

# CASE STUDY

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## QUEEN'S CAMPUS: DURHAM UNIVERSITY IN STOCKTON

Widening access to higher  
education on a brownfield site

## Summary



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1. Aerial perspective of site before construction of Infinity Bridge, with academic buildings to left of river and Stockton-on-Tees in background
  2. Site plan with academic buildings shown in red and college accommodation in brown
  3. Aerial view of Teesside site with academic buildings on Queen's Campus shown in red
- Images courtesy Shephard Epstein Hunter*



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Queen's Campus was an initiative driven by government-led regeneration policy, which fitted with a vision fostered by the University leadership of a more outward-facing institution engaged with deprived areas of the North-East and communities blighted by deindustrialisation. It also provided an opportunity to experiment with a new multi-disciplinary and modular approach which might generate new courses with greater appeal to non-traditional students. The site is located just outside Stockton-on-Tees, and was constructed piecemeal over the course of a decade, as and when funding from a number of external sources became available. Lack of residential and research space early on slowed the development of the campus's social and academic life but was subsequently rectified. It has developed teaching and research strengths in the areas of environmental science, health and wellbeing (including GP training), and business studies, and hosts a mixed residential population of local and international students, especially from the Far East. Today the campus boasts modern facilities and high-quality sports provision in a waterfront location, and is regarded by the Local Enterprise Partnership as central to the ongoing regeneration of the surrounding areas, including Stockton town centre itself.

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# Introduction

'We have to do something to regenerate this area'

*Ray Hudson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor 2014<sup>1</sup>*

'Durham ... is essentially university-centred; Stockton ... is very much a university within society ... it was seen by some as an agent of change'

*John Hayward, former Provost Queen's Campus (Hayward n.d:110)*

Durham University's Queens Campus is located on the outskirts of Stockton-on-Tees, on the banks of the River Tees. It sits on the edge of the Teesdale Business Park which has grown up on the site since the first university buildings were constructed from 1992 onwards. The campus took its first intake of students in October 1992, and represented an experimental venture for Durham University at the time, strongly encouraged by government. Now 20 years old, its contribution to the life of the region and of the university is recognized, both by the Local Enterprise Partnership and by the University leadership itself: 'Stockton presses a lot of buttons in terms of the internationalization agenda, diversifying income streams ... but also a higher proportion of local students who tend to come from, you know the priority neighbourhoods and social groups and so on. So it presses all sorts of buttons' (Ray Hudson, Feb 2014). But at the same time the trajectory of its academic and organisational development has not always been clear or consensual and has demanded successive renewals of commitment from within the institution itself over the years: 'There were times when success seemed highly unlikely, particularly in the early years. That was when the vision needed to be bolstered by determination, when the commitment needed political support, when the calculated planning needed good fortune. Despite broad ranging support, the development constantly needed to win over opposition both within the University and outside' (Hayward n.d: 8). This experience over the first 10 years of the campus's life has been described in an informative personal account by its first Principal/Provost John Hayward, on which this case study draws extensively.<sup>2</sup>

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## Historical and policy contexts

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As the university's website explains, the concept of the 'remote' campus was not new to Durham, and indeed it took the lead in establishing 'overseas campuses a century before the concept was reinvented: in Barbados in 1875 and Sierra Leone in 1876' (Durham University n.d). Strictly speaking, these were affiliated colleges (with a focus on theology), which both became re-affiliated in 1967 to their national universities. Queen's Campus, which now contains two of its 16 colleges, represents a modern continuation of that tradition (albeit only 18 miles from Durham) – a so-called 'colony from the mother city' (Hayward n.d:9), inspired by a similar missionary zeal, whereby 'the University established a significant presence at our Queen's Campus in the heart of Tees Valley, re-initiating medical teaching [though not full degrees in medicine] and breaking disciplinary boundaries to enhance public health and social wellbeing' (Durham University:nd).

Nevertheless, when the idea of opening a new university college in the Tees Valley was first mooted in the 1980s, with reference to a 'Birkbeck of the North' (ie geared towards non-traditional and often mature students), the university's new Vice-Chancellor Fred Holliday described it in pioneering and risk-laden terms. Hayward reports that in October 1987 he announced to staff that, 'To survive in the 1990s will require us to think thoughts and do things never before contemplated in Durham' (Hayward n.d:14).

## The need for growth and rationalization

1.1

What then were the factors which prompted the University to take such steps? In 1985 Durham University's student population was less than half the size it is now, at just under 5,000 students – compared to 10,000 undergraduates and 4,000 postgraduates today, with another 2,000 students based at Queen's Campus. The institution was made up of many small departments, representing a relatively narrow range of closely interlinked subjects considered in some quarters old-fashioned compared to the new courses promoted by the campus universities founded in the wake of the 1963 Robbins Report.<sup>3</sup> In 1986 the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher announced stringent cuts in public funding to higher education – the beginning of HE reforms and rationalization which has led with inexorable logic first to the opening up of mass education with the transformation of polytechnics into universities under the Conservatives in 1992 (the post-1992 universities), then to Labour's controversial introduction of student tuition fees in 1998, and eventual nine-fold increase by 2012 under the current Coalition government, with reduction of public funding to under one-third of university revenue. The then University Grants Committee, which had overseen the emergence of a national system of public universities following the Robbins Report, demanded that universities re-structure to ensure that better management structures were put in place, along with measures for widening student access and generating qualified manpower relevant to the needs of the national economy – or else face the loss of their funding streams. Durham was forced to consider ways of creating a more 'balanced university' (Hayward n.d:11), with larger academic groupings for resource allocation, and increased student numbers, or implement redundancies.

## Reconstituting the academic model

1.2

However the possibilities of growth in Durham City were very limited. Holliday suggested creating a new Durham college on Teesside, specifically conceived as a Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, and with an emphasis on broadening access in Science and Engineering. It was proposed that it would have a multidisciplinary focus, based on three centres: a Centre of Regional Studies focused on Teesside, a Centre for Transnational Studies developing links between Europe, Japan and the Pacific Rim, and a Key Technologies Centre focused on technologies identified by the Engineering council. The agenda around broadening access had already been laid down by reforms to the School of Education in Durham, with the establishment of a new four-year BEd in primary education which was open to local students with lower A-level qualifications than normally required by the university.

## The regeneration agenda

1.3

In 1987 Margaret Thatcher made a visit to Teesside to promote the government's new regeneration programme and launch of Teesside Development Corporation. Her famous 'walk in the wilderness' around the derelict, contaminated site of the Head Wrightson Engineering Works site, later to be transformed into Teesdale Business Park, was a spur to the university's emergent plans. Thatcher welcomed the idea of a Birkbeck of the North in Teesdale, stressing the need for university engagement with regeneration through local HE provision. Teesside was the only major industrial conurbation in Britain without a university, and regeneration funding could be made available for a university initiative through the Development Corporation apparatus. Since local unemployment stood at 25%, and take-up in higher education among the lowest in Britain, plus poor health outcomes, a mortality

rate 20% higher than national average, and crime rates among the highest in the country, there was a pressing need to retain teachers and doctors in the region (Hudson 2013).

## A collaborative initiative

1.4

The Teesdale site was one of five which would be considered as a location for a new university college, with land and buildings provided through the Development Corporation and in partnership with Stockton Borough Council (Teesdale Business Park would become one of the corporation's flagship projects by the time it was wound up in 1998). The innovative decision was taken to join forces in the foundation of a new joint college with Teesside Polytechnic, which was approved by the University Senate and Council, and greeted by the UGC with a positive response in 1989. It was established that the new University Funding Council, which took over the UGC's functions that year, would work with the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council to agree the funding mechanism for the new institution. Further funding streams through the regional and district health authorities were also discussed, particularly in relation to nursing training, and with local companies, with a view to establishing new types of partnerships with non-academic organisations as part of the wider regeneration impacts that could be delivered by the university.

An outline curriculum assembled by a new Academic Planning Group was approved in the same year, with an initial focus on Health Studies and Education in Phase 1, followed on by degrees in Social Sciences and Human Biology in Phase 2, designed to make 'hard' science more appealing to non-traditional students by integrating it into an applied and social science context. The curriculum would also offer Drama and Theatre Studies. It was 'a set of courses ... established on the basis that they wouldn't compete with what was offered at either institution...' (Ray Hudson Feb 2014), and included provision for modular courses with the idea that they would also be available part-time, in order to attract a wide range of students (in fact this was never realized). In 1991 the joint college, offering joint degrees as Joint University College on Teesside (JUCoT), was officially announced. A funding package of £8.4m was subsequently agreed by the government for the site and one building just in time for the first intake of students in September 1992. In the same year however, Teesside Polytechnic was itself to assume new university status (as Teesside University), which would fundamentally undermine the delicate collaborative and academic balance which had been established with the new venture. In 1993 the college was officially opened by the Queen as University College Stockton, under Principal Professor Bob Parfitt.

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## Processes and Structures

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'The key to success lay in partnership, in stepping outside the constraints of higher education and its restricted funding with the support of a strong academic base and reputation'

*John Hayward (Hayward n.d:8)*

University College Stockton represented the first new university site to be opened in 25 years, but it was organisationally and typologically distinct from the new university campuses founded during the 1960s and 1970s. Not only was it clearly defined as 'collegiate', although it would later be redefined as a campus, but it was also unusual in involving another institution as a joint venture partner, a local authority, and a development corporation. Furthermore, it was to provide the anchor for a new business park on a

contaminated brownfield site. In all these respects it would presage a new wave of post-millennial university spatial development, driven to a significant extent by urban regeneration agendas, a growing hole in public funding, and a steady shift towards devolution of the planning system to local level.

## The project champion

2.1

Central to most, if not all, university development plans is the vision and determination of a particular individual capable of forging some level of cohesion across the various disparate actors involved in such complex projects. Vice-Chancellor Fred Holliday, after whom Queen's Campus's original building would be named, took up his post in 1980 and set the chain of events in process which resulted in the materialization of the campus in 1992. A Professor of Biology and Zoology at Aberdeen University, he had past experience as acting principal of the University of Stirling, a campus university founded in 1967. He brought to Durham an open-minded outward-facing outlook, embracing the possibility of new opportunities and connections with the world beyond academia, in response to the government's policy reforms around higher education. He championed the idea of creating a Birkbeck of the North, and when he announced plans for his retirement in 1990 (to be succeeded by Evelyn Ebsworth, a chemist from the University of Edinburgh) it opened up fissures of dissent within the university which de-stabilised the venture. There was opposition both to the concept of the development as a university college (since uniquely amongst the others it had responsibilities for teaching, but no residential accommodation), and to the idea of a university college being established as a separate entity at a 25-mile distance from the university on a remote site. Furthermore, the approval in 1989 by the University Senate and Council of proposals for a new Institute of Health Studies based in Durham, without consultation with Teesside Polytechnic, caused a major rift between the two partner institutions. In 1990 a corporate Joint Developments Executive with four members from each institution was created, to which the new Institute of Health Studies would be responsible for the parts of its operation taking place on Teesside, with funding through the Department of Health and Regional Health Authority.

## Governance

2.2

The plans for Queen's Campus had to be agreed by the University Senate (the academic governing body, made up of academic staff and student representatives, and chaired by the Vice-Chancellor), Council (with ultimate responsibility for university affairs, comprising academic and lay members and student representatives, and chaired by a lay member), the Development Corporation, and Teesside Polytechnic, in consultation with Cleveland County Council. In addition, approval from the University Funding Council and Department of the Environment was required for the project to go ahead. In 1987 a third Pro-Vice Chancellor post was created to chair two Working Groups established the following year – one responsible for academic planning; the other for administration, finance and accommodation. They comprised between 15 and 19 members, including representatives from Teesside Polytechnic, and were constituted with a view to mobilizing broad support for the project across the two institutions. Following approval of the plans and outline curriculum, a Joint Developments Executive was set up to oversee the joint venture as limited company, in which Durham had responsibility for building services during the building phase, along with general and academic administration and student admissions, while Teesside took on financial and legal services, library provision, personnel and payroll, and estates and buildings after the opening of the college. On Teesside Poly's reconstitution as a university in 1992, with its own Vice-Chancellor, the executive board was re-established

as a Board of Directors until the company was finally wound up in 1994, and a Board of Governors with joint representation took its place. At that point Durham University assumed full responsibility for the financial and organizational affairs of the college along with ownership of the building in order to streamline services delivery, although academic delivery continued on a joint venture basis. This fundamental re-structuring was accompanied by the appointment of a new Principal for the college, John Hayward, who had been Registrar and Secretary at Durham, and would continue there as Head of Administration alongside his role at University College Stockton.

## Organization and constitutional issues: from college to campus

2.3

From 1994 onwards, services at the new college at Stockton were subject to a steady process of convergence with the university, or 'Durhamisation' as it has been described, which was never entirely consensual. However, in 1997 John Hayward's role as Principal was replaced by that of Provost, which he filled until 2001 in a new capacity completed separated from his former functions at the University, giving a sense of increased autonomy. The college also continued to run until 2001 on a semester basis, in contrast to Durham's term-based model. But graduation ceremonies had already been transferred from Stockton to Durham at the request of students, and from 1998 joint degrees were dropped and awarded solely by Durham University. The college was re-positioned as a campus of the university – under the new name University of Durham, Stockton Campus. In 2001, the two halls of residence were established as colleges in the established sense (John Snow and George Stephenson) in place of the old University College, and the campus again re-named, this time as **Durham University: Queen's Campus** (2002).

This consolidation, linked to faculty restructuring within the university as a whole, was further established with Hayward's retirement, and the decision not to replace his post as Provost. Instead, the Vice-Chancellor of the University took on a combined role incorporating responsibility for Queen's Campus, resonating with the view expressed by Ray Hudson today: 'rather than thinking about Stockton as a separate campus, for me that just doesn't make any sense; it just happens to be a place where we deliver certain courses' (Ray Hudson Feb 2014).

## Funding arrangements

2.4

'We've not had to borrow ... I don't think any of the development we've done in Stockton we've had to borrow against. And in terms of running costs it's much higher quality than a lot of [university buildings]'

*Ray Hudson 2014*

Durham's original capital outlay at Stockton was very small, with the costs of the land and an initial building of 6000m<sup>2</sup> paid for by the UDC, with government funding finally approved by the Department of the Environment as part of its regeneration agenda in September 1991. Grant funding for subsequent construction has kept those capital costs minimal, along with low running costs due to the design of the buildings. However no funding was provided at the outset for the provision of residential accommodation, and since neither university was willing to put up the finance, opting for a private development approach which never materialized due to lack of interest, two temporary residential buildings provided by Stockton Borough Council were used for the first two years of the college's life until an agreement could be finalized.

The ongoing revenue funding for the delivery of the academic offer has been more of a problem, frustrated by the reluctance of the Funding Council (HEFCE as it became in



1992) to support the requested number of student places at the outset. Although it was accepted that the college would need a minimum of 1500 students by the end of its first three years for academic and financial viability, the initial funding allocation was for only 100 places, half of that requested. Furthermore, no funding was offered for equipment. This was not forthcoming until after the college opened, when, following its site visit, HEFCE finally offered £500,000 for equipment to be matched by the college. Sun Corporation also paid £200,000 for a computer laboratory, conditional on the purchase from them of a second lab for £160,000.

In his account of the college's early years, Hayward describes how the bareness of the site and lack of facilities (no library, labs, residential accommodation, dining room, or social facilities) when the college opened discouraged many students of the first intake – it did not even have its own phone line. He suggests that less than 85% continued into the second year, and many abandoned ship after the first semester. Although these deficits were slowly rectified, funding remained problematic. By 1996 the university knew that it had to grow physically in order to achieve a critical mass, and stepped up efforts to explore different options for the funding of new buildings on both sides of the river (North Shore and south bank), particularly research facilities. These included approaches to the European Regional Development Fund, HEFCE, the Sports and Millennium Lottery Funds, and various potential non-academic partners including Glaxo, Wellcome, Wolfson Trust and Landfill Tax Credits. In 1997, the Development Corporation pledged the land for a second building on the site, designed by Dennis Lister Architects and later named Ebsworth, which provided 7900m<sup>2</sup> of space. It brought the value of the university's assets at Stockton, including the freehold for the Holliday building purchased from the Development Corporation, to over £27m, of which it had itself found £10m. In March 1998 it received a final grant of £800,000 from the Development Corporation before its winding-up, for an International Research Centre for Regional Regeneration and Development Studies linked to Geography. In 2001, a third building, the Wolfson Research Institute, was constructed, financed by the Wolfson Foundation, ERDF, and HEFCE Medical Development at a cost of £14.5m, bringing the total amount of academic space to 13,996 sq m by 2005 (with 9,829 sq m of residential space).<sup>4</sup> However, long-term hopes to open a new research facility on the North Shore, combined with a public focus and sports facilities (mainly river-based, following the construction of the barrage on the Tees in 1995) in collaboration with the Development Corporation, came to nothing, despite the eventual commitment of £17m of EU funding for a new footbridge (the Infinity Bridge, completed 2009) connecting the two sides in 2001. A £150m Development Corporation proposal included a large research centre in Sports Science, then Biomedical Science, plus a 12,000 seat arena, ice pad, popular science centre, 600 student bedrooms and facilities, a 1000m<sup>2</sup> Centre of Sports Excellence, and indoor racquets facility, but never secured funding. The 4.3 acre site owned by the university on the North Shore remains empty today, although there is ongoing exploration of plans for residential development there, while the recent (2014) agreement of a £5m grant by the NHS will allow for the further extension of the Wolfson Institute on the south side.

## Site planning, design and construction

## 2.5

The Teesdale site was selected from five possibilities – including Middlehaven, Poole Hospital, Polytechnic land, and Wynyard Hall. Hayward describes the hospital and Wynyard sites as very pleasant but with poor public transport access, while the polytechnic land lay south of Ormesby, outside the Teesside Development Corporation area, and Middlehaven would be a very expensive docklands redevelopment in Middlesbrough. Despite a similar need for extensive remediation, Teesdale came with the attraction of UDC funding and strong support from Stockton Borough Council, notwithstanding some concerns that it

could blight development in Middlesbrough. The idea was that it would provide an anchor for the development of a new business park, sitting in a bend of the River Tees, which following the construction of a barrage in 1995 was transformed from tidal mud into clean water, and has been developed with a range of water-based sports facilities. It is served by bus and by rail from Thornaby train station on the line from Middlesbrough to Newcastle, Durham, Darlington and Carlisle, or the Transpennine route to Liverpool, and was a factor in the station's reconstruction in 2003. However most visitors, including university staff, arrive by car, and in 2002 70% of survey respondents at 43 firms and organisations located there 'saw the need for improvements, mainly to the infrastructure of the site, over half mentioning road access and nearly half car parking' (Tully and Townsend 2002:4).



College accommodation, constructed 1994: John Snow College, as it became in 2001.  
Photo C. Melhuish 2014

The original university building, now housing administration, dining and student facilities, was specified, designed by architects Halliday Meacham, and constructed at breakneck speed in 1991 to 1992. Hudson describes how, when it opened, 'all there was was the Holliday building and then industrial wasteland so I used to park the car, walk round the back, take my wellingtons out, put them on, and walk through mud, into Holliday, wellingtons off, shoes on....' (Ray Hudson 2014). But in 1994 and 1998, two halls of residence were constructed by Taylor Woodrow (designed by Fletcher Joseph Leeds, and Dennis Lister & Associates),

providing accommodation for around 500 students – now insufficient to house even the first year. Others live in privately-rented housing on the Teesdale site: 'we call it toytown', comments David Fionda, Operations Director at Queen's Campus,<sup>5</sup> referencing the pastiche design and brick cladding of the residential development through which one walks en route from the station to the Holliday building.

Ebsworth is a super-flexible frame building containing the library, lecture theatres, and seminar rooms, but essentially adaptable to suit any purpose, designed by Dennis Lister & Associates. Shepherd Construction started work in Jan 1998, on the same day the land transfer was executed, and it was completed in time for the new academic year in Sept-Oct. The current Estates Strategy includes provision for its refurbishment and reconfiguration, along with plans for the extension of the Wolfson Research Institute to provide accommodation for a new GP training scheme in partnership with Stockton Borough Council, and new accommodation for Durham University Business School. Listers also prepared the drawings for this building prior to 2001, but the final design was by The Austin Company, and comprises high-quality, multi-functional laboratory space originally used by Environmental Science courses delivered by Geography, as well as by Anthropology for its applied research in Sleeping patterns (the Sleep Lab). Some of this lab space has been recently re-fitted to accommodate new Pharmacy courses, but some is also said to be significantly under-utilised.

In 1997 the old Working Men's Club near the station was converted into student facilities, and Thornaby Town Hall was also renovated in 2000 to provide accommodation for e-Tees Valley with IT courses developed by staff from the Centre for Life Long Learning at UDSC working with the Department of Computer Science at Durham with funding from (European Social Fund/European Regional Development Fund) in partnership with Stockton Borough Council.

A high-quality sports building regularly hosts international competitions, for example badminton, as does the Watersports Centre, including a 1000m rowing course, built in 2001 on the river following the construction of the new barrage. These facilities attract students from the university's Durham colleges to Stockton, as well as large numbers of outside visitors, and so constitute an important component of the site contributing to its animation

and the continuant development of its social life which will be supported by further plans for its improvement in the future. These include new landscaping, the removal of car-parking to the perimeter, and completion of Stevenson Junior Common Room, along with possible residential college development on Northshore (Estates Strategy 2011-2020 n.d:23). There is a general sense that the campus could now benefit from a new building of some architectural quality, with a significant reduction of space devoted to cars. In Hudson's words, 'From the point when that car park became the central feature of the University ... what I would really like to do is put a nice iconic building there and push the car parking round the edge' (Ray Hudson 2014), reflecting the growing emphasis by university estates departments on minimising vehicular traffic, and investing in landmark buildings which make a positive contribution to the environment and atmosphere of university sites.

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## Visions and narratives

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'The focus should be on health including medicine, sport and environment as well as regeneration and the social and economic well-being of the region in helping to address social factors such as unemployment, poor housing, poverty and pollution'  
*John Hayward (Hayward n.d:79)*

The investment in Queen's Campus was always less focused on producing a strong architectural or physical image for the development and more about realising a set of decent facilities which would deliver on a clear narrative about engagement with the region and contribution to the social and economic wellbeing of its population. As Hayward notes, 'at that time unemployment on Teesside was almost twice the national average, the educational achievement of 16 year olds and the percentage of 18 year olds proceeding to tertiary education was amongst the lowest in the UK. The crime rate was the third highest and the proportion of single parents 45% above the national average. Business start-ups were less than 50% of the national average' (Hayward n.d:79). This narrative has gradually been shaped through an academic vision which has emphasized the desirability of non-traditional courses with a specific appeal to local students, and accessibility through its entrance requirements and course structures. However it has also suffered from frequent changes to the academic programme over the 20 years of the campus's existence and a shortage of campus-based academic staff. This has been balanced by the particular commitment of a number of different individuals who have played a significant role in the development of the campus over time, and worked hard to promote a vision of what it should be both to the university and to the outside world.

### The physical image

3.1

For many students, the attraction of Durham University lies as much in the physical and symbolic presence of its castle and the cathedral, evoking particular associations around the idea of a university rooted in centuries of history, as in its academic reputation. By contrast, Queen's Campus has been described by one staff member as 'stuck on the end of an industrial estate' made up of a disparate collection of relatively undistinguished buildings, and out of reach of a lively city centre. Due to the shortage of residential accommodation there is a lack of social life on the campus, with few organized societies and activities. Students are often disappointed to realize they will be based at Stockton rather than in Durham: 'Love Durham uni but hate Stockton Campus – is it worth going?'

asks one potential applicant on a student forum (The Student Room 2014). On the other hand, the campus is compact, modern and well-equipped with high quality sports facilities, including white-water rafting on the Tees, which are also used extensively by students based in Durham. Furthermore, among the steadily increasing intake of overseas students (now 30% of the total), not all share the same place-based image of the university: '... a high proportion of Far Eastern students ... they don't have this stereotype of Durham which is the castle and the Cathedral ... and they're not there to party...' (Ray Hudson 2014). Thus they may be less concerned about accessibility to city centre attractions, while staff report they also show more interest in exploring the local rural hinterland more widely, and getting involved in other activities not directly related to the university. Hence the Queen's Campus image may be perceived as more neutral, but also less bounded and inward-looking than that of Durham, offering greater freedom to explore student life in other ways.

### The non-campus campus

3.2

The term was coined by John Hayward to describe a vision of the campus which extended beyond its own academic buildings and resources, and built up partnerships with other educational and non-academic organisations for the wider benefit of the region. It demonstrates the perceived dichotomy between the bounded nature of conventional campus typology and the outward-facing institutional agenda which drove its development at Stockton, and points to the steady shift of universities as institutions towards engagement and integration with urban and peri-urban contexts and communities. This was reiterated more recently by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, underlining the particular opportunities offered by Queen's: 'the sort of things that we develop there – a lot of them depend on links with the partnerships with local organisations – there isn't the capacity to do that in Durham' (Ray Hudson 2014). Hayward identified the key elements of this vision as extended subject provision, innovation in teaching and learning with full-time and part-time options, and taught and research-based postgraduate degrees. He strove to encourage research focused on the college and region, and establish educational, industrial, cultural and sports-related partnerships located on sites adjacent to College in order to create a 'broadly-based' campus (Hayward n.d:69). He also saw it as vital to promote lifetime learning through Continuing Education and Continuing Vocational Education courses, working with Stockton Council and other agencies 'in order to establish the identity of College as a resource for the community' (Hayward n.d:69). The co-location in 2003 of the local Stockton and Billingham Further Education college on an adjacent site was seen as a key part of this strategy, and one that he regretted would not be developed further after the university's 2001 review of the campus.

### 'Durhamisation': streamlining the image, narrative

3.3

Hayward's departure heralded a decisive shift towards convergence and integration. The re-constitution of the college as a campus of the university represented a desire to project a unified image of the two sites as integral parts of the same institution, subject to the same policies. Queen's would do slightly different things – the Working Group's review recommended focusing on professional studies in Education, Business and Finance, Medicine and health-related studies, while the innovative multi-disciplinary Environmental Sciences and Geography of Cities degrees would be closed due to lack of demand. Furthermore, the entry tariff would be raised to Durham standards (now an AAA\* offer), encouraging a shift towards a more traditionally constituted student body in line with the central institution. Today these developments are still regarded by some as an imposition of old-fashioned processes and structures which has acted as a brake on the more

experimental and outward-facing agenda which underpinned the original conception of the new campus. But for others they have been crucial to the creation of a more consistent narrative about the university as a whole which supports rather than challenges its national and international academic profile.

### Academic programming: local v national focus

3.4

'If something's going to be an integral part of the University it lacked lots of things – it lacked any research, college residential accommodation, student facilities more generally ... it had a set of courses which had been established on the basis that they wouldn't compete with what was offered at either Institution ... what it left us with was a set of courses that didn't fit very easily into our structure. They had different terms for example.'

*Ray Hudson 2014*

At the beginning, the Stockton initiative was strongly driven by the idea that it would provide a forum for exploring new approaches to teaching and research, particularly with regard to the concept of multi-disciplinary teaching outside the faculty system – in which it was a fore-runner of trends now gathering impetus today. But frustration grew, as, increasingly, courses started at Stockton were closed or taken back to Durham: 'We create things then they move to Durham' comments one staff member.

The first new degrees in 'human sciences' (BA Human Sciences, BSc Environmental Sciences) combined social and natural sciences and a number of different departments, including Anthropology, Economics and Psychology. They were based on five themes, which underlined the application and relevance of the courses to social issues and problems: what makes humans human; society and human welfare; society and social values; ways of change; studying people. It was anticipated that these would appeal to a broader student base than the traditional disciplines offered at Durham, and also open up science to a wider range of applicants – again presaging current developments across the HE sector. In addition, a BA in European Studies was offered. In 1995 a Biomedical Sciences degree was established in partnership with the Development Corporation, and in 1996 Initial Teacher Training and Childhood Studies, while a range of additional new undergraduate subject areas were considered – Applied Psychology, Sports Science, Reactor Technology, Business Finance, Urban Studies and Performing Arts, Combined Literary Studies, and a History and Philosophy course focusing on the Industrial Revolution. In 2000 the BA in Education moved to Stockton from Durham, but the popular Childhood Studies degrees were dropped, reflecting the growing concern about the need to develop a research base at Stockton and a more national and international focus to the work. The college was re-framed as a 'national resource [ie as part of Durham University] deployed to make a regional contribution' (Hayward n.d:52), building on links with other universities in the EU, and the successful Sleep Lab officially opened in the Ebsworth building as a research lab of the Department of Anthropology and research centre in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health. Efforts were stepped-up to secure funding and land for new facilities on site suitable for hosting and promoting multi-disciplinary research.

When the Wolfson Building opened in 2001, these ambitions were finally established. Today the Wolfson Research Institute for Health and Wellbeing hosts 90 staff and 30 researchers and has strong relationships with the NHS and local government through a number of different research centres.<sup>6</sup> In addition to health-focused and applied research, it has also hosted the International Research Centre for Regional Regeneration and Development Studies linked to Geography, and the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, both with a focus on regional priorities.

However the original aspirations for development of collaborative and entrepreneurial research links with industry<sup>7</sup> have not materialized as hoped, and despite extensive negotiations early on with Kvaerner Process Technology (subsequently Davy), although Kvaerner did give £100,000 to the college to extend and equip a lab in readiness for the first intake in Biomedical Sciences in 1995. New research centres in land recovery and clean technology were considered as possible joint ventures, but never taken forward. Computing Science never found a home at Stockton, nor Engineering, since it already had well-equipped labs in Durham and the set-up costs for new facilities would have been too great, and Stockton has never developed as a hub for science and technology partnerships or spin-off companies.

## The present and future

3.5

Instead, Stockton has retained a focus on health, wellbeing, and Part 1 medicine (the only course with permanent staff at Queen's), with a new course in Pharmacy recently established, along with a GP training scheme: 'We'll bottom out there with about a couple of thousand students ... we'd quite like to develop some CPD because there's a lot of possibilities around this area between social care, what's coming out of the NHS and going into the Local Authorities ... and around health itself ... the Tees Valley is not quite as unhealthy as Glasgow but it's not far off.' (Ray Hudson 2014). In addition, the Business School has developed a strong strategic view and courses in Business and Accountancy are particularly popular with overseas students. The campus also maintains an agenda around encouraging non-traditional students into higher education, with a Foundation course for widening access that achieves a 75% conversion rate to full degrees; and a progression scheme aimed at encouraging 14-15 year olds into higher education. As Ray Hudson points out, however, and just as at its original conception, the materialization of any vision and strong narrative of what the campus is and might be is driven very much by the leadership and commitment of the academic staff who take it on: 'it doesn't matter how good the structures are, what it comes down to is somebody who's prepared to get a grip and drive it'.

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## Translation into place

4

The translation of the Stockton vision into its physical location on the Teesdale site, on the south side of the river Tees, was guided by the preference of the Development Corporation and the support of Stockton Borough Council. The prospective development was perceived as key to unlocking the industrial decline of the region through a regeneration of the site which would provide the catalyst for economic and social benefits. 20 years later the presence of the university campus is also regarded as central to the ongoing £300m North Shore scheme by Tees Valley Regeneration, including offices, leisure facilities, housing and a hotel. This scheme capitalises on the realisation of the £17m Infinity Bridge (led by Expedition Engineering) in 2009, using EU and other funds leveraged by the presence of the university – although some would have preferred to see that funding invested in the campus itself. It is part of a wider development programme for Stockton's town centre which focuses on opening up connections between the centre and the river frontage to attract businesses, retail and associated visitors. It includes a new pedestrian area, Infinity View, with views of the eye-catching footbridge, and a permanent light installation along the river frontage which will also create a stronger sense of connection across the water to the Teesdale business park, university campus and housing.

## Campus planning and typologies

### 4.1

'The plan of a university, like that of a city, should be a mechanism for enabling things to happen, for the enhancement of life'

*Sir Peter Shephard, Shephard Epstein Hunter 1980*<sup>8</sup>

Queen's is not a stand-alone campus, nor is it integrated into an urban context, in contrast to Durham University itself. Stockton is a market town rather than an urban centre, and the site is essentially disconnected from its centre by the river, while also firmly bounded to the south and east by railway infrastructure. It was a contaminated, ex-industrial, brownfield site redeveloped as a business park under exceptional UDC powers, unconstrained by the local authority planning framework, which privileged car access and parking over other public realm considerations. The buildings were erected piecemeal, without an overall masterplan, and the site as a whole has subsequently been criticised as lacking in both a 'cultural heart' and an efficient circulation system, although the waterfront location could provide an asset for development.



View of the campus from the bus leaving for Durham City. Photo C.Melhuish 2014

The vision for the Stockton campus was then developed more or less independently of any clear concept of campus typology, architectural design or urban planning framework, and materialised at breakneck speed in response to an emerging national regeneration framework and government reforms to the higher education system. The lack of integrated residential accommodation represented a major flaw from the start, having significant impacts both on student perceptions of the campus, and on the development of a sense of community supported by social facilities amongst the student population. Even after the construction of two residential halls was

agreed, the disconnected location of what is now John Snow College on the west of the Teesdale site among other non-university buildings fragments the unity of the campus. The Shephard Epstein Hunter masterplan of 2006 states that 'pedestrian access to the main academic buildings is hampered by a confused and tortuous arrangement of public pathways. Many apparently public routes are barred to the public. Likewise the route from the main station to the University is hardly an inviting or pedestrian-friendly one' (SEH masterplan, 2006:94).

The SEH masterplan underlines the need to improve pedestrian connections across the site between the university's buildings, and across the river – presaging the construction of the footbridge. It also proposes the removal of the traffic roundabout in front of the Holliday building and the creation of a new prominent entrance to the campus, along with the relocation of parking to the perimeter of the site in order to create a series of courtyards within it, providing protection from the weather: 'there is a need to create a sense of place and enclosure' (SEH masterplan 2006:8) It further emphasises the importance of improved connections back to the town centre from the new bridge, since the pedestrian route along the south bank is again 'tortuous'. All of these measures could help to reinforce an agenda around engagement with local communities and neighbours, re-imagining the campus as an integrated extension of the town.

As part of this process, the waterfront itself has the potential to become a valuable social asset. Waterfronts have become central to design policies and practices which towns and cities internationally are using to regenerate their economic and social life. At Stockton, a major step forward in the reinvention of the river Tees as a site of leisure and associated social activity was the construction of the barrage in 1995 which transformed tidal mud into clean water and presented the catalyst for the construction of new river-



Proposals for new pedestrian connections, courtyard, and vista to NorthShore, Shepheard Epstein Hunter masterplan 2006.  
Image courtesy Shepheard Epstein Hunter

based sports facilities including the Whitewater-rafting centre on the North Shore. However the academic buildings do not make the most of their riverside frontage and so far the university has not taken up the opportunity to expand to the north shore and integrate the river as a dynamic part of its own campus development.

## Economic impacts of the development

## 4.2

‘When we started down there – September 1992 – all there was was the Holliday building and then industrial wasteland.... had you been here 20 years ago you’d realise just how much both the University’s development, but also the development around it, that was triggered by it, has come on. Yeah okay, there are empty office blocks on Teesdale – there are empty office blocks everywhere. They’re building housing on the other side, which at one stage you just couldn’t have imagined’

*Ray Hudson 2014*

The integration of the campus into the local area and the region has rested heavily on economic outcomes generated by its presence. And by several accounts, the area has undergone a positive transformation in the time since it first opened to students. In terms of direct local employment it created 100–130 new academic posts and 75 supporting posts (45% part-time) – among the current staff the Operations Director comes from Middlesbrough and was formerly an employee of British Steel, and the Campus Services Manager has worked at Queen’s since it opened.

But it also, as reported by its own International Centre for Regional Regeneration and Development Studies in 2002,<sup>9</sup> kickstarted the growth of the business park with which it is co-located. The research found that other businesses were attracted to the site by its status and location, as well as low property prices on arrival and a pool of skilled labour



and trainable staff at advantageous wage levels (especially women and young people). It was seen as the premier office park of the Tees Valley, with the largest employers having HQs in London or SE, but possibly at the expense of other Tees Valley office centres eg central Stockton and Middlesbrough. Most of the facilities opened were call centres for those companies, with construction accelerating between 1997 and 2001, and 4,500 people employed by 2002. Five of the employers surveyed had 400 or more staff (including the University) and 18 under ten. 60% of employees overall were women, reflecting the nature of the work as data inputters/telephonists and administrators, with a minority of professional and technical occupations on offer. The report found that it had brought an income of £47.3m to the sub-region.

In the view of the Local Enterprise Partnership, Tees Valley Unlimited, in 2014, the investments made by both Durham and Teesside universities in research and development facilities and business schools means they are vital partners in the continuing economic development of the region, with a focus on the knowledge economy.<sup>10</sup> Queen's in particular is central to attracting investment from large healthcare companies, especially in telecare and telehealth, which are drawn to the area by the skills and access to research facilities which it offers. A spokesman emphasises that they 'would like to see it evolving over next 10 years to bring more reputation to area' – and also, 'more international students', who are seen as a valuable resource. Even if then, as a staff member suggests, 'Durham doesn't know what to do with Queens', it appears that the local economic agencies have a fairly clear idea of the contribution it can make to the wider life of the region.

### Student contribution to local life and the economy

4.3

As noted by Hayward in his account of the campus's first 10 years, 2000 students graduated in that time, many of whom were already local or from the North-East (45%) and would have remained in the region as graduate employees, as well as taking up employment in Durham. The impact of this would be not only to inject an infusion of new skills into the local economy (and currently Queen's is building up a postgraduate community around Business Studies as well as health), but also to contribute to an increased sense of regional self-esteem through involvement with higher education (Hayward n.d). The student population itself – which by 2002 was larger than that of any single Durham College, and remains steady at 2000 – has also had its own impact on the area, through spending on accommodation and services, although no evaluation has been carried out of the multiplier effect. The demand for private rental accommodation remains high, due to the continuing shortage of university provision (around 500 places) and relatively under-developed student life on campus – despite improvements in pastoral care structures and social amenities – and it is suggested that in future this demand may well increase due to the relocation of students from Durham city in search of cheaper accommodation further afield.

### Social impacts

4.4

'Students come from mixed backgrounds, and contain, by the standards of British academia, a relatively high proportion of mature, working-class people who are the first in their family to go to university'  
(Coleman and Simpson 1999:4)<sup>11</sup>

The impact of Stockton on the wider community has stemmed as much from the make-up of its student body as from any other factor. At the outset, its widening access agenda was innovative, with entry assessed by 'evidence of life experience and commitment rather than academic qualifications' (Coleman and Simpson 1999:4), and in fact not all students

stayed the course: Durham anthropologists Coleman and Simpson refer to one student 'characterizing both the university and the course as building a "prison" around him ... [he] consistently maintained that he felt that he was being forced into a middle-class straight-jacket by being required to adopt a language, an attitude and a set of assumptions that were alien both to who he was and the person he wished to become' (Coleman and Simpson 1999: 6). Over time, entry standards have increasingly been aligned with the rest of the university, but Stockton continues to promote recruitment of non-traditional students from the local area alongside its internationalisation agenda. The proportion of students who live locally is promoted through the university's Foundation and progression programmes, even though links with the local FE college have not been developed to the extent that was originally envisaged. In addition, partnerships with the NHS on schemes such as GP training and CPD in social care make a direct input to healthcare frameworks in the area, addressing issues around the place-based nature of national health inequalities highlighted by Hudson in a Demos publication also supported by the Wolfson Research Institute for Health and Wellbeing (Hudson 2013).

As Hudson notes in his concluding chapter, national geographies of economic success correlate with those of population health and wellbeing, and 'in deindustrialised towns and cities and former mono-industrial places ... the legacies of occupationally specific illnesses and diseases ... and the general legacy of hard physical work in demanding and often dangerous workplace environments combined with the effects of chronic worklessness on the mental health of those who had lost their jobs. the cumulative effects of poverty and multiple deprivation ... wreaked havoc on the health and wellbeing of people and place' (Hudson 2013:69). Taking a lead in addressing these issues, the campus has developed active collaborative partnerships with community groups, for example Thrive, a community project based in Thornaby-on-Tees which is a partner with church Action on Poverty. From June 2005, the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action based in the Wolfson Institute, and supported by Beacon North East, has been working with Thrive to do research on experiences of household poverty, isolation and mental health in Teesside, deploying some of the university's Part 1 medical students both as household interviewers and mentors on placements with Thrive, and as analysts of the data collected.<sup>12</sup> The University also provided a research consultant to design stage two of the research, funded by grants from the Wolfson Institute, alongside an action researcher funded by Beacon NE to work with Thrive. This was followed by a new bid for funding to the Northern Rock Foundation by the university and Thrive for action research on debt on Teesside, demonstrating the mutual benefits that can potentially be derived from a university presence in relation to goals around social regeneration. In this case, the partnership has offered the opportunity for a mutual exchange of learning and resources, as well as enhanced profile on both sides by association with the other – a prestigious university on the one hand, having both research expertise, funds, and academic knowledge at its disposal; and an embedded community organisation with in-depth knowledge of local challenges, social dynamics, and politics, as well as a wide range of social contacts, on the other.

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## Key issues and learning points

**5**

*The key drivers* for the initiative were not so much a need for space, but government-led regeneration policy and funding cuts to universities linked to requirements for restructuring and widening access. However there was also an interest within the university in developing

interdisciplinary academic programmes and engaging with local community needs especially related to health and wellbeing, business, and the environment

*Funding* the University relied almost entirely on external funding and partnerships, especially with the local Urban Development Corporation, which obviated the need for capital borrowing, but made it more difficult to plan for the ongoing running costs and future development of the campus, and slowed the development of critical residential and academic mass

*Location* the site was regarded as remote from the university's administrative and academic heart, although within easy reach by car. It was also perceived as poorly connected to Stockton town centre, and did not make the most of its waterfront location at the outset. Few academics were based there, and some students expressed negative perceptions of the site compared to Durham City

*Masterplanning and design* the campus was not masterplanned, and the buildings were realised by a number of different architectural firms and construction companies over time. It is co-located with a business park and private residential development, and the public realm is dominated by car-parking. The Infinity Bridge provided a new 'landmark' for the site but has been slow to generate wider public realm improvements, and pedestrian connectivity is weak.

*Academic programming* there is ongoing exploration of the kind of academic programme best suited to this site, which specifically relates to surrounding conditions and communities, particularly through courses related to health and wellbeing, business studies and education, as well as a foundation centre. Programming over the years has been affected by a sense of instability due to courses being closed or taken back to Durham because of lack of demand and funding, and issues around the convergence/ autonomy of the campus in relation to the university in Durham City.

*Non-academic engagement* partnerships with industry were part of the original vision but did not materialise as hoped due to lack of drive from the university and conflicts with the later centralisation agenda, although Davy Process Technology runs a laboratory facility adjacent to the site. But some community partnerships have emerged, eg through the university's Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, and the LEP recognises the university as an important attractor for high-profile companies to come to the area – access to skills, research facilities, and students staying on to work in area has been significant positive impact

*Specific assets* the buildings provide flexible teaching and research space, and generate relatively low running costs compared to Durham's older stock. The provision of high quality sports facilities, also taking advantage of the waterfront location, has been a positive asset attracting students and outside visitors to the site, as well as enhancing the profile of the campus through international events. Lower housing costs in the area are also likely to be a draw in future for university students and staff priced out of Durham City.

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## Notes

- 1 Ray Hudson, Deputy Vice Chancellor, interview by Clare Melhuish at University of Durham, February 2014 (transcript). All further attributed quotations as cited, unless otherwise stated
- 2 This account by John Hayward is available as Occasional paper No. 3 from the Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies: [http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk/MainSite%20pages/Resources/OxCHEPS\\_OP3.pdf](http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk/MainSite%20pages/Resources/OxCHEPS_OP3.pdf)
- 3 *Higher education: report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins 1961–63*, Cmnd. 2154, London: HMSO. The Robbins Report recommended the expansion of higher education including the provision for all College of Advanced Technology to assume the status of universities
- 4 See University of Durham: Development Framework and Master Plan, Shephard Epstein Hunter 2006, 23
- 5 David Fionda, Bursar and Operations Director, Queen's Campus, interview by Clare Melhuish at Queen's Campus, Stockton-on-Tees, February 2014
- 6 For more details see <https://www.dur.ac.uk/wolfson.institute/test/centres.units>
- 7 Aspirations framed in the context of the government's White Paper, *Realising our Potential: a strategy for science, engineering and technology*, of May 1993. London: HMSO
- 8 As quoted in *University of Durham: Development Framework and Masterplan*, by Shephard Epstein Hunter 2006, 1
- 9 Janet Tully and Alan Townsend, *Teesdale Business Park Survey* (Durham: University of Durham, 2002)
- 10 Tees Valley Unlimited, April 2014: Strategic Economic Plan, <https://www.teesvalleyunlimited.gov.uk/media/234704/sep.pdf>
- 11 Simon Coleman was formerly Reader in Anthropology at Durham University, and Bob Simpson is currently Professor in the Department of Anthropology
- 12 [https://www.dur.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice/researchprojects/debt\\_on\\_teesside](https://www.dur.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice/researchprojects/debt_on_teesside)

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