley, Lovett 2023, map XXVIII

¹³⁵ Pallister 2007a, pages 170-171

¹³⁶ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 31

¹³⁷ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/16388701.memories-middleton-st-george-co-op-ernie-hall-delivered-groceries-horse-cart/>

¹³⁸ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 31

¹³⁹ Darsley, Lovett 2023, 'Haughton Road Industrial Area' & point 89

¹⁴⁰ Coulthard, Teasdale (ed.) (2018), page 31

¹⁴¹ <https://middleton-st-george.org.uk/about-the-village/village-profile/>

In 2003, the school on Neasham Road survived a destructive fire, but was replaced by a modern school building in 2006. In 2004, the blowing engine house of the former [N] Middleton Iron Works was demolished¹⁴², making way for further new housing.

3.4 Spatial Analysis

Note that planform, road and railway line layouts, watercourses, topography, and all structures of interest are described in the previous sections (see sections 3.2 & 3.3). Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

The assessment area is experienced by members of the public from the A66 and A67, footpaths, main and side roads and communal spaces within the settlement, and from several public rights of way over private farmland, nature reserves and the former railway corridor.

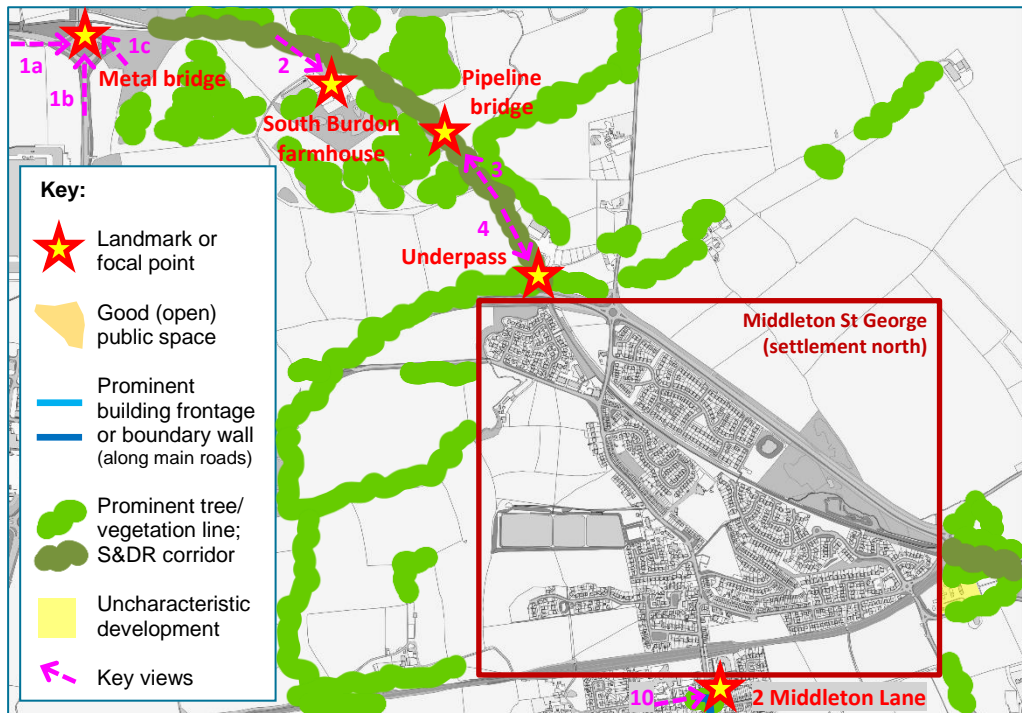
The area includes a number of focal points which feature within the key views, see below. Whilst South Burdon Farmhouse, the pipeline bridge, underpass below the A67, [M] Killinghall Arms and [P] Metal Railway Bridge can only be seen from shorter distances, the [E] Fighting Cocks Inn, [E] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and 2 Middleton Lane are also visible over longer distances. The area's most prominent landmark, in terms of its size and exposure, is the metal bridlepath bridge across the A66, linking the outskirts of Darlington via the green corridor with Middleton St George, along the route of the former Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR).

The analysis of the character zones (see section 3.5) shows that the spatial experience between the zones differs notably, ranging from lush open countryside (Zone A) to a well-enclosed green corridor (zone B), loosely arranged modern housing estates (Zone C), high-density historical developments lining the main roads (Zone D), an embanked water park of rectangular footprint (Zone E), allotments concealed behind dense vegetation (Zone F), open communal green spaces (Zone G), and a modern school compound (Zone H). The A66, A67 and live railway line create noticeable barriers within the assessment area and between/within character zones, with the railway line cutting the village into two separate parts. The large amount of lush vegetation, often along boundary lines and adding to the definition of space, provides an element of cohesion throughout the assessment area.

Buildings are generally of two-storey height, although there are also a number of bungalows and a new housing site including three-storey houses, which are marked in yellow on the maps below as they do not fit in with the remainder of the development of the village. The 'urban' enclosure and cohesion established by the nineteenth-century layouts have been undermined by later houses where these do not line and face onto the main roads. Whilst modern residential development was initially on brownfield sites of the former industry such as the [N] Middleton Iron Works, the more recent and ongoing housing schemes are built on greenfield sites in the village's immediate setting.

The settlement includes three good (open) public spaces, as marked in orange on the map below, with the Square, i.e. the southern road junction which is confined by buildings, also featuring in two key views. In contrast, the playing field and clearing inside the Whinnies are (partially) enclosed by mature trees.

¹⁴² Pallister 2007a, pages 100, 161 & 171



Spatial analysis. *Top:* Assessment area. *Bottom:* Middleton St George settlement north (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024. Graphics by Gaby Rose)

The key views within the assessment area are as follows.

View 1a has been taken from the B6279 (Tornado Way) approaching its junction with the A66 from the western, Darlington direction, in the northwestern-most corner of the assessment area. It is only experienced by vehicle users of the A66. The focal point is the green metal bridge carrying a bridlepath along the former route of the

S&DR into the green corridor which leads to the village of Middleton St George. In the background, beyond the grassed roundabout, the trees of South Burdon Community Woodland can be seen. A number of galvanised streetlamps are very prominent in this view.



View 1b has been taken from a cycle path to the south of the roundabout looking north along the A66 towards the landmark of the green metal bridge carrying the bridlepath into the green corridor which leads to the village of Middleton St George. This view is experienced by vehicle users of the A66 and cyclists. In the background to the right, the tree line in the location of the former railway corridor can be seen. A number of galvanised streetlamps are very prominent in this view.



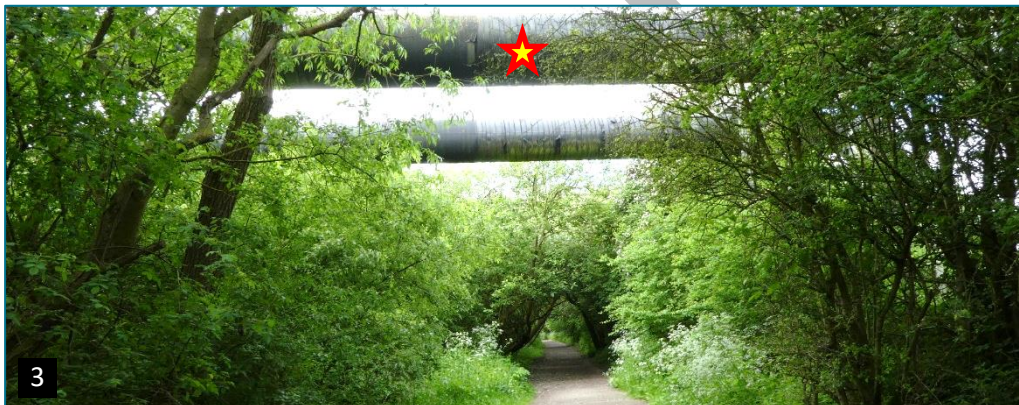
View 1c has been taken from the cycle path to the southeast of the roundabout looking northwest towards the landmark green metal bridge. It is experienced by cyclists as well as pedestrians who park their vehicle in this location and then head off into the countryside to the east (right). The blue sign in the background shows the average minutes required for cyclists to reach Darlington town centre via the bridge (20), Middleton St George (13), Sadberge (13) and Great Burdon (9) from here. A number of galvanised streetlamps are very prominent in this view.



View 2 has been taken from the former track bed of the S&DR which is now a public bridleway, looking southeast down the green corridor and to the focal point of South Burdon farmhouse beyond the overgrown railway embankment. It is experienced by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. The two photos reveal the difference vegetation can make in only two months, with the top image taken in May and the bottom in March 2024, the latter showing the house far more prominently. Moreover, the farmhouse was also very prominent from the former level crossing just slightly further on in March, but completely concealed by leafy vegetation in May, which is why that viewpoint has not been included.



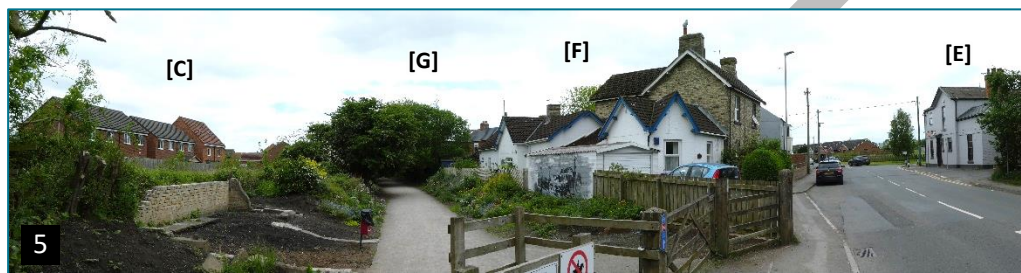
View 3 has been taken from the bridleway looking northwest with the focal point of a pipeline bridge overhead. It is experienced by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Again, the pipes were much more prominent two months earlier in March. They were also very visible from the opposite direction but much concealed by leafy vegetation in May, which is why that viewpoint has not been included. This photo is a good example of how enclosed and dark the green corridor can be once the vegetation growing on the sloped sides of the railway embankments has taken over.



View 4 has been taken from the green corridor looking southeast towards the underpass carrying the A67 above, which cannot be seen but can be heard from here. It is experienced by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Again, the underpass was much more prominent two months earlier in March. It was also very visible from the opposite direction but much concealed by leafy vegetation in May, which is why that viewpoint has not been included. In front of the underpass, there is a metal barrier, followed by a large rock and a public litter bin.



View 5 has been taken from the former level crossing of the S&DR with Sadberge Road (route of the former Roman road) looking southeast. It is experienced by all users of the public highway. In the foreground to the left are the remains of the [C] Waiting Shed built in Pease brick, behind which a recently constructed housing estate can be glimpsed. Down the green corridor, which at this point is only available for pedestrians and cyclists (no longer a bridleway), are the remains of [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor walling within the trees. In the centre of the photo are the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building, both also constructed in Pease brick and now in residential use. In the background to the right is the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn which has recently been converted into a supermarket. In the far background beyond Sadberge Road is a row of modern bungalows. Wooden telegraph poles and a galvanised streetlamp are prominent in this view.



View 6 has been taken from Station Road looking north towards the historic Fighting Cocks road junction with the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn being the distant focal point. To the left is the row of modern bungalows mentioned above, concealed behind established front gardens. To the right, nineteenth-century terraces, now much modified, enclose the road on this side. The rhythm created by their chimney stacks is an important feature. Wooden telegraph poles are prominent in this view.



View 7a has been taken from about midpoint of Sadberge Road looking northwest with the former [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, now in residential use, being a focal point to the left, set at an angle to the road. In front of it is the lush vegetation belonging to the Middleton St George Community Centre and Parish Council premises. To the right, nineteenth-century terraces, now much modified, enclose the road on that side. The rhythm created by their chimney stacks is an important feature. Wooden telegraph poles are prominent in this view.



View 7b has been taken from slightly further south along Station Road looking northwest with the former [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel still being a focal point in the distance, set at an angle to the road. In front of it is the lush vegetation belonging to a domestic garden and the Middleton St George Community Centre and Parish Council premises. On the right side of the road, set back behind a well-cared-for front garden, are the former [J] Cocks Memorial Homes, designed in an Arts and Crafts style, which seems unique for the assessment area. The entrance piers within the low brick boundary wall can be seen to the left of a mature tree in the centre of the photo. The clock tower is not much of a landmark as the building is not prominent from the road. Due to the large trees, the wooden telegraph poles are slightly less obvious in this view.



View 8a has been taken from Middleton Lane looking northeast at the roundabout of the southern road junction (the Square) with the former [M] Killinghall Arms, now an Indian restaurant, being the focal point. Hipped roofs are notable in this location. The route to the left is Station Road and to the right Yarm Road. The latter is lined by a row of terraced housing to the left/north (Pemberton Terrace and the adjoining New Row), originally built for workers of the [N] Middleton Iron Works which used to be behind the houses. The rhythm created by their chimney stacks is an important feature. At the right edge of the photo, part of the semi-detached houses which replaced Central Buildings (including former police station and lock-up) can be glimpsed, with the modern police hut to the left of it, now presumably in residential use. Wooden telegraph poles are prominent in this view.



View 8b has been taken from Yarm Road looking northwest at the roundabout of the Square. Again, hipped roofs are notable in this location. Whilst the [K] Havelock Arms Hotel and former [M] Killinghall Arms can be spotted to the right facing onto Station Road, there are no focal points in this view. At the left edge of the photo, part of the semi-detached houses which replaced Central Buildings can be glimpsed behind a well-established front garden. The corner building in the centre has a convenience store on the ground floor. Wooden telegraph poles are less prominent.



View 9a has been taken from near the other end of Yarm Road looking southeast at the roundabout with the [P] Metal Railway Bridge over the old road to Yarm being the focal point. To the left dense vegetation encloses the active railway line, merging with the green corridor in the location of the former Oaktree junction beyond. In the background underneath the bridge, recently constructed housing estate can be glimpsed, comprising buildings of locally untypical designs. Galvanised streetlamps are prominent in this view.



View 9b has been taken from Woolsington Drive looking south at the roundabout with the [P] Metal Railway Bridge over the old road to Yarm being the focal point. To the left dense vegetation encloses the active railway line, merging with the green corridor in the location of the former Oaktree junction beyond. At the right edge of the photo part of a row of bungalows can be glimpsed behind a vertically boarded timber fence. Galvanised streetlamps are prominent in this view.



View 10 has been taken from Neasham Road looking east at the junction with Middleton Lane, on the southern fringe of the assessment area. 2 Middleton Lane with its prominent two gables fronting onto the junction is a focal point and can also be seen from further down the road. To the left is a modern housing block, its architectural design being out of character with the surrounding historical precedents. To the right are some of the detached villas built for prosperous families in commerce and industry in the late-nineteenth century. On the far right, the mature trees and gated boundary wall used to belong to the grounds of Thorntree House, which is contemporary with the comparatively more modest villas across the road. Whilst the mansion still survives, much of its former plot has been built over by

modern houses. In this view metal telegraph poles with multiple lines of wire detract from the focal point.



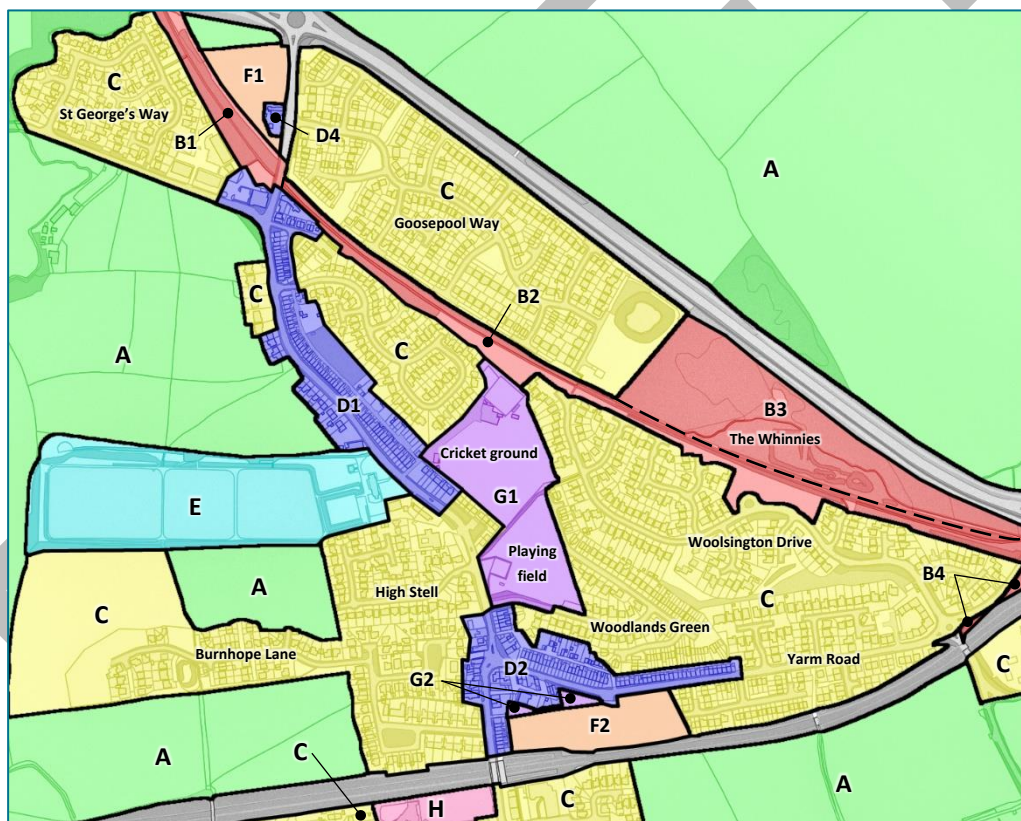
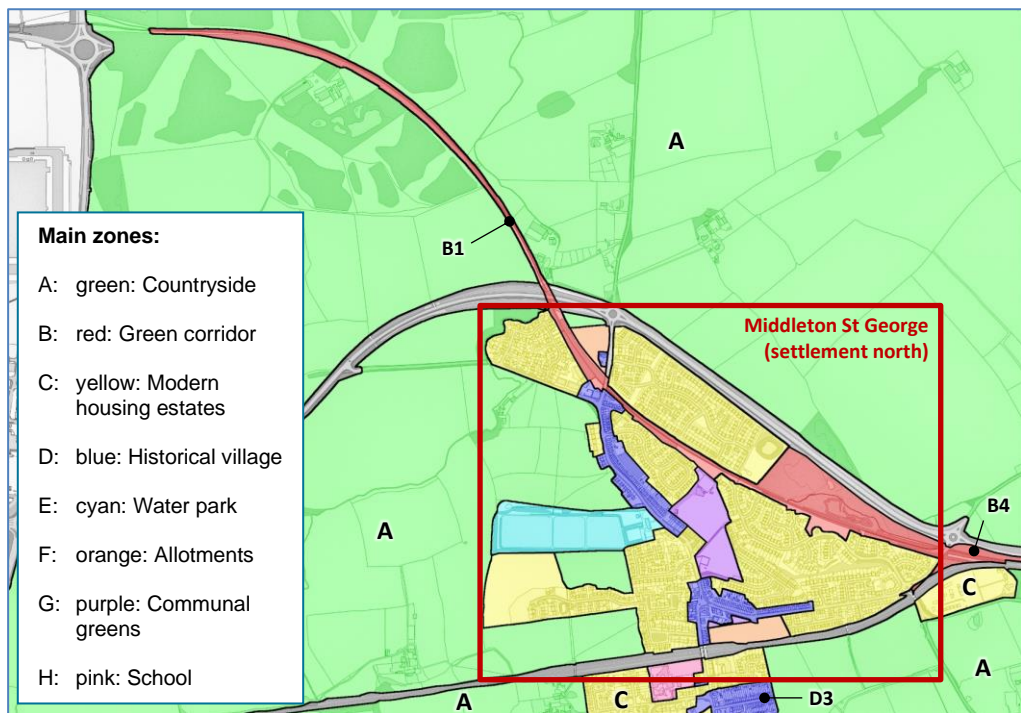
3.5 Character Analysis

This section should be read in conjunction with the descriptions of the assessment area's layout, planform, setting (see section 3.2) and its historical development including structures of interest (see section 3.3) and the spatial analysis including key views (see section 3.4). Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document. Key views are referred to as (View 1, 2, ...) in the text below.

Despite the large size of the assessment area, only nine character zones have been identified, some of them quite large, which are shown on the map on the next page. These are primarily based on development and use types and layout, which defines their appearance. Many zones (A, C, D, F, G) are made of a number of dispersed, separate areas, whilst others (B, E, H) are one continuous area. The A66, A67 and active railway line have not been allocated any zones, as these are transport corridors which create barriers within and between zones.

The character zones will later be used to inform proposed conservation area boundaries (see chapter 5.0), based on their special architectural or historic interest.

The assessment area comprises the following character zones; the significance ratings provided are within the Darlington borough context:



Character zones. *Top:* Assessment area. *Bottom:* Middleton St George settlement north (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024. Graphics by Gaby Rose)

Zone A – green: Countryside. This is by far the largest zone which comprises five separate areas of varying size. It is of **moderate historic interest** being the result of enclosure since the sixteenth century, which has established a patchwork of medium-size fields and dispersed farmsteads, as well as containing archaeological evidence of preceding medieval open field systems and possible earlier structures. There is good recreational access with a network of public footpaths and bridleways crisscrossing

the countryside, contributing to its public enjoyment. Moreover, this zone is not only experienced from within but can also be seen from parts of other zones, the A66 and A67, and the live railway line. It has a key role in the setting around Middleton St George, in particular to the west of the village.

Zone A mainly consists of arable and pastoral farmland, including a few horse paddocks, and two nature reserves in the northern part of the assessment area. Lush vegetation is a key characteristic with trees (e.g. ash and horse chestnut), shrubs and hedges (hawthorn and blackthorn) often defining boundary lines, following watercourses or forming small woodlands; an example for the latter is the South Burdon Community Woodland which comprises a predominantly native broadleaved forest with areas of managed grassland and open-water habitats¹⁴³.



Zone A: South Burdon Community Woodland viewed from the green corridor near its western end (Subzone B1), looking south. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

Zone A provides habitats for a range of farmland bird species such as yellowhammers and linnets that will nest and forage in the hedgerows; skylarks and grey partridge that will nest on the ground in the longer vegetation; and species such as barn owl, kestrel and bats will hunt across the fields and field margins for prey. Barn owls and kestrels would also nest in veteran trees and agricultural buildings in this zone. In addition, the trees and buildings offer roosting potential for bat species such as common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat. Mammal species recorded include badger, fox, rabbit, and hedgehog.



Zone A: Agricultural fields just north of active railway line with new houses along Burnhope Lane (Zone C) being constructed in the adjoining field. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Former fields to the west of the village and south of the active railway line were recently turned into housing estates or are still under construction, having changed

¹⁴³ Land Use Consultants 2015, pages 46 & 48

them from Zone A into C. Further Zone-A fields will soon be turned into housing estates, see Local Plan Policies Map¹⁴⁴.

Zone B – red: Green corridor. This is the longest character zone stretching from the northwestern to the southeastern corners of the assessment area. Whilst it is mainly linear in shape following the track bed of the former Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR), it also includes the Whinnies nature reserve at the eastern end. Its main character is being one continuous woodland, apart from the roads which cut across and create small breaks, with only a few built structures and no buildings. This character zone is of **very high historic interest** comprising a stretch of the original route of the S&DR which later became part of the Fighting Cocks branch; the location of the former Oaktree Junction at the meeting point with the live line at the eastern end; and remnants of former industrial sites which were key to the historical development of the village. It includes the following surviving structures of interest:

- [A] Crane Base and Platform
- [B] DRDC Loading Dock
- [C] Waiting Shed (remains)
- [D] Coal Depot (remains)
- [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor (remains)

This zone also contains other small-scale industrial fragments as well as the spoil heaps and bridge abutments which are associated with the former [N] Middleton Iron Works site, see below.

Although this character zone is one continuous area, it can, from a pedestrian's perspective, be subdivided into four 'subzones':

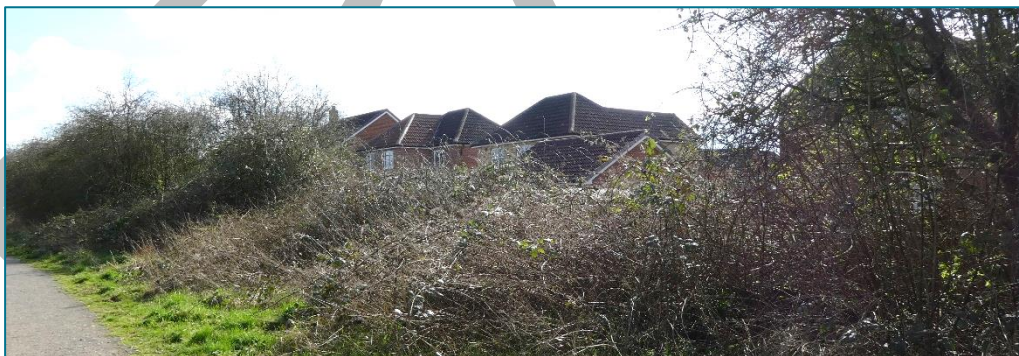
- B1. the green corridor to the northwest of Sadberge Road
- B2. the green corridor between Sadberge Road and Yarm Road
- B3. the Whinnies nature reserve
- B4. the green corridor and 'woodland' to the east of Yarm Road

Subzone B1. This stretch of the green corridor is of recreational value being fully accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It provides important connectivity not only for people but also wildlife, with direct links into Zones A and C and D. The track is enclosed by dense vegetation (**View 3**), which changes with the seasons, growing on the slopes of the railway cutting embankments to both sides. The predominant habitat comprises hawthorn and brambles, which offer suitable nesting habitats for species such as blackcap and whitethroat warblers.

The overall sense of enclosure is very prominent in this subzone's western stretch, where the railway bed lies in cutting. There are the remains of a historical ditch along the south-western side within the corridor, which was designed to keep the line drained, and a number of early stone sleeper blocks were found discarded here (not seen by the author). There is also a ditch at the top of the cutting on both sides (in places) which collected run off from the adjoining fields. Rabbits have been digging out cinders from the old track surface on the northern cutting embankment (not seen by the author). In this part of the subzone, views into the adjoining countryside (Zone A) can only be had in a few locations near South Burdon farmhouse (**View 2**), where there used to be a level railway crossing for the farm. Whilst there is no

¹⁴⁴ Darlington Borough Council 2022

particular evidence, there is a later concrete post and base, which must have carried some sort of signal. Along this stretch of line there are a number of concrete bases left from the later use as a branch line which presumably supported signals¹⁴⁵.



Subzone B1: *Top:* Concrete post halfway up the railway cutting embankment viewed from former level crossing at South Burdon farmhouse. *Middle:* View from the green corridor onto farmland to the southwest (Zone A), with historic drainage channel in the foreground, and a much lower embankment behind. *Bottom:* View from the green corridor onto modern housing estate along St George's Gate (Zone C) behind overgrown cutting embankment, looking southwest. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

When approaching the underpass carrying the noisy A67 the sense of enclosure diminishes, with the vegetation becoming less dense and the embankments lower or even disappearing, enabling views onto farmland and farm buildings, although this can also depend on the amount of foliage at the time of the year. The underpass marks the entrance into (or exit from) the village (**View 4**). Immediately to the north

¹⁴⁵ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 17

of it, a modern access lane comes off to the east of the green corridor. To the south of the underpass, recently constructed houses along St George's Gate (Zone C) can be glimpsed from a few locations. Along the northern side, allotments (Zone F) and a historical semi-detached house beyond (Zone D) can be spotted when there is no or little foliage. On approaching Sadberge Road, the remains of a [A] Crane Base and Platform and other small-scale industrial fragments can be seen in the undergrowth to the right/south, and finally the remnants of two phases of [D] Coal Depot walling. On the opposite side of the track is the former [B] DRDC Loading Dock. In the area leading to the former level crossing, the corridor widens as it used to include various sidings branching off the main railway tracks, as well as a signal box.



Subzone B2: *Top*: View along green corridor looking east, with entrance into the Whinnies (subzone B3) on the left and grassed-over railway cutting embankment on the right with housing off Woolsington Drive (Zone C) in the far background. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024) *Bottom*: View from Yarm Road looking southwest at the embankment of the raised former track bed (as opposed to when the railway lay in cutting as seen on the photo above) with another entrance into the nature reserve on the right. There used to be a railway bridge over Yarm Road. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

Subzone B2. This stretch of the green corridor is of recreational value being fully accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. It provides important connectivity not only for people but also wildlife, with direct links into Zones C and D. There are thin strips of woodland and scrub which comprise ash, willow, sycamore, oak, hawthorn and blackthorn, providing a habitat for nesting birds and roosting bats; and the understory supports species such as common toads, hedgehogs, and small mammals.

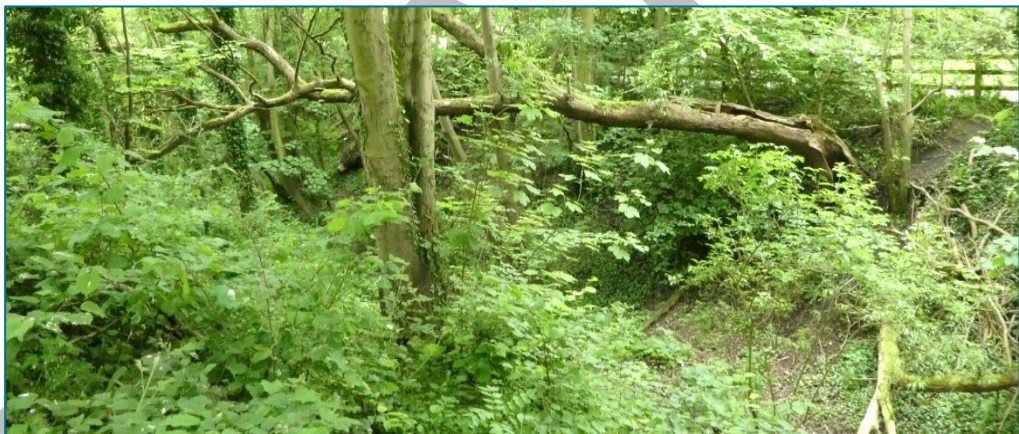
To the east of the level crossing, the corridor is narrow again, as it only used to accommodate the two tracks of the main line. On a shallow embankment to the north are the remains of the Darlington-bound [C] Waiting Shed, with some of the new houses off Goosepool Way (Zone C) visible behind. On the opposite side, the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building (Zone D) are not part of this character zone, as, although functionally directly linked to the railway corridor, they have physically been separated with a timber fence and long, modern garage now forming a barrier on top of a shallow embankment where the platform used to be (**View 5**). In this location, the green corridor has benefited from improvement works

carried out by residents, the Friends of the S&DR and a local artist (see section 3.6), re-establishing a sense of arrival at the former station. Carrying on eastwards, trees and shrubs line both sides, with the remains of [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor walling appearing on the southern railway cutting embankment. In the location where the sidings used to branch off into the [N] Middleton Iron Works, the vegetation opens up, exposing a grassed-over embankment with a green space behind, enabling glimpses onto modern housing off Woosington Drive in the location of the former iron works (Zone C). Shortly after, an access path branches off to the north providing a clear view onto the other end of the Goosepool Way housing estate. The Whinnies (Subzone B3) start after a green space with pond to the east of the houses, establishing a continuous dense woodland along the northern side of the corridor up to Yarm Road. Opposite the entrance into the nature reserve, to the southern side of the corridor, the vegetation begins to open up again, exposing a larger green space beyond the railway cutting embankment, again enabling views onto modern housing off Woosington Drive. Further east, the corridor becomes fully enclosed by vegetation again, with the former track bed of the railway now elevated on top of an embankment. Just before Yarm Road, it slopes down relatively steeply to meet the road, which had been cut into the railway embankment.

Subzone B3. The Whinnies is a five-hectare Local Nature Reserve (LNR) currently managed by Durham Wildlife Trust. It is of recreational value being fully accessible to pedestrians. There is a secluded atmosphere throughout the nature reserve, crisscrossed by earthen paths. Whilst most of this subzone is a dense woodland, there is a large clearing at its western end including a pond and timber benches. The bumpy topography of the woodland area to the east suggests the presence of slag spoil heaps produced by the former [N] Middleton Iron Works, as depicted on the 1912-14 six-inch OS map. In this area, there are drainage ditches as well as the remains of bridge abutments made of stone (not seen by the author due to heavy vegetation growth) associated with the transport of slag from the former iron works, as shown on the 1912-14 map. The bridge was locally called the Red Bridge, presumably because it was covered in red iron ore dust¹⁴⁶. Along the border with the former railway corridor (Subzone B2) is a chasm including some dead trees.

The LNR comprises a series of species-rich grasslands with small ponds, deciduous woodland, and scrub habitats. The meadow to the west is a species-rich calcareous grassland containing species such as quaking-grass, yellow-wort, birds-foot trefoil, agrimony, zig-zag clover, marsh thistle, and meadowsweet. It supports an assemblage of invertebrates including ringlet butterfly, dingy skipper, common and large blue butterfly, and many other butterfly species, as well as a host of other species of invertebrates. The grasslands to the east are dominated by wetter tolerant species such as ragged robin, yellow flag iris, and devil's bit scabious. The woodland and scrub contain tree species such as elm, wych elm, elder, field maple, oaks, willows, and ash; and shrub species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, and dogwood. The ponds onsite provide habitat for a range of species including smooth newt, common toad, water scorpions, dragonflies, and fish such as roach, perch, and European eels. There are also historic water vole records for the ponds and ditches onsite.

¹⁴⁶ Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway & Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2016, page 30



Subzone B3: *Top*: View from the clearing looking east with the pond and seating in the foreground. *Middle*: Woodland to the east with bumpy topography suggesting spoil heaps underneath. *Bottom*: Chasm with dead tree and green corridor behind fence line. (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Subzone B4. This area is of some recreational value with the path running between the A67 (outside this character zone) and the embanked railway track bed being accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. The linear woodland to the north of the original line of the S&DR is a local nature reserve. The overall woodland character of this subzone feels less secluded than in subzones B1-B3 due to the proximity of Yarm Road and the A67. Other parts of the woodland of this area can be seen from Yarm Road (Zone C) (**Views 9a & b**) and the live railway line (outside this character zone). The location where the Fighting Cocks branch used to meet the surviving railway line was Oaktree Junction. This part can, however, not be accessed by the public as it is within the live railway corridor, fenced off by metal mesh panels.



Subzone B4: View looking east along path between the A67 (to the left, out of view) and embanked former track bed of the S&DR on the right, which is still part of the live railway corridor in this location, hence fenced off. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

Zone C – yellow: Modern housing estates. This character zone comprises the most separate areas, eight in total and rising in future, which come in various shapes and sizes. Its character is residential, with the houses being of non-local and ‘suburban’ design, often arranged along winding cul-de-sacs. Houses are often two storeys high, although there are also a number of bungalows, with gardens. This character zone is only of **very limited historic interest**. Some of the housing estates were built onto the former industrial sites that had been set up following the advent of the railway, but no historical evidence seems to survive in these areas. Others were built onto greenfield sites, formerly belonging to Zone A. Due to their inward-looking nature of these areas, the surrounding character zones often contribute only little to their setting. One exception would be the modern houses that face onto Station Road and Yarm Road in the vicinity of roadside, traditional brick terraces (Zone D), although the new designs generally do not harmonise with the historical precedents.



Zone C: *Top:* Some of the more typical houses, with their design not being location specific but to a good standard. *Bottom:* A modern attempt of housing design which is visually less successful. (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

This zone contains limited ecology interest; however, the urban setting does offer potential for species such as hedgehog, which will use gardens for foraging and commuting. The older buildings may offer roosting potential for bats such as common and soprano pipistrelle, as well as nesting opportunities for swift, starlings, house sparrows, house martins, and swallows. The vegetated gardens offer pollinating plants for bees, butterflies and moths, and hover flies.

Zone D – blue: Historical village. This zone comprises four separate areas. Its general character comprises traditional buildings, often in the form of terraced housing, densely lining and facing onto the main roads. This character zone is of **medium-to-**

high historic interest, with subzones D1 and D2 being of most significance, forming the historical cores of the village. It also includes the largest number of surviving structures of interest:

- [E] Fighting Cocks Inn
- [F] Station Master's House and Station Building
- [H] Undenominational Mission Hall
- [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel
- [J] Cocks Memorial Homes
- [K] Havelock Arms Hotel
- [L] Co-op and Stable
- [M] Killinghall Arms
- [N] Middleton Iron Works (remains)

Character zone D can be subdivided into the following subzones:

- D1. Fighting Cocks road junction and Station Road
- D2. The Square and Yarm Road
- D3. Middleton Lane and Chapel Street
- D4. Sadberge Road property

This zone has a similar (limited) ecological interest as Zone C (modern housing estates). The main difference is that subzone D1 links the water park (Zone E) to the green corridor (Zone B); however, as it is poorly vegetated it does not provide an effective wildlife corridor.

Subzone D1. In this key location where the 1825 S&DR crossed the line of the Roman Road (**View 5**), the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn is not only the oldest surviving building in the village but also a long-distance focal point at the historic Fighting Cocks road junction (**View 6**), where the development of this settlement first started. It forms a group with the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building on the opposite side of the road, and together they contribute significantly to the setting of the former railway corridor (Zone B) in this location. Along Haxby Road, a cul-de-sac to the east of the junction, traditionally constructed semi-detached brick houses of possible 1940s date continue the historical layout by lining the road. To the south of the junction, rows of traditional terraces enclose the winding Station Road along its eastern side. The northern terrace appears, unusually for this village, to be stone built and features canopies spanning between the ground-floor bay windows. Its original, roadside opening pattern seems to be intact. In contrast, many of the brick houses of the next, much longer brick terrace had their original openings changed in size and/or are now rendered. Further south are various gable-fronted properties including the former [H] Undenominational Mission Hall. Then there is another terrace, again with canopies spanning between the bay windows on some of the houses, as well as having more generous front gardens than the preceding properties. Despite the many changes, historic features can still be found on this side of the road, such as prominent chimney stacks, ornate eaves detailing, shaped lintels and traditional boundary treatments. To the south of the terracing, set back from the road behind a generous front garden with mature trees, the former [J] Cocks Memorial Homes have two commemoration plaques on their main gable and appear to be well preserved. On the opposite (west) side of Station Road, later semi-detached houses behind front gardens have been included in this zone as they contribute to the enclosure of space, although gaps between the buildings also enable views into the countryside (Zone A). To the south, the former [I] Wesleyan

Methodist Chapel is set at an angle to the road, providing another long-distance focal point (**Views 7a & b**).



Subzone D1: *Top left*: Stone-built terrace of c.1900 with canopies spanning between bay windows with shallow front garden. Whilst the window frames have been changed to different designs, this terrace is otherwise well preserved. *Top right*: Entrance pier with carved stone cockerel and commemoration plaques on gable in the background, [J] Cocks Memorial Homes. *Middle*: The long Station Terrace with three well preserved houses, although window frames have been changed to different designs. The unit on the left, which would have looked the same, has been changed significantly. *Bottom*: Water View, the southern terrace, of which parts have been rendered. Note the eaves detailing on the right-hand house. Again, there is a ground-floor canopy and the original opening pattern has been preserved. The front garden has an unusual stone boundary wall with metal railings and distinct carved piers, which are in poor condition. (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Subzone D2. This area centres around the Square (**Views 8a & b**), the southern road junction along the north-south route through the village, which is now a roundabout. Development started here to provide workers of the [N] Middleton Iron Works with housing and amenity facilities. Today only a short section of boundary walling to the east of Killinghall Row is all that survives from the former iron works. This long terrace faces directly onto the pavement along Yarm Road and has a stepped roofscape reflecting the sloping topography. Many of the houses have undergone significant changes with regards to their openings and/or received a modern render, although the rhythm created by the chimney stacks has largely survived. The following terrace to the north is quite similar but is set back behind generous front gardens. Around the Square, individual buildings are grouped more organically. The former [M] Killinghall Arms has been extended with an additional unit to either side under one roof. In contrast, the [K] Havelock Arms Hotel across the road still reads as a detached building. On the east side of Station Road is a short red brick terrace behind front gardens. Detailing in Pease brick is of interest and there are also canopies spanning from the ground-floor bay windows, as already seen further up the street. Down Middleton Lane, there is the former [L] Co-op and Stable with some modern buildings to the opposite side of the road, which generally fit in well. Bellevue Court to the south of the former Co-op works is less successful. Following a gap, there is a traditional terrace set back from the road behind a shallow front garden, with a gable-facing property at its southern end. Again, there have been the typical alterations to individual properties, although the continuous decorative eaves brick band and rhythm created by the chimneys remain.



Subzone D2: *Top left:* A few of the well-preserved houses of Killinghall Row, which face directly onto the pavement. *Top right:* Gable-fronted end unit of terrace along Middleton Lane. (Photos © Gaby Rose, March 2024) *Bottom:* Terrace at southern end of Station Road with polychromatic brickwork. The once continuous roof surface has now been broken up by using different materials. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Subzone D3. This fragment of an area to the south of Dinsdale Station was first developed as a better-class housing area for prosperous families in commerce and industry (**View 10**), who were not constrained to live in close proximity to the [N] Middleton Iron Works.

Subzone D4. This plot comprises a semi-detached house along Sadberge Road, which was built in the second half of the nineteenth century. Nellie Hawkins who worked in the signal box during the war lived in one of them¹⁴⁷.



Subzone D4: Semidetached house, surrounded by allotments (Zone F) and lush roadside vegetation. It is unusual that bay windows are on the gable end, although this seems to be the main elevation. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Zone E – cyan: Water park. This is a single area which comprises the water park, including boating and fishing ponds, and the premises of the Middleton St George Community Centre and Parish Council. The character zone is of **medium-to-high historic interest**, with the outdoor sports court presenting the original reservoir of 1851 into which the Stockton, Middlesborough and Yarm Water Company had pumped water from just outside Darlington, and the three larger basins that were added slightly later, which now comprise the water park. The most dominant feature in this zone is the embanked three former reservoirs, which have trees growing on the embankments as well as a public footpath on top. These are quite visible from their surroundings, although the ongoing construction of a housing estate to the south (Zone C) is starting to have a negative impact on the setting of this recreational landscape. Moreover, the new housing is visible from the elevated water park, spoiling what were until recently natural surroundings. To the northwest and west, there is a small woodland with a nature trail which also offers views and glimpses north as well as footpaths into the landscape (Zone A); however, temporary security fencing is already up heralding the imminent construction of yet another large housing scheme, which will have further detrimental impact on this and other zones. In the water park and woodland, there are various metal artworks, way markers, interpretation boards, benches, and old masonry structures.

The basins are vegetated with flag iris and bulrush to the borders, and the angling ponds are stocked with species such as carp, perch, and roach. They support water birds such as mallard, moorhen, and coot, with herons using the ponds for hunting. Occasional otters use the reservoir within their commuting route through the area. The reservoirs also support foraging Daubenton's bats on an evening, which catch insects over the water. The areas around the basins comprise amenity grassland and

¹⁴⁷ Norman Hugill, email dated 15/11/2023 to Peter Bainbridge

woodland. The former is predominant to the south and adjacent to the car parking areas. Trees present within the latter include ash, rowan, field maple, elm, willow, crab apple, and cherry. The trees are mature and will support a wide range of nesting birds as well as roosting bats. The woodland contains ground cover which support an assemblage of invertebrates, small mammals, amphibians, and larger mammals such as roe deer. It also contains plant species which are indicative of ancient woodland, such as dogs' mercury, red campion, wood avens, herb-robert, guelder rose, wood sedge, and hairy brome. These indicators demonstrate that the woodland has been present for a long time and is in generally good condition. Bird species observed included chiffchaff, blackcap, bullfinch, chaffinch, goldfinch, robin, and wren.



Zone E: *Top*: Along the southern embankment of the reservoir looking east. *Middle*: Former original reservoir turned into a sports court, looking northeast, with Middleton St George Community Centre in the backdrop and metal artwork in the foreground. *Bottom*: Small woodland with nature trail including a bench and view into the landscape (left) and an old brick wall with stone copings (right). (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Zone F – orange: Allotments. This zone is made of two separate areas. It is of **medium historic interest**, with the allotments having been created to help feed families through home food production during the depression and during the rationing years of the Second World War. This zone is very private with public views concealed by dense vegetation.

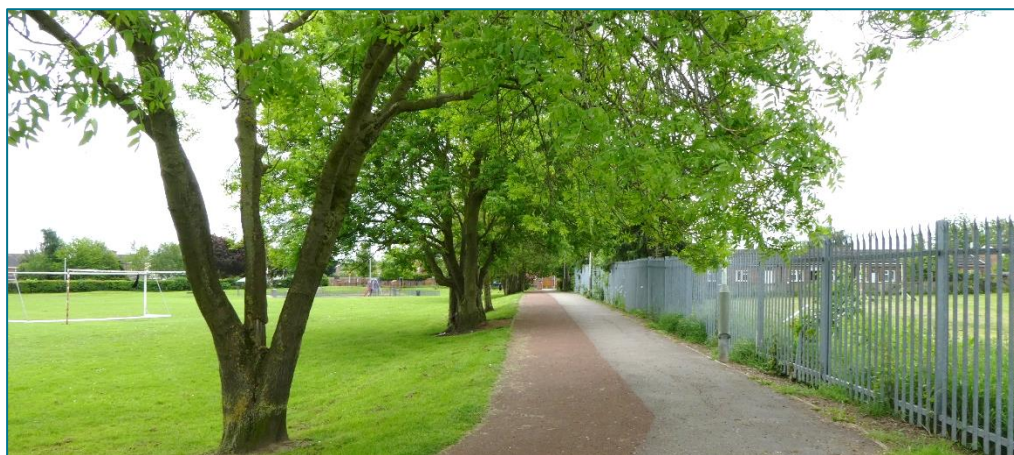


Zone F: Allotment gardens to the south of Yarm Road, looking south from Zone G. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Allotments can offer some biodiversity interest, and often function as green corridors and habitats for wildlife. The northernmost allotments along Sadberge Road (F1) are bounded by mature hawthorn and elder hedgerows with trees such as ash within the hedgerows. The southernmost allotment along Killinghall Row (F2) contains hedgerows which are more heavily managed and shorter in height and width but would still offer some limited interest from birds and other wildlife. The boundary hedges and trees offer nest habitat for birds such as chaffinch, goldfinch, blackbird, and dunnock; as well as offering foraging and pollinating opportunities. The linear hedgerows also create green corridors for hedgehogs to shelter and commute, and for bats such as whiskered bat to commute and forage along.

Zone G – purple: Communal greens. These areas comprise various open green spaces including the cricket ground and playing field (G1) for recreational purposes, which adjoin and include some mature trees along boundary lines, and two much smaller triangular public spaces (G2) to the south and southeast of the Square, which are connected by a narrow earthen footpath enclosed by tall hedges to either side. The character zone is of **low historic interest**, with the triangular spaces first shown on the 1912-14 OS map.

This zone predominantly consists of areas of amenity grassland, with trees and hedges to the borders. The grassland comprises typical managed grassland species such as perennial rye grass, red fescue, cockfoot, and Yorkshire fog. Other plant species within the grassland are daisy, creeping buttercup, self-heal, white clover, and dandelions. Trees present to the borders of the grassland include ash, poplar, copper beech, black locust, crab apple, elm, willow, and black oak; the hedges to the borders are predominantly hawthorn. Due to the heavily managed nature of the grassland, it offers little interest to pollinators, but may provide some foraging opportunities to hedgehogs. The trees and hedgerows offer more potential, with some fruiting and flowering trees providing foraging and pollination interest to a range of species.



Zone G: *Top*: Playing field to the left with a line of mature trees along the path next to the adjoining cricket ground on the right, behind a tall metal fence. *Middle*: Green space to the southeast of the Square, with footpath to the left which leads to a smaller triangular green space, looking west. *Bottom*: Smaller green space to the south of the Square, also looking west (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

Zone H – pink: School. This is one area which comprises the premises of the St George’s Church of England Primary School as well as the Women’s Institute and scouts’ building. All three are of very different architectural styles, with the large modern school complex including curved elements, the institute being a timber-boarded ‘hut’, and the scouts’ building having a functional appearance. None of the buildings fit together, and it’s not really a proper character zone either but an assemblage of structures which do not belong into any of the adjoining zones. This zone is of **low historic interest**, with the dwarf boundary wall possibly being the sole surviving remnant of the 1911 school. The ecological value of this area is similar to Zone G (communal greens).



Zone H: *Top*: St George's Church of England Primary School with historical dwarf boundary wall in the foreground, which would have been topped by vertical metal railings. *Bottom*: Women's Institute and scouts' building (right) (Photos © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

3.6 Value Attributed by the Local Community and Other Stakeholders

Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

Middleton St George is a pleasant village and desirable place to live, hence its continuing growth in housing. It is well connected by road (A67), train (Dinsdale Station) and plane (Teesside Airport to the east outside the assessment area) and has good access into the countryside and nature reserves via public foot, bridle and cycle paths (see section 3.2). The assessment area includes various amenities for residents and visitors, such as a number of shops, a post office, a pub, a restaurant, cafes, takeaways, a pharmacy, a veterinary practice, a primary school and other services, as well as leisure facilities including a playing field, cricket ground/club, water park (model boat and fishing clubs), history group, women's institute and scouts.

Middleton St George is a well-to-do place with houses prices being at an average of £229,390 over the last year (Darlington, by comparison, was £166,197). The majority of sales were detached properties selling for an average price of £317,080 (by comparison, the majority of sales in Darlington were semi-detached houses at an average price of £171,170¹⁴⁸; in County Durham, the majority of sales during the last year were terraced properties at an average price of £105,790¹⁴⁹). However, sold

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/darlington.html>

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices-in-County-Durham.html>

prices in Middleton St. George over the last year were 15% down on the previous year and 3% down on the 2021 peak of £235,842¹⁵⁰.

The communal value of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) as a whole, including the section going through the assessment area, is of considerable significance to the heritage sector locally, nationally and internationally, and there is a growing interest in early railway infrastructure from the wider public. Those who appreciate or actively promote it are in effect an international community, including the following local groups¹⁵¹:

- Darlington Model Railway Club
- Darlington Railway Museum Trust
- Darlington Railway Preservation Society
- Friends of Darlington Railway Centre
- Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway
- the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust
- the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Society
- the North Eastern Railway Association

In 2017, Historic England accepted the whole 26-mile route of the former S&DR as a **Heritage Action Zone (HAZ)**, following an application by the Stockton & Darlington Railway Heritage Board which included Darlington Borough Council. The overall HAZ initiative is working with local people and partners to breathe new life into places that are rich in heritage, to unlock their potential and make them more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors. Launched in May 2018 and running for five years, the S&DR HAZ aimed to better manage, preserve and utilise heritage assets with a view to stimulating economic growth through various projects in the build-up to the railway's bicentenary in 2025¹⁵². Programme outputs which directly affect Middleton St George include improvement works to the level crossing and the provision of information and interpretation (Projects 6 and 13 of the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub, see below).

In early 2020, the Parish Council and Friends of the S&DR responded to local interest by establishing the **Middleton St George S&DR Heritage Steering Group** with the mission of delivering the **Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub**. This involves a number of projects to enhance the historic station site. The following tasks have commenced or already been completed¹⁵³:

- Project 1 'Waiting Shed': Works on the consolidation of the remains of the [C] Waiting Shed has started (July 2024), having received a £100 contribution from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Members of the Friends of the S&DR carried out the labouring, with one of them doing the brick laying and supplying the lime mortar. Later, an information board and seating will be provided, and the area will be suitably landscaped and made wheelchair accessible.
- Project 2a 'Railway Fence': The current owner of the former [F] Station Master's House replaced some 25 metres of the previous domestic

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/middleton-st-george.html>

¹⁵¹ Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2013, pages 33-34

¹⁵² Knight 2019, page 4

¹⁵³ Chisholm (2022)

boundary fence in the traditional North Eastern Railway station style, but with diagonal palings facing the former track.

- Project 2b 'Station Name Board': Friends of the S&DR member Peter Bainbridge crafted a traditionally designed Fighting Cocks board in timber and fixed it onto the new fence in April 2024.
- Project 4 'Railway Mural': The current owner of the former [F] Station Master's House kindly permitted the painting of a mural on their garage facing the former track. Artist Lewis Hobson of Durham Spray Paints depicted the old station with a train. The costs of the spray paints (£1,500) received a 50% grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, whilst the other half was paid for by the Friends of the S&DR. At the end of April 2024, local school children attended the painting of the mural. They were also allowed to sow wildflowers on a prepared patch of soil between the garage and Sadberge Road. The official unveiling of the mural was on 4 May 2024, alongside activities for children.
- Project 8 'Loading Dock Wall': Vegetation and spoil build up have been removed by volunteers to bring the former [B] DRDC Loading Dock better into view and allow the wall to be inspected and repaired as necessary.
- Project 16 'Conservation Volunteers': A team of volunteers has been established by the Friends of the S&DR who have cleared vegetation and recovered bricks and other re-useable materials. They meet on Friday every two weeks to carry out maintenance works at Fighting Cocks.
- Project 17 'Conservation Area': An investigation to create a new conservation area has been carried out by conservation officers at Darlington Borough Council and Durham County Council.



New Fighting Cocks name board fixed to the left of the mural on the recently installed fence of a railway station design. The mural has since been slightly amended with the addition of a carriage. Also note the colourful flower border created by the owner of the former [F] Station Master's House. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

In April 2020, the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn was listed as an Asset of Community Value with Darlington Borough Council, giving the local community an increased chance to buy the asset when it came up for sale, which in this case however has not

happened. The former inn was removed from the list in November 2021 following relevant disposal (transfer of the freehold)¹⁵⁴.

In 2021, the **Beamish Museum**, an open-air museum to the south of Newcastle-upon-Tyne which brings the history of the Northeast of England to life, recreated Middleton St George's 1950s fish and chip shop which used to adjoin the [M] Killinghall Arms to the left. The building was constructed within the museum's 1950s Town as part of the Remaking Beamish project, grant aided by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, forming the end property of a row with three other building replicas from elsewhere in the Northeast. The community of Middleton St George had been involved during the creation of the project¹⁵⁵. Today, the premises of the original fish and chip shop are occupied by a takeaway.

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/communities/assets-of-community-value>

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.beamish.org.uk/news/chip-in-with-beamishs-1950s-town-at-middleton-st-george-event/>

4.0 Condition, Threats and Opportunities

This chapter is intended to inform future management plans if a conservation area was to be designated. These would be subject to public consultation.

4.1 Condition and Current Issues

This section should be read in conjunction with the historical development of the assessment area (see section 3.3), spatial analysis (see section 3.4), character analysis (see section 3.5) and value attributed by the community and other stakeholders (see section 3.6), which provide further information or examples on most of the issues raised below.

The assessment area is currently in good condition in terms of its maintenance status. There are however a number of issues which have degraded the historical environment:

Until quite recently, the western parish boundary coincided with the line of the former **Roman Road**, following field boundaries and what is now Sadberge Road. Due to the expansion of the village, the ancient parish line was abandoned, and a new line drawn further west in 2016. Moreover, the new housing estate off Burnhope Lane, which is currently under construction, cuts across the line of Cade's Road, diluting its readability.

In general, **modern housing schemes** continue to swallow up the historical village. Their design and layouts do not harmonise with the higher-density old houses (terraces) which face onto the main roads. The new buildings employ a generic architectural language which is not location-specific to Middleton St George and are loosely arranged around long, winding cul-de-sacs with multiple short cul-de-sacs branching off. Such layouts can lead to problems like emergency accessibility and crime, the latter especially presenting opportunities where escape routes exist, such as footpaths leading from the estates¹⁵⁶. Moreover, the new housing is eating away the surrounding countryside to the west which used to form the setting of the historic village until very recently. Public footpaths which led through agricultural fields now go through housing estates, taking away from their recreational value. Middleton St George is increasingly being developed into a suburban sprawl, which is not how the place set out to be (linear village). This is not a criticism that new housing is provided but *how* it has been done.

Excessive vegetation growth inside the green corridor is an issue, and it seems that mainly the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway carry out regular trimming and weeding works at the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub. A conversation with them explained that it appears impossible for the volunteers to keep on top of things due to the lack of sufficient manpower, larger-scale equipment and seasonal restrictions to carry out works. The Friends own a small patch of land to the north of the former inn, whilst the remainder of the corridor is owned by Darlington Borough Council.

Traditional buildings in Middleton St George have suffered the following harmful interventions, with those in bold having had the most detrimental impact:

¹⁵⁶ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004) pages 20 & 88

- loss of historical features
- lowering of original chimney stacks
- introduction of new roofing materials (including on existing canopies), (non-conservation) roof lights and solar PV panels on road-facing elevations
- plastic rainwater goods, especially those in a light colour
- **change of original opening pattern** including introduction of Juliet balcony
- **change of original fenestration layout**
- **non-traditional window and door replacements**, often using off-the-shelf uPVC products
- **use of paint/render, including poorly chosen colours, on facing brick- or stonework**
- **use of incompatible building materials on external solid walling**, such as cement pointing and modern renders and paints, which have a high risk of causing long-term damp problems resulting in cold, unhealthy interiors
- modern canopy and porch designs
- satellite dishes and aerials on road-facing elevations
- unsympathetic rear extensions including flat roofs



Extensions to rear of traditional terrace with flat roofs, modern renders and inappropriate window proportions, viewed from public footpath. (Photo © Gaby Rose, May 2024)

The **public realm** of the village includes the following detractors which have a negative impact on the historical environment:

- loss of historical front gardens
- change of original boundary treatments with modern designs
- wooden telegraph poles and overhead wires
- galvanised streetlights and traffic/bus stop-sign posts
- blistered and tarmacked pavements, the latter sometimes poorly patched
- a utilitarian bus shelter (although painted to blend in) squeezed onto a narrow stretch of pavement in front of the former methodist chapel
- plastic bollards and advertisement on the forecourt of the former inn
- untidy back lanes



Back lane behind one of the traditional terraces with dumped rubbish. Saplings and other vegetation taking hold on the last remnant of the former iron works site on the right. (Photo © Gaby Rose, March 2024)

4.2 Threats and Potential Future Issues

One of the main threats to the historical village is its **continued development**. Landowners may be enticed to sell their agricultural fields, especially if it yields a better profit than farming them. In particular, the countryside to the west of the settlement and the gap between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row should be (have been) retained as open fields due to their strong contribution as setting and readability of the historical planform. There are less sensitive areas which could be developed instead. Moreover, the continued supply of housing schemes incorporating generic building designs along cul-de-sacs does not instil a sense of place and in fact dilutes historical areas of local distinctiveness. There needs to be a masterplan of how the village can be sustainably expanded so that it can fully support its residents whilst retaining or enhancing its sense of place. Further expansion will also necessitate the provision of an adequate road network (not dead ends) and appropriate services within the village.

Old buildings and other structures (e.g. boundary walling) remain at risk of being lost or further disfigured, possibly to make existing plots more economically viable. Salespeople and building contractors often lead property owners to believe that elements of their old buildings need a modern makeover, for example, to make them more energy efficient, like by replacing traditional windows and doors with uPVC substitutes or applying modern renders to solid walling. However, there are major opportunities for improving the thermal performance of windows by employing relatively simple methods (e.g. heavy curtains, blinds and shutters) or by installing secondary glazing¹⁵⁷. Moreover, using timber windows and doors has the advantage of (re-) using more eco-friendly and sustainable resources. In the long-term, the costs of maintaining them will often be cheaper because they can be repaired – contrary to uPVC products which normally need replacing as a whole – thus reducing the amount of building materials, energy and waste. Property owners are also often unaware that impermeable materials such as modern renders, cement pointing and silicon paints are incompatible with traditional construction, which relies on moisture movement. Consequently, such applications are likely to trap water in solid walling and create

¹⁵⁷ Wood, Bordass, Baker 2009, page vii

long-term damp problems, resulting in cold and mouldy indoor environments. The negative visual impact such interventions have can be significant, as already evident throughout the historical village. Removing, disfiguring or concealing traditional fabric and features from an old property can also reduce its market value.

4.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

Structures of interest are assigned their **[LETTER]** given on the map at the beginning of this document.

It is hoped that this appraisal document will help residents, local businesses, investors, planners and highways/utility authorities understand how heritage significance is embodied within the assessment area and provide them with the knowledge to prevent future harm and enable positive change.

The Middleton St George **Neighbourhood Plan** has identified a number of community actions to improve the parish, which could be delivered by the parish council in conjunction with other local organisations¹⁵⁸:

1. Create wildflower areas, e.g. along Sadberge Road
2. Support the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub
3. Install interpretation boards at the water park and in the green corridor
4. Better control dog fouling
5. Remove overhead cables
6. Identify community wildlife projects
7. Seek a net-zero carbon future for the parish
8. Improve the current play area
9. Improve the water park, e.g. lighting, trails
10. Provide more facilities for young people
11. Provide more facilities for older people
12. Improve the multi-use games area
13. Create a community garden
14. Tackle anti-social behaviour more efficiently
15. Work with Darlington Borough Council to improve highway safety and traffic management
16. Provide an integrated approach to bus service provision
17. Work with Darlington Borough Council to deliver path improvements
18. Make improvements to the unadopted road leading to the cricket club
19. Ensure that development provides appropriate path and cycleway links

In addition to the neighbourhood plan, a more detailed **masterplan including location-specific design guide** could be produced, providing clear guidelines for sensitive development within the assessment area. It should include:

- Existing and proposed road and other transport networks incl. carparks
- Existing and proposed building orientations, types, massings and designs
- Existing and proposed green/communal spaces
- Zones of different use types, how they interact (e.g. residential – commercial – leisure) and how they are served by the transport system

¹⁵⁸ Middleton St George Parish Council 2022, pages 32-34 (annex 2)

- Guidelines for improvements to existing (traditional) buildings and the public realm

Such a detailed masterplan could be adopted as a supplementary planning document and provide a helpful tool for applicants, agents and planners, as well as homeowners, businesses and highways/utility authorities who wish to carry out works under permitted development rights. Whilst it would not create instant change it would enable smaller steps in the right direction at a time and therefore be a beneficial long-term tool.

Outstanding works of the **Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub** (see section 3.6) include¹⁵⁹:

- Project 3 'Track Installation': Old concrete railway sleepers to be installed in front of the former [B] DRDC Loading Dock.
- Project 5 'Old Mill Wall': Repair and partially reinstate the remains of the [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor walling.
- Project 6 'Level Crossing': Replace existing gates with a more railway-crossing themed design. Possibly create traffic calming features at all former level crossings along the line, with setts replicating early sleeper blocks or with metal rails inserted into the carriageway.
- Project 7 'Coal Depot': Commission a survey of trees and other vegetation, assess its ecological importance and establish a management regime. Carry out an archaeological investigation, with visible remains secured and the area properly landscaped, with interpretation. Vegetation to be removed from the brick and stone retaining boundary wall of the former [D] Coal Depot and its north-western end made good. The proposed picnic table area could become a public garden.
- Project 9 'Crane Base': Some of the brickwork of the [A] Crane Base requires repointing. Its surroundings could be cleared of vegetation and a feature created with the other remains nearby.
- Project 10 'Highway Artwork': Install a railway-heritage-themed village sign on Sadberge Road.
- Project 11 'New Hedge': Housing developers are required to plant 30m hedge behind the [C] Waiting Shed following completion of project 1.
- Project 12 'Fighting Cocks Inn': The developer of the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn is required to affix an information panel to the building describing its origin and heritage importance.
- Project 13 'Information and Interpretation': Details to be announced later.
- Project 14 'Car and Cycle Parking': Parking bays or a lay-by for visitors could be created on Sadberge Road. Cycle parking rails or stands should be provided in a secure location.
- Project 15 'Publicity': Updates on the Heritage Hub will be circulated. Guided tours and explanations of the projects will again be given in order to encourage local people and business to become involved.

If a conservation area was designated for Middleton St George, it would be worthwhile to impose an **article 4 direction** (see section 2.3) on the area, to restrict permitted development rights, meaning that planning permission would be required to carry out certain works on existing buildings and other structures. This would control the design and quality of works and therefore help prevent further harmful

¹⁵⁹ Chisholm (2022)

alterations and gradually introduce positive change. Such direction should be applied to dwellinghouses as well as other use types in the conservation area.

If a conservation area was designated for Middleton St George, it may also be **easier to obtain grant money** for improvement works and on-site interpretation.

Besides undergrounding overhead wires, there are various opportunities to **improve the public realm**, such as by providing heritage-style streetlights and painting galvanised poles in matt black.

Existing **traditional buildings** that have been disfigured or otherwise altered can, for example, be improved by reinstating original opening patterns, appropriate fenestration and removal of modern render. Likewise, traditional front garden boundaries could be reinstated where they have been lost.

A **digital heritage trail** could be created on Darlington Borough Council's existing *Darlington Town Centre Trails* app.

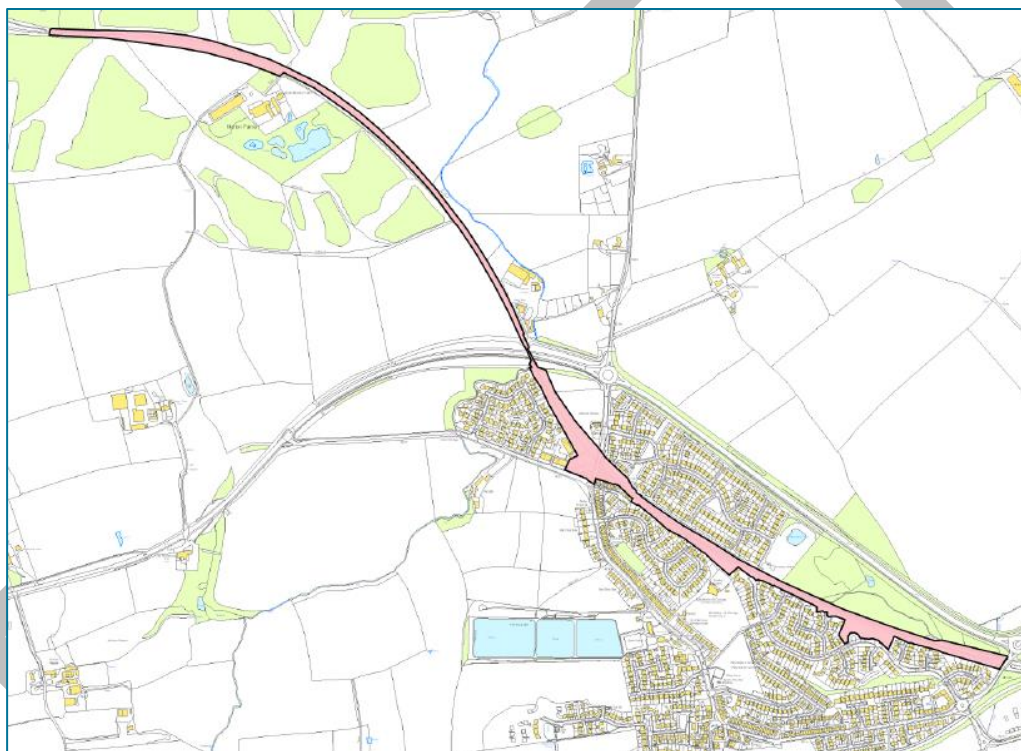
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5.0 Proposed Boundaries

This chapter offers suggestions for how boundary lines for a Middleton St George Conservation Area could be drawn, based on the findings of significance within the assessment area (see chapter 3.0). Structures of interest are assigned their [LETTER] given on the map at the beginning of this document.

Members of the public and other stakeholders are invited to submit their comments on the proposed boundary changes during the public consultation period (see section 1.2). Information on other areas of potential significance/relevance that have not been mentioned in this appraisal would also be welcome.

In July 2022, Durham County Council (DCC) came up with a proposed conservation area boundary for Middleton St George. Whilst their suggestion has been fully included in the current proposal, the author believes there is justification to incorporate additional areas.



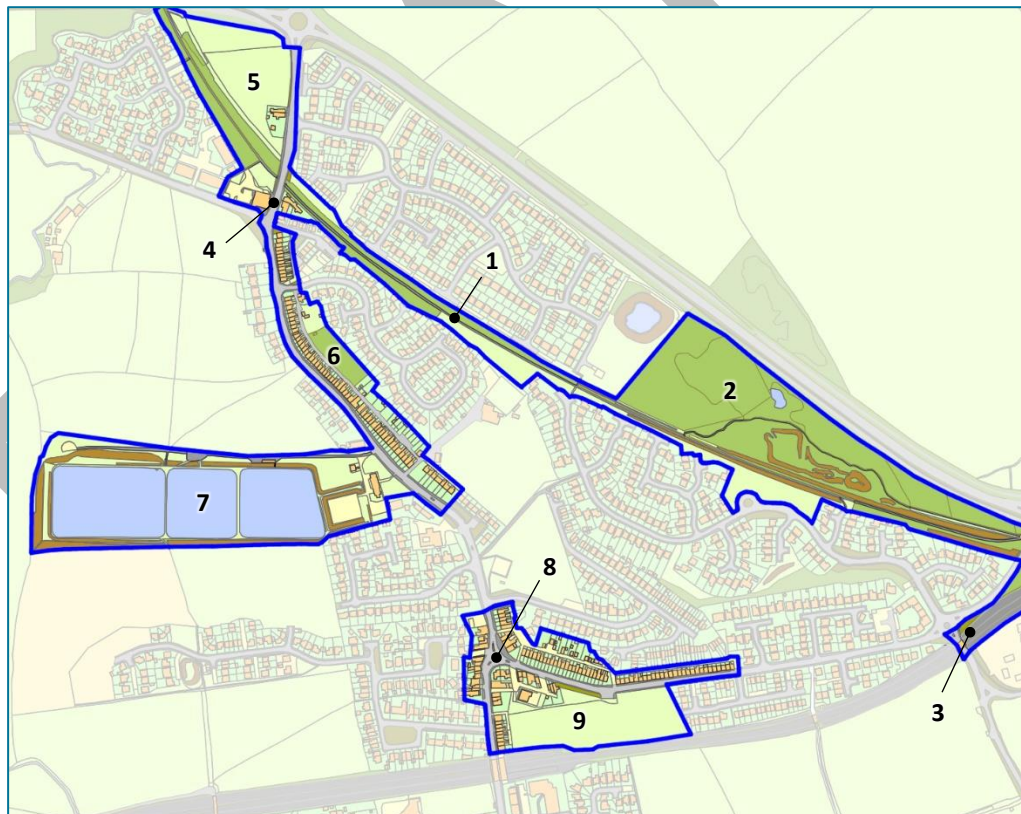
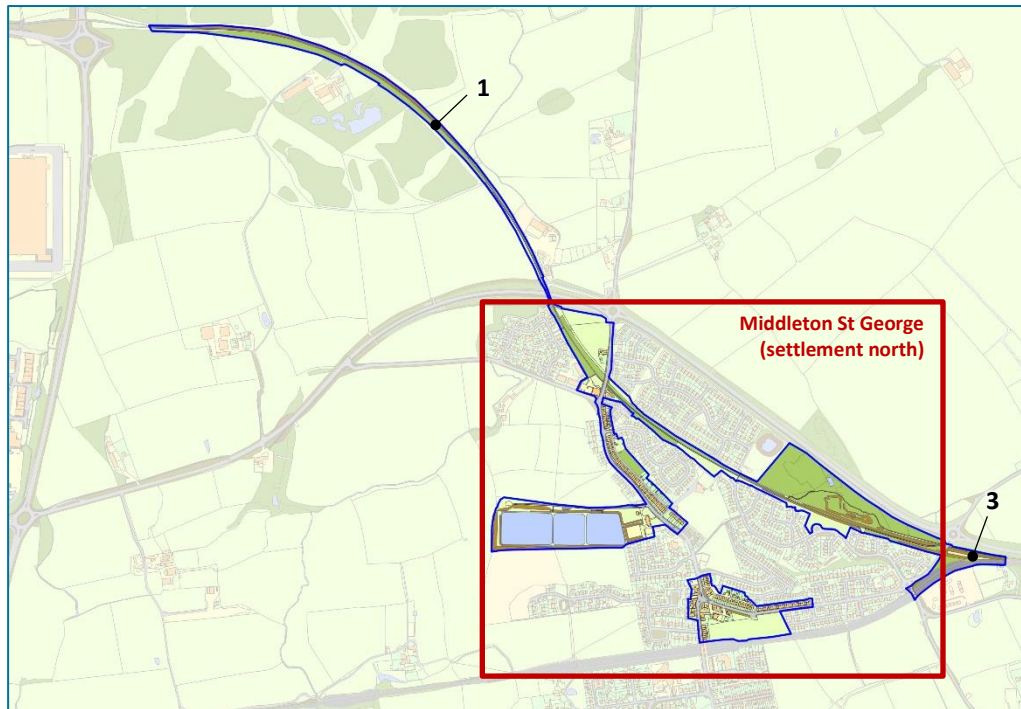
Durham County Council's proposal of 2022 for creating a new conservation area. **This is no longer proposed.** (Map © Crown Copyright and database right 2022. Ordnance Survey LA 100049055. Landmark Information Group Copyright © 2022)

In order to qualify for conservation area designation, any proposed areas need to meet the following tests¹⁶⁰:

- a) The proposed areas have sufficient architectural or historic interest to be considered 'special'.
- b) That special interest is experienced through the areas' character or appearance.
- c) It is desirable for that character or appearance to be preserved or enhanced, also considering any problems that designation may help solve.

¹⁶⁰ Historic England 2019, page 5

The map below shows proposed boundary lines for a possible Middleton St George Conservation Area designation; these mainly concern character zones B (Green corridor), D (Historical village), E (Water park) and F (Allotments) (see section 3.5).



Proposed conservation area boundaries in royal blue. *Top:* Assessment area. *Bottom:* Middleton St George settlement north (Map © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 0100023728. Licence Number 100023728 2024. Graphics by Gaby Rose)

Justification for the proposed boundary lines is as follows (character zones (see section 3.5) in brackets):

1 – Green corridor (B1 & B2). This matches the boundary line that has been suggested by DCC (see above). The area has been identified as being of high historic interest, and it is also of high public (communal) value. It comprises part of the former track bed of the original line of the Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR), and later the Fighting Cocks branch, which is still clearly readable as such, including its original cuttings/embankments and drainage ditches. Surviving structures of interest include the [A] Crane Base and Platform, [B] DRDC Loading Dock, [C] Waiting Shed (remains), [D] Coal Depot (remains), [G] Enclosed Railway Corridor (remains) and other small-scale industrial fragments.

2 – The Whinnies (B3). This area has not been proposed by DCC, but the author believes that its links to the former [N] Middleton Iron Works, which used to be of such high importance to the historical development of the village, justify designation. The topography created by the underlying spoil heaps, which originated from the former iron works site, give such a distinct character to the woodland, and there is also surviving evidence of a bridge which span to the former iron works site. Moreover, the local nature reserve is of high public value.

3 – Oaktree Junction (B4, amended). This area has not been proposed by DCC, but the author believes that it is important to include the former link with the original line of the S&DR and the Darlington & Saltburn branch, to signify that there used to be a junction in this location. It is understood that the Fighting Cocks branch was later served from Oaktree Junction, once the western railway connection had been severed. The proposed area also includes the old [P] Metal Railway Bridge over the old road to Yarm which is a focal point from the public highway.

4 – Fighting Cocks (part of D1). This matches the boundary line that has been suggested by DCC. The area has been identified as being of high historic interest, containing the former [E] Fighting Cocks Inn, which is not only the oldest surviving building in the village but also a long-distance focal point, and the former [F] Station Master's House and Station Building. This area is directly linked to the arrival of the S&DR at the historic Fighting Cocks road junction where, consequently, the development of this settlement originated.

5 – Roman Road & northern allotments (F1 & D4, amended). This area has not been proposed by DCC, but the author thinks that there is a case for including this stretch of Cade's Road with the more unusually designed nineteenth-century semi-detached building making a visual contribution along the public highway. The historical allotments are quite a distinct site which is in the immediate setting of the former track bed of the S&DR.

6 – Station Road (D1, amended). This area has not been proposed by DCC, but the author thinks there is a case for including the early linear development along the main road. Whilst many of the houses have been changed detrimentally, it is hoped that conservation area designation would, over time, perhaps reverse some of the negative alterations. Surviving structures of interest include the former [H] Undenominational Mission Hall, the former [I] Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, a focal point along the main road, and the former [J] Cocks Memorial Homes, which are of high local significance due to their architectural style and connotation with the former manor, which can be traced back to medieval times. The short stone-built terrace at the northern end seems unusual for Middleton St George and is worthy of inclusion.

7 – Water park (E). This area has not been proposed by DCC, but the author believes that the former reservoirs justify inclusion due to them being part of the early development of the village. The smallest basin dates back to 1851 when the settlement as such had not even started to take shape. The water park and nature trail are also of high public value and have a distinct character.

8 – The Square & Yarm Road (D2). This area has not been proposed by DCC, but the author thinks there is a case for including the early development around the Square that is the direct result of the establishment of the [N] Middleton Iron Works, which used to be of such high importance to the village. A stretch of distinct boundary walling still survives. Other structures of interest include the former [M] Killinghall Arms, a focal point from the public highway, the [K] Havelock Arms Hotel and the former [L] Co-op and Stable.

9 – Southern allotments & Greenspaces (F2 & G2). This area has not been proposed by DCC, but the author thinks that there is a case for including the two triangular greenspaces, which are accessible to the public, and the southern allotments which are also in the setting of area 8. It is hoped that through conservation area designation the greenspaces would be protected from future development.

6.0 Adopted Boundary

This section will be provided following the public consultation period.

Evaluation of feedback from public consultation

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