



City of Durham Parish Council

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Date of Summons: 5th March 2025

SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee: Councillors V Ashfield, L Brown, N Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen and C Lattin.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Environment Committee meeting** to be held **via Zoom at 13:00pm on Tuesday 11th March 2025** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87922850430>

Meeting ID: 879 2285 0430

Members of the public and press are also cordially invited to attend. Members of the public may address Council, Committee or Sub-Committee meetings for up to three minutes, with the agreement of the Chair of the meeting, provided that the statement is related to an item on the agenda. The speaker should approach the Clerk before the meeting commences to request to speak during the meeting.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, Civility and Respect and Human Rights plus Social, Economic and Environmental matters.

Yours faithfully,

A. Shanley

Mr Adam Shanley
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council

AGENDA

- 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS.**
- 3. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11th FEBRUARY 2025**
- 4. TO RECEIVE ANY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS**
- 5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT**
- 6. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:**

6a. To decide:

- I)** Discussion document on reducing air pollution in Church Street and surrounding streets - suggestions for interventions. Report included.
- II)** To approve a draft letter to DCC and other Local Authorities in the LA7 in relation to the proposed new Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (TVERF) in Teesside.

6b. To complete:

- I) Update re: fundraising efforts to fund new green roof bus shelters
- II) Update on the proposal to reinstall the boundary stone between the City of Durham and Shincliffe parishes
- III) Update on the proposed new blue plaque commemorating former Crossgate Councillor Sam Green.
- IV) Update on the production of a Community Emergency Plan.

6c. To note:

- I) To consider the Committee's budget (following Full Council agreement in January) for financial year 2025/26.
 - II) Meeting regarding the Durham City Green Corridor project being delivered by DCC and the National Trust.
 - III) Update on the Wear Rivers Trust/ Durham City Riverscape Community projects.
- 7. AOB** (please note for information only and not for formal decisions).
 - 8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Tuesday 8th April 2025 at 1pm
Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 1pm

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 11th February 2025 at 13:00pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors C Lattin (Chair), V Ashfield, L Brown, D Freeman and R Friederichsen.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley, Councillor J Ashby and Mr Roger Cornwell (member of the public).

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and **accepted** from Councillor N Brown.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14th JANUARY 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. TO RECEIVE ANY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS

Mr Roger Cornwell advised that he was attending the meeting to hear and contribute to the discussions on Items 6a. I) and 6b. III).

Councillor J Ashby advised that he was attending the meeting to contribute to the discussion on item 6b. II)

5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Committee warmly welcomed the excellent report and work by the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Wardens over January. The Committee particularly thanked the Wardens for their proactive work in addressing significant waste issues around the City.

6. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

6a. To decide:

III) Request to take over responsibility for a claimed public byway between the end of John Street to the end of Holly Street

Mr Roger Cornwell explained that this byway has existed for around 150 years, but there was an attempt to build over it which was successfully opposed by a local resident. Gladwin (the local resident) had compiled documentation and witness statements proving the historical use of the byway, and she had officially registered the claim with the county council.

Roger advised that he is currently the claimant, but he would like the Parish Council to take over responsibility for maintaining the claim. Members expressed their general support in taking this on, primarily as this would help preserve an important local footpath.

There was some discussion about the potential maintenance and liability implications, but overall the Committee agreed that the Parish Council should formally take over the claim from Roger subject to further advice from the Footpaths Officer at DCC and an agreement to do so by Full Council. The Committee agreed to work with Roger to get the necessary paperwork transferred, and then pursue getting the byway officially recognised and protected.

IV) Proposal to support the Wear Rivers Trust as part of the Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) project

The Chair advised that the Parish Council has agreed a fund of £5,000 for this current financial year (2024/25) towards a project aimed at improving the River Wear. This has been a significant priority for the Council's Environment Committee since as early as 2022 and this has usually taken the form of both funding and collaboration with the Wear Rivers Trust as part of its Durham Peninsula Invasive Non-native Species (DP INNS) project.

The Chair highlighted that the Durham Peninsula Invasive Non-native Species (DP INNS) project is a long-term project aimed at connecting the dots across the project area to achieve a joined-up approach to managing, and raising awareness of, invasive non-native species (INNS), particularly Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed, and Giant Hogweed.

The Chair also advised that it is looking very promising that WRT will be able to tackle INNS in DCC woodland this year, an issue which has limited progress over the past few years. WRT have requested permission to remove invasive species and litter pick in Pelaw Woods, Aykley Woods and Flass Vale between March and October 2025.

Members considered the project proposal by the Wear River Trust for funding towards volunteer events as well as engagement with schools. Whilst the engagement with schools was welcomed and this has been funded each year since 2022, the Committee felt that the priority for the work ought to be geared towards volunteer recruitment and activities.

The Committee agreed to delegate responsibility to the Chair of the Environment Committee to engage with WRT more closely on this.

Additionally, the Chair reminded Members that the Committee has also supported the work of the recently established Durham City Riverscape Community (DCRC) Group.

The group, made up of 213 members, is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the beauty of the River Wear through Durham City. Their skills help keep the riverscape looking its very best while functioning for the enjoyment of all, residents, visitors and wildlife alike. As well as the much-publicised monthly litter picking events hosted by this group, the group shares thoughts, ideas, vision and creative solutions to the issues facing the City's primary and outstanding natural asset.

The Environment Committee **agreed** to the following funding proposal by the DCRC:

Item	Justification	Cost	Potential supplier
Insurance for the activity	Without it we cannot continue as an organised group	£112	Already agreed by Adam and Graham
Long reach poles & hooks (3 off)	To be used to retrieve litter currently inaccessible due to terrain	Pole £74 ea. Hook £20 ea. Total £282	Docazoo (on Amazon) PC ay have preferred suppliers
Printed logo on Hi Viz Vests we currently have or retrospective printing with Riverscape Logo	To give the group a sense of identity and bring attention to the activity and its importance to the community. In an effort to engendering as more responsible attitude to littering along the river and in the city.	£3.5 each for 50 in total. Total £175	Hi Viz (Potentially can be sourced locally)
Tear drop flag to publicise activity 2 off	As above the plan would be to site at each end of the stretch, we are picking	Base £25 Flag £125 X 2 Total £300	Vista Print Potentially can be sourced locally
Supply of disposable rubber gloves	Provide protection from infection from contaminated litter	£11 per pack of 50. One year's supply say £132	Screw fix
Sustainable dispensers for antibacterial gel.	Currently Antibacterial (Alcohol) gel is available in the club boat house purchased by	£15.71 ea Handy Dryers	BLT Direct

	members in disposable dispensers a more environmentally sound and cost-effective alternative is durable dispensers filled from a bulk container	Refillable Sanitiser Pump Bottle x 3 =£47.13 Gel in packs of 5l £22 ish each x 3 for 1 year = £66	PC probably has preferred supplier but widely available
		Total: £1,067	

V) To consider a joint letter, with participant schools of the OASES Breath Clean Air project, to DCC on clean air in Durham City.

Councillor R Friederichsen presented the draft proposed to send alongside all participant schools in the OASES project for co-signing and eventual sending to DCC colleagues. The Committee reviewed the draft letter and **agreed** it was a good starting point.

However, the discussion then shifted to the broader context around clean air initiatives in the city, including the proposed 20mph zone on Church Street. Councillor V Ashfield raised concerns about ensuring consistency across different clean air and traffic calming measures being considered.

The Committee decided it would be best to hold off finalising this letter until after the Parish Council's Finance Committee meeting on Friday, where the Church Street proposals would be discussed. Councillor V Ashfield offered to take another look at the letter draft and incorporate any relevant points from the Finance Committee discussion.

The Committee **agreed** that Councillors R Friederichsen and V Ashfield should work together to get the letter completed and shared with the schools in the next month or so.

VI) To consider what action the Parish Council might take in relation to the proposed new Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (TVERF) in Teesside.

Councillor V Ashfield raised concerns about the TVERF project, noting that there are health and environmental risks, as well as doubts about its ability to reduce non-recyclable waste going to landfill as intended. Councillor V Ashfield suggested the Parish Council should consider taking a position on this and raising it with the County Council.

Councillor D Freeman expressed support for the TVERF project, arguing that incineration is the best available option for dealing with waste that cannot be recycled, and that landfill is an unacceptable alternative.

The Committee discussed whether it was within their remit to take a stance on this county-level issue. Councillor V Ashfield suggested that whilst it may not be their direct responsibility, the Parish Council could still provide feedback to the County Council, especially if local groups like Climate Action Durham are actively engaged on the topic.

The committee **agreed** that Councillor V Ashfield should prepare a report outlining the key issues and arguments around the TVERF project, which could then be presented to the Full Parish Council meeting in February for discussion and a potential position to be taken. This would allow the Parish Council to provide input to the County Council's ongoing considerations around the facility.

6b. To complete:

I) Report from Claire Murray-Kemp on an update re: fundraising efforts to fund new green roof bus shelters

The Clerk provided an update on the status of the funding for the new green roof bus shelters. The Clerk noted that there is around £65,000 remaining in the relevant Section 106 funds, which could potentially cover the cost of 3 bus shelters.

The Committee discussed prioritising the locations for the new bus shelters and agreed that the Committee may need to potentially scale back the original plan for 4 shelters down to 3, given the funding constraints.

The Clerk also highlighted some technical concerns from the highways department about the weight and carbon capture effectiveness of the green roof shelters, which he has relayed to the project lead Claire. The Committee felt these issues could likely be addressed.

The Committee was very supportive of moving forward with the bus shelter project using the available Section 106 funds. The Committee **agreed** that the Clerk should work with Claire to finalise the application and get it submitted to the County Council as soon as possible, with the goal of having this approved in the coming weeks.

II) Update on the proposal to reinstall the boundary stone between the City of Durham and Shincliffe parishes

Councillor J Ashby provided an update on the progress made by the Shincliffe Local History Society in taking ownership of this project.

Councillor J Ashby set out that the key points with this project were:

- The history society has written a detailed plan of action, which includes:
- The history society is contacting the County Council as the highway authority to get guidance on the appropriate location for reinstalling the boundary stone.

- Ensuring the County Council's design and conservation team is aware of the project
- Approaching both the Shincliffe Parish Council and the City of Durham Parish Council about potential funding.

The Clerk advised that he has also written to the Shincliffe Parish Council to make them aware of the project and get it on their agenda.

The Committee was very supportive of this project and **agreed** the Parish Council should be prepared to provide funding, as it is an important historical marker within the parish.

The next steps are for the Shincliffe Local History Society to continue their outreach to the relevant authorities, and then come back to the City of Durham Parish Council with any funding requests. The Committee expressed their appreciation to Councillor J Ashby for his work in driving this initiative forward.

III) Update on the proposed new blue plaque commemorating former Crossgate Councillor Sam Green

The Clerk provided an update on this proposal, noting that the Committee's previous suggestions for high-profile individuals to unveil the plaque have not panned out, as the proposed guests are not available this year.

The Committee discussed alternative options, with Roger suggesting musician Tom Robinson as a potential VIP guest, given his local connections. John Ashby also offered to reach out to Tom Robinson's brother Matthew, who was in John's school form.

The Committee agreed that having Tom Robinson or another suitably prominent LGBTQ+ figure unveil the plaque would be ideal, as it would help recognise the national significance of Sam Green's work.

They also supported the idea of having Malcolm, the former CHE chair, or Councillor E Ashby involved in the unveiling.

The Committee expressed its thanks to the Clerk for this progress on this project and asked the Clerk to continue pursuing options for a high-profile unveiling event.

IV) Update on the production of a Community Emergency Plan.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for his work in producing a Plan which has now been presented to DCC's Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) for them to review this and finally test this.

The Chair thanked residents involved in this significant work and advised that she would keep the Committee updated on how this plan progresses.

6c. To note:

I) To consider the Durham City Green Corridor project being delivered by DCC and the National Trust.

The Clerk advised that he was liaising with colleagues at the National Trust to arrange a presentation regarding their proposed Durham City Green Corridor project.

II) Ongoing efforts to resolve issues in relation to the new parking permit scheme by DCC.

A number of Members raised concerns about the new parking permit scheme introduced by DCC. The Clerk advised that he had also received similar complaints and had been liaising with DCC officers on a solution and had managed to arrange for the Customer Access Point at Clayport library to be a designated area where residents could go if they needed support with the online system.

7. AOB (please note for information only and not for formal decisions).

None received.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 11th March 2025 at 1pm

Tuesday 8th April 2025 at 1pm

Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 1pm

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all participants for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(11th March 2025)**

ITEM 6A: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON REDUCING AIR POLLUTION IN CHURCH STREET AND SURROUNDING STREETS

Interventions for reducing air pollution in Elvet. Prepared by Elvet Clean Air, a working group of Elvet Residents' Association

This document sets out four potential interventions which would improve air quality in the Elvet triangle area of Durham city. They are not mutually exclusive and could be used in combination. They have been devised by local residents after extensive consultation, and discussed and approved by the Elvet Residents' Association.

We recognise that people are naturally resistant to change, and that any potential intervention may have disadvantages as well as benefits. We have tried to anticipate any potential disadvantages for each intervention and suggest mitigations.

We also recognise that the worst option is the *status quo*. Current air quality (in terms of measured nitrogen oxide levels) in parts of the Elvet triangle is recognised to cause premature death in children and to be detrimental to everyone's health. **Individuals, or bodies, who seek to reject all the proposed interventions should be prepared to suggest effective alternatives.**

Problems of high volumes of traffic:

- Increased levels of sickness and mortality from dangerous levels of air pollution;
- Increased risk of serious road accidents from ancient streets not designed to cater for high volumes of pedestrians and vehicles;
- Increased damage to the structure of buildings caused by vibrations and road movement due to high numbers of heavy vehicles.

Potential Interventions:

Church Street is a residential street with a primary school and a major pedestrian thoroughfare with thousands of students and residents breathing in highly polluted air daily. Here is a list of potential interventions designed to reduce air pollution in the area.

1. Traffic filter on New Elvet Bridge to limit access to emergency vehicles, buses, taxis and cycles.
2. Congestion charge for driving into Elvet during peak periods, apart from local residents, buses, taxis and emergency vehicles. Consider possible time-limited exemptions for motorists who make purchases locally.
3. One-way system in Elvet with a permanent 20-mph speed limit throughout.
4. Student parking only for those with impaired mobility or requiring them for their study or part-time work e.g. teaching.

In each case we have identified benefits and downsides below. Legal rulings indicate that the current air quality issues and their public health impacts demand action. While each of the proposed interventions have some

disadvantages, these need to be considered alongside the considerable advantages of improving air quality and public health.

1. Traffic filter on New Elvet Bridge

Here (red circle), access to **emergency vehicles, buses, taxis and cyclists** is possible (Figure 1). Other traffic would not have 24 h access. Enforcement would be by Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras like the city centre congestion zone, with times of operation set to achieve the desired air quality benefits.



Figure 1: Traffic filter on New Elvet.

Benefits: This would speed the flow of public transport through the city helping to attract people to buses. Routes through Elvet are identified as the top priority for investment in the Durham City Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and so improving safety by removing other traffic would presumably enable many more people to switch to active travel modes. These changes would reduce overall vehicle numbers, thereby reducing air pollution levels. We know this works since during the covid pandemic and during bridge repairs levels of pollution dropped markedly in Church Street (Figure 2).

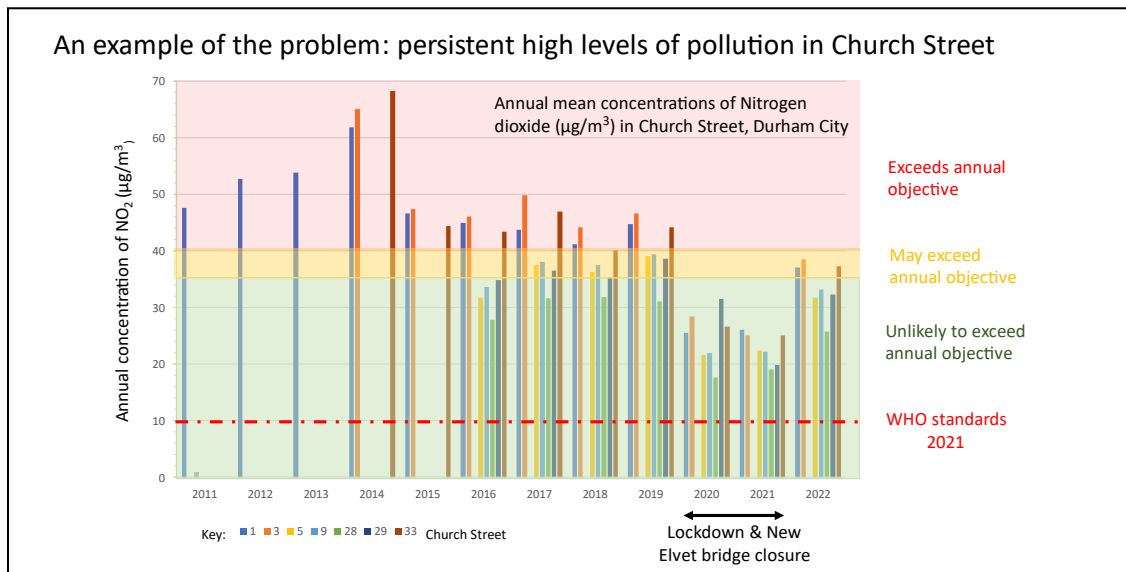


Figure 1: Air pollution in Church Street

Risks: Moderate costs to install, but through traffic would need to find an alternative route through or around Elvet, potentially increasing traffic flow in neighbouring areas. Restrictions on Quarryheads Lane and Margery Lane may be needed to keep traffic on the main roads. Improved cycling and walking options on the alternative routes may be necessary.

2. Congestion charge for Elvet

The congestion zone (Figure 3) would be **free to low emission buses, electric taxis, emergency vehicles and residents**, with other vehicles paying a fee to enter. A congestion charging system currently operates in a neighbouring area on the Bailey.

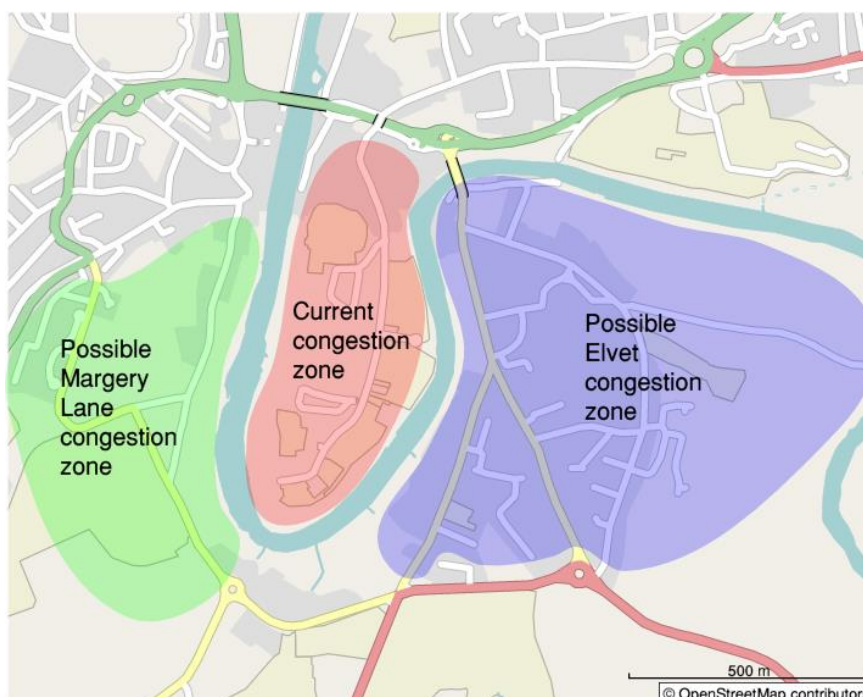


Figure 3: Elvet Congestion Zone.

Benefits: reducing the number of vehicles passing through Elvet and prompting people to adopt cleaner vehicles. Reducing air pollution. Low price intervention requiring four cameras. These should ideally be self-funding providing charges are targeted at the right level. Using a congestion zone rather than a low emissions zone gives more flexibility over which vehicles are charged.

Risks:

- Possible objections from businesses in the area, and from parents dropping off at St Oswald's School. A variation might be to only charge vehicles which pass right through the zone in a certain timeframe, so that if you entered and exited via the Whitechurch junction, for example to drop off a child, there would be no charge. Or if you entered via New Elvet Bridge and exited half an hour (or some time period to be decided) later after a visit to a local business, no charge would apply.
- Displacement of traffic into other parts of the city: a similar zone for the Margery Lane area may be needed.
- Motorists attacking traffic cameras.
- Politicising congestion charges by claiming these 'demonise the working classes'. It should be noted that lower-income areas have persistently higher levels of pollution than wealthier areas e.g. See - <https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/18676139/Jason+Strelitz+Appendix+20.pdf/cad3d506-7281-6abb-aa7f-c1155fa00f0b>

3. One-way traffic system in Elvet

A one-way traffic system (Figure 4) would route traffic coming from the south through the Whitechurch junction northwards along Church Street and southwards down Hallgarth Street. Other variations are possible, such as one-way only from Oswald's Court to the top of New Elvet.



Figure 4a: Elvet one-way system.



Figure 4b: Alternative one-way system

Benefits: By removing conflicting motor vehicle movements at the Church Street/Hallgarth Street/New Elvet junction, the traffic lights would only be needed for the pedestrian phase. Vehicles would therefore not accumulate in the

Church Street canyon to the same extent as they do now. The one-way system would also remove the yellow box at the intersection of Church Street and New Elvet preventing the continuous log-jams which occur at this point and improving traffic flow. Movements at the Whitechurch junction would also be simplified, increasing capacity. Carriageway space could be reallocated to protected cycle lanes and wider pavements, encouraging people to use active travel modes. The one-way proposal could be combined with some of the other measures.

Risks:

- If traffic flow is improved in Elvet this may attract more motorists wishing to pass through the City, increasing vehicle traffic volume.
- Residents in Hallgarth Street concerned about buses moving along their street.
- Increased traffic on Stockton Road.
- One-way streets can lead to increased speeds so lane narrowing or some other traffic calming measure would be required to compensate allowing pavement widening for pedestrians and installing cycle lanes.
- Police use Church Street as a blue-light route would have to re-route.
- Additional restrictions may be needed on Whinney Hill.

4. Restricted student parking

Students should not bring cars into Durham City unless there is a health need or the student needs a car for work to support themselves at University or they require transport for their studies. The University are planning to assess how many students bring their cars to Durham City before considering future action, although the vice chancellor is broadly in support of this initiative.

Benefits: A system is already established at Durham University to assess need, and for these students they may park on University property. Restricting residents' permits for HMOs via the same criteria would free up car parking for other users (e.g. cycle lanes or accessing the city centre economy). Reducing car numbers will contribute to less congestion and air pollution. Reducing the number of young drivers on the road will improve safety.

Risks:

- May not dramatically reduce congestion nor pollution, therefore additional interventions are required.
- May lead to more parking of cars outside the Controlled Parking Zone, such as at Mount Oswald. Extending the CPZ may be necessary.