



NORTH of ENGLAND CIVIC TRUST

A study of the
Significance
which the
Angel of the North
gains from its
Setting



The Angel of the North overlooking a sliproad off the A1 soon after installation, 1998. This view is now obscured by trees

Image: Sally Ann Norman

Prepared by
North of England Civic Trust

With
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For
Gateshead Council | Historic England



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Foreword

This study was commissioned and jointly funded by Gateshead Council and Historic England. Both feel that *The Angel of the North* is important for Gateshead as a landmark, as a piece of art that many people enjoy, and increasingly as a visitor attraction with the economic benefits that brings. Because we consider *The Angel* to be an asset for the borough, we feel it is right to seek to protect it in the future.

This piece of work will help us and others to do this by understanding how changes to its surroundings may impact on how it is viewed and appreciated.

In 2016, Historic England held an exhibition in London and Newcastle called *Out There*, which showcased public art from the last 60 years. In these shows, the public were asked what piece of public sculpture made an impact on them and what should be protected in the future. *The Angel* was the most mentioned sculpture in response, showing how it is appreciated by people throughout England, and in turn how it helps to put Gateshead on the map.

Following this, Historic England approached Gateshead to discuss how *The Angel* could be protected in the future, and this commission was felt to be a sound first step to achieving this.

Gateshead Council
Historic England

January 2018





The Angel from the south, by the A1 sliproad to the Eighton Lodge roundabout, 1998. This view is now obscured by trees

Image: Colin Cuthbert

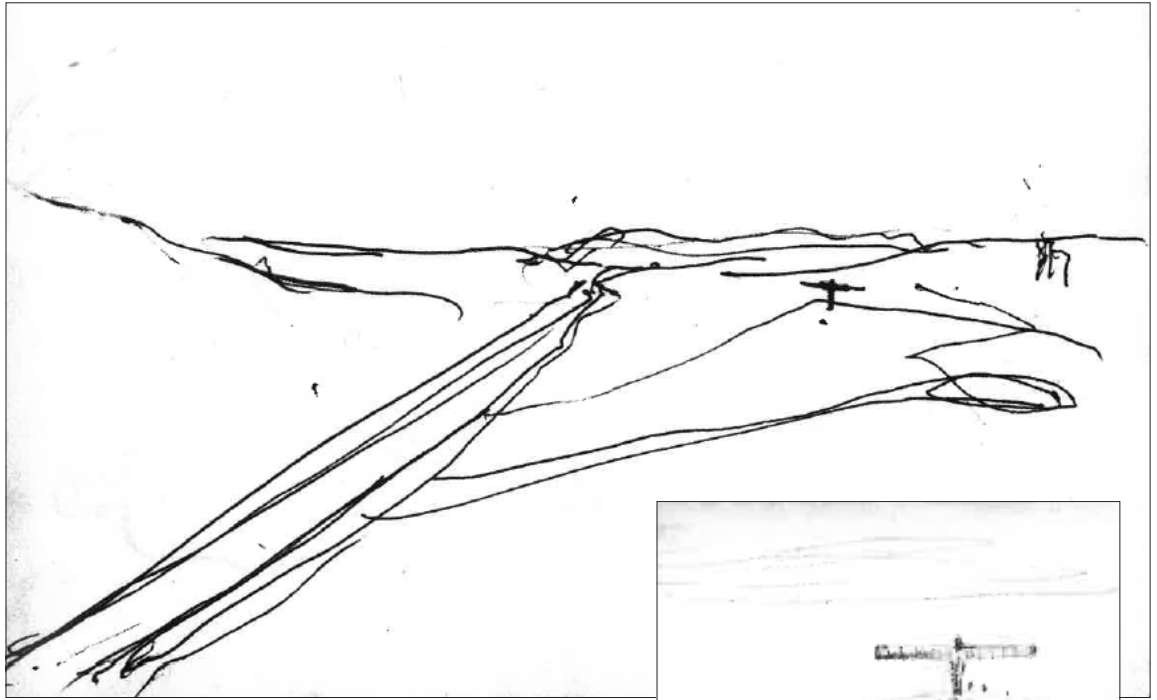
What is The Angel of the North?

The Angel of the North, by Antony Gormley (1998)

- 1.1 *The Angel of the North* is a site-specific landmark public sculpture by Sir Antony Gormley. It was installed in 1998 in Low Eighton, Gateshead. It is essentially a giant figure of a standing man with outstretched industrial wings instead of arms.
- 1.2 It is 20m high and 54m wide, and built from 208 tonnes (3,153 pieces) of weathering steel (Corten) characterised by an oxidised colour and ribbed surface. It is fixed by 52 3m long bolts to a sunken 700 ton concrete plinth, which is anchored by 20m concrete piles to its grassy mounded site. The wings are fixed to the body by 136 bolts and welds, and can withstand winds of up to 100mph.
- 1.3 The site, on the east side of Team Valley, is an elevated 'V' of land north of J66 of the A1 where it joins the A167 at Eighton Lodge roundabout (NZ264577). It is accessed off the A167 via a small car and coach park and a series of public footpaths over nearby land, which rise up to the foot of the sculpture and encircle its grassy mound. It is edged on the west and south sides by semi-mature woodland planting. To the north are the 1960s neighbourhoods of Allerdene and Harlow Green, including several 13-storey tower blocks which are prominent local landmarks.
- 1.4 A landmark sculpture was first conceived for this site by Gateshead Council in 1990 as an opportunity for an artist of international standing to produce a major landmark commission for the main southern approach to Gateshead and Tyneside, at the recently-remodelled junction of the A1 and A167. It would be a *"millennial image that would be a marker and a guardian for our town"*¹. The site was described in the brief as *"commanding views ... from distances of up to 4 kilometres arcing through 100°"*. The idea was sold on the strength of the site, *"a valley scarp at the greenbelt edge of Tyneside passed by 90,000 vehicles a day, the London-Edinburgh rail line in the middle distance, and Durham Cathedral on the horizon"*. Between 1989 and 1992, the site was reclaimed from the former Team Colliery, the remains of its pithead baths piled up to create a mound ready for an artwork *"ambitious in scale and aspect, a landmark, an emblem of the character of the region"*.
- 1.5 The commissioning process was led by the Council's Art in Public Places panel, and delivered by its Libraries & Arts and Planning & Engineering departments, supported by regional arts board Northern Arts. It followed a decade of smaller-scale public commissions in the borough which had led the way in a national movement of arts-led regeneration. It also followed the celebrated 1990 National Garden Festival in Gateshead, where open air sculpture had been one of the main attractions.

Right: Sketches by Antony Gormley prepared during design development, illustrating the inspiration for the sculpture's form, scale, prominence, orientation and openness which he took from its relationship with the Team Valley's topographical setting, transport routes and tower blocks. Note the cars sketched in the inset, which also imagines The Angel's foundations. 1994-95

Images: Making An Angel, Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1998, p17



- 1.6 Artists were researched, courted and shortlisted for over two years. By early 1994, Gormley was identified as the preferred artist. His initial response was “*I don't do roundabout art*”, but after visiting the site, he identified with it well and proposed an industrial piece based on his earlier concept *A Case for an Angel* (1990). By 1994, his sketches, and later a series of scaled maquettes, were generating huge interest as well as some negative media coverage. Planning permission was granted in 1995, yet opposition continued as costs and other concerns emerged. Funding for the work (which cost £800,000) was secured by April 1996, coming from sources outside the Council, including European Regional Development Fund, Arts Council (National Lottery), Northern Arts and private sponsorship (from Ove Arup & Partners, The Express Group Engineering, Silverscreen plc and GMB).
- 1.7 An education programme dedicated to the artwork ran for two years from 1995 (the year the sculpture's title was agreed). An artist-led project involving schools, pubs and a community group created a time capsule which was buried beneath its feet, intended to be opened in 2148. In 1996, UK Visual Arts Year was celebrated with a region-wide festival, including exhibiting Gormley's *Field for the British Isles* (1989-2003) in a former railway shed at Greenesfield, Gateshead. This proved a catalyst in changing public opinion in support of *The Angel*. In 1997, the Council began to create the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and the Gateshead Millennium Bridge, which added to its status as a leader in contemporary and public art-led regeneration.
- 1.8 Gormley saw *The Angel* as a collaboration between himself, the Council and those engineering, manufacturing and installing it (Ove Arup & Partners, Hartlepool Fabrications Ltd and others). The sculpture was made in an engineering shed in Hartlepool, which Gormley visited almost weekly from July 1997. Methods used in design, construction and installation were innovative for the time. It was transported to the site on 14 February 1998 in three sections – body and two wings – erected on

Right: the empty mounded site as illustrated in the brief for a new landmark sculpture. 1990

Image: Gateshead Council

Far right: Three photo-montages prepared during early planning discussions. Then, The Angel was to face more east than south, towards the A167. As designs developed, orientation was moved to the south, increasing its prominence across the valley, and emphasising it as a herald to rail and A1 travellers. 1994

Images: Arup

Below: Location plans

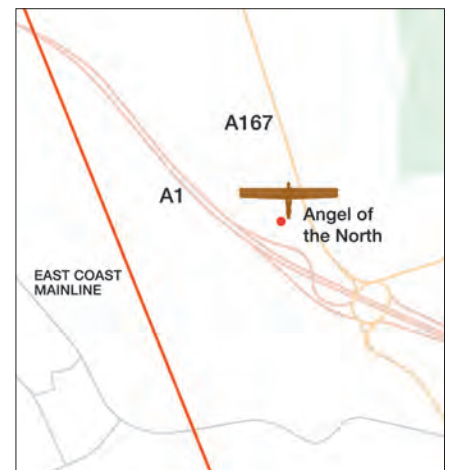
Images: Arup



15 February and inaugurated on 16 February, an event which witnessed *“the birth of a new place”*. A celebration day to mark the installation was held on 20 June. A large steel name plaque set in the grass nearby identifies the sculptor, commissioning body and funding partners (see back cover). The sculpture has since won many awards.

1.9 The sculpture and site are owned by Gateshead Council. The sculpture’s on-site display board refers to its landscape presence, saying it is seen on average by *“more than one person every second”*. It says the sculpture has inspired the community, brought pride, belief, confidence and investment to Gateshead, and brings *“daily, national and international attention”* to the borough and visitors from all over the world.

1.10 Apart from the expected slight change in colour of the weathering steel, the sculpture itself is unchanged from the day it was installed. Its setting has changed, both through direct action, such as through new development and road improvements, and also indirectly such as through the growth of trees and changes in the traffic passing by.



1 Quotes in this section are from *Making An Angel*, Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1998



*The Angel viewed from Elswick
Cemetery, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2017*

Image: Cathy Edy, Arup

Outline statement of significance

Introduction

- 2.1 Knowing what makes *The Angel of the North* special helps to look after it in the future. Understanding how and why it is significant makes it easier to manage change so that its special characteristics can be better protected and celebrated.
- 2.2 This section sets down an outline analysis of *The Angel's* significance under various themes, based on several strands of research and thought. It includes discussion in the context of contemporary public art, landscape character and the historic environment. It includes the results of a review of the way its significance has been evaluated by others.
- 2.3 The outline statement over the next few pages is organised under the following themes:
 - significance as **post-war public art**,
 - significance as **a piece of sculpture**,
 - significance to culture-led **regeneration and the re-imaging** of Gateshead and the region,
 - significance to **people**,
 - significance of **the artist**.
- 2.4 Contextual notes are given at the end of this section, including a brief history of public sculpture in England, plus a methodology and bibliography.

Significance as post-war public art

- 2.5 *The Angel of the North* (1998) is arguably the most prominent piece of post-World War II public art in the UK. It is part of a great continuum of sculpture, amplifying the strong British tradition of installing artworks by leading sculptors in the public realm as a statement of civic pride. It is a powerful example of the public, open air siting of sculpture which came to typify the post-war period. It is one of the earliest and still the leading UK example of site-specific landmark sculpture which characterised the final decade of the 20th century. It has re-defined the significance of sculpture within the field of public art.
- 2.6 Key to *The Angel's* pivotal place in the history of post-war public art are its site-specific, landmark qualities, its figurative subject matter, and its provenance as a local authority commission in the 1990s.
- 2.7 The artist Antony Gormley's attention to setting and site, as much as subject matter and form, produced a strong, credible and popular balance between many of the tensions of modern public sculpture. *The Angel* powerfully recognises that a designed relationship with location and setting can drive public sculpture as much as a reflection on a particular subject matter or theme, and that the result can have impact beyond artistic acclaim:
- Post-war works sited in a **particular location** but not necessarily inspired by that location have often been less critically successful. Some late 20th century works used in urban regeneration were more interested in popular impact than a creative response to place. But some of the most interesting drew strong inspiration from their landscape setting, such as Liz Leyh's concrete and fibreglass *Cows* (1978) in Milton Keynes. In the same way, *The Angel* draws its principal theme as a welcoming herald to visitors directly from its gateway location to the conurbation. It is a stand-alone piece driven by its topographical and landscape setting rather than an association with or subservience to a particular architectural development.
 - Whilst some early post-war work was of the **human figure**, much tended towards abstraction; pieces which departed strongly from familiar, organic forms tended to generate public scepticism. In contrast, *The Angel's* clearly human-like form provides a key hook for people to attach their own meaning, making it more readily engaging. It is a prominent example of a return to figurative public art, a theme which dominates Gormley's artworks. It is also a strong example of how the design of public art grew to encourage touching and, in this case, clambering and sitting.
 - Some post-war works have used **scale** to be intentionally provocative, often dividing opinion as a result (such as John Buckley's *Untitled* (1986), known as the 'Headington Shark'). In contrast, *The Angel's* dramatic scale is a direct response to that of its landscape setting and the requirements of the brief to provide a landmark piece. It has been called 'the first high-profile British act of gigantism in sculpture'; far from being artistic vanity, *The Angel's* giant human-like shape is a direct response to the panoramic site by an artist inspired across his portfolio by the human form.
- 2.8 *The Angel* marked a new phase in the **commissioning** of contemporary outdoor public art. In the 1990s, local authorities began to commission public sculpture from celebrated artists as a focal point for new development: "Size began to matter; a large sculpture, especially one by an internationally known artist, came to be seen as a significant sign of progress in local regeneration and an asset to the community" (*Public Art 1945-95*, Historic England, 2016, p13). *The Angel* is the UK's most high profile

Top right:
'Fulcrum',
1987,
Richard
Serra,
Broadgate,
London

Image:
Andrew Dunn
CC BY-SA
2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=287288>

Bottom
right: 'Bottle
of Notes',
1993, Claes
Oldenburg,
Middles-
brough

Image: Paul
Hudson CC-BY
2.0, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pahudson/>

example of this, acting as a symbol of the renaissance of a whole city-region, not just a single development or town. Its commissioning by a local authority is typical for the decade, yet the process by Gateshead Council, at the top of its public art game, was influential over many other authorities. As a key public image of the late 1990s, *The Angel* was quickly adopted as a symbol of the new millennium.



2.9 As well as works in Gormley's own portfolio, *The Angel's* **pedigree** can be seen in works by others at the time; none have yet achieved *The Angel's* prominence and acceptance. Richard Serra's *Fulcrum*

(1987) is a 17m high site-specific piece comprising five angular weathering steel plates sited in a new London square. This is similar in scale and materials yet, by not being figurative, is less engaging to the everyday observer. Other comparators can be found in the North East of England, a particular focus of public art commissioning bodies in the 1990s.



These include Claes Oldenburg's *Bottle of Notes* (1997) in Middlesbrough and David Mach's 39m long brick *Train* (1997) near Darlington. Both of these take inspiration from their sites' context and history but, unlike *The Angel*, they are not a direct response to the chosen landscape or townscape setting. Through a creative response to the sculpture's siting and scale, *The Angel* is the most ambitious and prominent example in the UK of site-specific landmark sculpture used as a place-making tool. It is an excellent example of artwork as an informal visitor destination.

2.10 *The Angel* is singled out in relevant **literature** on the history of modern public art. In the entry on 'public art in the 21st century' in *Grove Art Online* (the foremost scholarly art encyclopedia), *The Angel* is placed beside Richard Serra's *Titled Arc* (1981) in New York, and Christo's *Wrapped Reichstag* (1995) in Berlin as an example of site-specific landmark artworks that have achieved international iconic status. It features prominently in the UK/USA *Timeline for the History of Public Art 1900-2005* published in 2008. The sculpture has a detailed entry in the National Recording Project of the Public Monuments & Sculpture Association, published in *Public Sculpture of North-East England* in 2000. Pearson makes explicit mention of the influence of *The Angel* on UK contemporary public art practice in the introduction to her 2016 book *Public Art since 1950*. Despite its date, it is singled out in Historic England's 2016 *Introductions to Heritage Assets: Public Art 1945-95*.

2.11 The work has won a string of **awards** from the arts, regeneration and engineering sectors, including:

- 1995 National Art Collection Fund Award for outstanding contribution to the visual arts,
- 1996 Arts Council working for cities award,
- 1998 British Constructional Steelwork Association best structural steel design,
- 1998 Northern Electric & Gas Awards arts event of the year,
- 1999 South Bank Arts Show award for visual art,
- 2000 Civic Trust best architecture, regeneration and heritage award.

Significance as a piece of sculpture

- 2.12 A note on **art appreciation**. It is not possible to produce a definitive appreciation of *The Angel* as a piece of public art, not least because it would need the input of public opinion. Yet some indication can be given of its success as a piece of sculpture. Appreciating art requires a balance of objective information and subjective opinion. Understanding more about the artwork and its context allows more robust opinion. Everyone's opinion will differ, yet amongst any given audience there will usually be a core consensus on whether a piece is liked or disliked, and why. This is why we have celebrated art displayed in galleries and museums, why some pieces have such high financial value, and why some works are so well-known and admired by the general public. The following is an outline appreciation of *The Angel* as a piece of sculpture.
- 2.13 In *The Angel of the North*, Antony Gormley's creative response uses the basic variables of sculptural design to striking and intriguing effect:
- The creative use of **scale** is key to *The Angel's* presence, and defines it as a **site-specific landmark sculpture**. It is designed to relate to the size and shape of the valley in which it stands; the valley's topographical scale inspired the monumental response to *The Angel's* scale. Its exaggerated size commands attention, makes it intentionally visible, prominent and significant in the landscape. This generates a range of experiences of it over a long, wide distance. It adds a great deal of intrigue to the sculpture, increasing our interest in it, increasing the size of its audience, and encouraging us to have an opinion. As viewers tend to relate a figurative sculpture's scale to their own, its very large scale gives *The Angel* more emotional impact.
 - Its **subject matter** and **proportions** are human-like, creating a figurative form that is readily recognisable yet, at the same time, strikingly alien in the unexpected look of its upper limbs. A **figurative form** makes the piece approachable. Such a familiar shape is easy to engage with; the single human figure is common in sculpture for its emotional relatability and expressive opportunity. Yet the ambiguity of *The Angel's* wings makes it a fantastical being, a theme also common in sculptural history. The wings are the trigger for our imagination to explore deeper meaning and purpose, with ideas prompted by the sculpture's title. Such unexpected revision of a familiar form is partly what makes *The Angel* such a provocative piece. Gormley has described being inspired by his relationship with his own body, often – as here – using casts of his body to shape his artistic response to being human.
 - The sculpture's **orientation** is a key aspect of its meaning. The figure faces south, towards several major transport routes which, because of the Team Valley's location and topography, are at a principal gateway to Gateshead and the Tyneside conurbation. The creative response was to see *The Angel* as a herald, a messenger announcing the traveller's arrival, a benevolent representative of the community that it stands on front of, opening its wings in a suggested embrace. This creates a warmth to the sculpture to counter the exposure of the site.
 - The sculpture's **articulation** and **compositional balance** are powerfully solid. The figure's gravitational axis is symmetrically central, its stance bolt-upright, creating a vertical rigidity which brings an **expressive character** of firmness, strength and composure. The outstretched wings are the key expressive element of the piece, exaggerated beyond the length of arms that the human-like figure might otherwise have had. They have a flat, horizontal rigidity which expresses super-human poise and strength. In contrast, the fullness of the legs, torso and head are more naturalistic, expressing an adult man (the artist modelled it on a cast of his own body) with some parts slightly exaggerated (eg. the calves).

- 2.14 The **material** used is important. Metal is a common material in sculpture history. As here, its tensile strength has far greater freedom than stone, allowing considerable manipulation of balance and articulation. The use of Corten weathering steel, which has a natural patina and a texture rough to the eyes and hands, increases the expressiveness of the sculpture both from a distance and close up. Its iron-rich colour relates *The Angel* to the earth on which it stands. Steel casting, cutting, welding and assembly are manufacturing processes traditionally embedded in the regional workforce, and the artist expressed his desire to see the sculpture's production process as much a part of the artwork as the product itself. The use of ribs – an exoskeleton for strength – as the key **surface expression** means its appearance is brought to life through highlights and shadows that vary both as the sun moves across the sky and as the viewer moves round the work. The artist says that the increased spacing of the ribs along the wings expresses emitting energy, highlighting its place in history at a time when the region was still regenerating from industrial decline to a technological age.
- 2.15 The artistic principles of *The Angel* are found in **sculpture in the round**, ie. it is an independent structure which needs to be seen from several angles to be fully appreciated. The **voids** around it are as important as the structural form. The balance between the metal mass and open space is what gives *The Angel* its distinctive shape: the viewer must be able to see around the sculpture to appreciate it. Seeing *The Angel* on the horizon against open sky is the essential way of experiencing this; the extreme version is the silhouette, where the content of the piece is entirely obscured leaving only the void around it to express its presence and shape. Some of the most striking experiences of *The Angel* are in silhouette. It is not possible to see all of it at once as it has a front, a back and sides; the viewer must move around it to experience it fully. This kinetic experience is exploited in its ribbed articulation (as discussed above) and it includes being able to walk up to and beneath the sculpture, where perspective forces its form to be ever more exaggerated the closer the viewer gets to it. It is not intended to be viewed from any particular angle, yet its expressive shape is best appreciated head-on or at an oblique angle, the most expressive of which is the $\frac{3}{4}$ -profile where the wings become a dynamic diagonal. Because the subject matter is human-like, the front will inevitably carry more meaning than the back. The piece has a sense of reality which partly makes it possible for the viewer to interpolate, or imagine, what cannot be seen. For example, seeing the sculpture from the waist up implies that it has legs. Yet the bizarre nature of its upper limbs suggests the full form must be seen to fully appreciate what *The Angel* might be and allow personal interpretation of it.
- 2.16 *The Angel* is an excellent example of how, by the **end of the 20th century**, sculpture had broken free from many of the common historical themes of the medium. It is a leading example the new types of sculpture which modern art introduced after World War II, using themes found in land art, environmental sculpture, site-specific sculpture, kinetic sculpture and street art. Through various changes, sculpture became a more expressive art form which went beyond mere representation from life to communicate and provoke deeper feelings and emotions. For example:
- *The Angel* is **not a representation from life**: it is human-like yet not human, its form is both familiar and bizarre, with exaggerated proportions and unexpected limbs which break away from a truthful imitation of reality. Yet *The Angel* is not so abstract that it leaves the viewer detached from its meaning; its figurative subject matter can be readily interpreted and personal imagination applied to it.
 - It is **not commemorative**, in that it does not memorialise or honour a historical person or event. This was particularly common in 18th, 19th and early 20th century 'plinth and pedestal' public sculpture. As a result, a viewer of *The Angel* is afforded

- free interpretation, making it more informal, populist and communally engaging.
- It does not adhere to the sculptural tradition of working with solid mass. Its **voids** are as important as the structure itself, both the voids expressed in the ribbed structure and, in particular, the great spaces above and below the wings that allow its essential shape to be expressed so powerfully.
 - Whilst it firmly uses the **symbolism** of its location, *The Angel* is a good example of how symbolism in modern sculpture is not always straightforward (unlike, say, the obvious symbolism of four Classical figures which might be sculpted to symbolise 'the four seasons'). Instead, *The Angel* provokes thoughts of mankind's deeper insights, beliefs or emotions which are personal to the viewer.
 - Although the sculpture itself does not move, the idea of the **kinetic experience of sculpture** is an innovation which *The Angel* strongly represents: it is designed to be seen on the move from traffic on the A1, the A167 and East Coast Mainline railway.
 - It is a good example of the **process of commissioning and design development** being as much a part of the creative response as the work itself. The brief began the creative exercise by examining the significance of the site. Preparation and submission of the concept (including the use of scale maquettes), materials selection and design development (including with Arup), and manufacturing and installation were all part of Gormley's innovative, collaborative, creative response.
 - *The Angel* is a good example of how the **sculptor is sometimes designer rather than craftsman**. Because of its scale and design, *The Angel* could only be executed by a team of metalworkers and assemblers, even if the concept, form and imaginative content are Gormley's.
 - It is an excellent example of both **direct metal sculpture** and **sculpture through assembly**. The use of the oxyacetylene welding torch as a sculptor's tool opened up new creative opportunities, such as skeletal structures, linear and highly extended forms, and complex, curved sheet forms. *The Angel* is a powerful example of these. Constructional methods have allowed sculptors to better explore new spatial and expressive aspects of sculpture, to create outdoor sculpture using techniques common in the construction of buildings and vehicles, and to create works more quickly and at a greater scale than carving and modelling.
 - It is a clear example of how contemporary sculpture has a growing affinity with the work of **modern industrial designers**. The creative endeavours of modern-day artistic sculptors, product designers, architects and civil engineers can often be seen to converge; *The Angel* represents this trend well.
 - It goes **beyond the purely visible**. Traditionally seen as a visual art only, sculpture which involves touch, sound and even scent is another 20th century innovation. *The Angel* is a good example of how the choice of material was partly made on its tactile qualities: touching is encouraged.

2.17 Historic England sums up many of the strands of *The Angel* as post-war sculpture in a pertinent paragraph: *"Much post-war public art is site-specific, made with a particular building or location in mind, and sometimes reflecting or portraying the activities carried out within or nearby, currently or in the past. Thus there are strong associations between pieces produced for former industrial areas and their local communities; they are reminders of the past which may prevent industries and events from being completely forgotten. Over time, even abstract works, perhaps initially disliked or regarded as irrelevant, become accepted through familiarity, leading to a sense of communal ownership and local historical significance. Works by internationally-known artists can confer broader significance on their locations, a sense of artistic, cultural and even financial worth."* (2016, p15)

Significance to culture-led regeneration and the re-imagining of Gateshead and the region

2.18 *The Angel* has played a key role in the cultural regeneration of Gateshead, Tyneside and the North East.

Right:
Another site-specific piece in Gateshead's public art portfolio. 'Rolling Moon', 1990, Colin Rose, Gateshead Riverside Sculpture Park

Image:
Andrew Curtis
CC BY-SA 2.0

2.19 Even before *The Angel*, place context had been key to the **commissioning of public art** in Gateshead. The borough first became involved in art in the environment in the early 1980s, and by 1986 a large-scale pioneering public art programme had been established. Over 80 pieces were commissioned, each individually designed for a specific site, and most incorporating references to local history and culture. *The Angel* amplified this, demonstrating how a sense of place had long been significant to Gateshead Council's commissioning process, with the brief for an artist encouraging them to respond to the site and landscape in which their piece would be installed. The Gateshead model went on to gain national and international recognition and accolades, and has been influential to other commissioning bodies. *The Angel's* continuing relationship with its setting demonstrates this history, and it has become the most high profile piece in Gateshead's public art collection.



Right:
Gateshead Quays

Image: Visit
England

2.20 Gormley's sculpture marked the tipping point for the **cultural renewal** of the borough and the region. *The Angel* represented a step-change in the impact of the Council's long-term arts-led regeneration strategy, and was the key to unlocking the



cultural and economic development potential of the Gateshead Quays, acting as a catalyst for the Gateshead Millennium Bridge, the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and Sage Gateshead. *The Angel* is part of this set of international cultural destinations. Its prominence has raised the profile of Gateshead and the North East, bringing national and world-wide recognition to the borough, and helping to improve its image. As a result of its siting, it is one of the most recognisable and internationally known artworks of modern times. *The Angel* is a key visitor attraction on Tyneside, now attracting over 200,000 visitors a year; this is comparable to Gibside, the main National Trust property in the borough. Since it was installed, an estimated 2.25 million people have visited *The Angel*, and 495 million passers-by – almost half a billion – have seen it.

2.21 The project has had a remarkable wider impact, being instrumental in building the North East's reputation as a leader in **adventurous public art**. The iconic status achieved by *The Angel* nationally and internationally became a symbol of what a forward-looking local authority could achieve. It demonstrated the Council's ability to commission an original landmark work of art and to stand by it in the early days of commissioning. It has become the touchstone comparator work for other landmark public art commissions, influencing the ambition of other authorities and agencies

who aspire to create iconic pieces to distinguish their cities or regions, and to bring about positive change as a result. Many such sculptures, some of them extremely large scale, have been installed since (eg. Sean Henry's *Couple* (2007) at Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Jaume Plensa's *Dream* (2009) in St Helens, and Andy Scott's *The Kelpies* (2013) in Falkirk); others remain proposals (eg. Mark Wallinger's giant white horse proposal for Ebbsfleet, Thames Gateway, labelled by the national press as 'the Angel of the South'). Thus, Gormley's sculpture is not just iconic for Gateshead but also as a demonstration of how the power of landmark public art can change the perception of a place: from a post-industrial town to a cultural destination. For example, Gateshead featured as one of eight new 'world cultural meccas' in *Newsweek* magazine in 2002. *The Angel's* clear outline and its presence on Gateshead's skyline are a crucial part of demonstrating this impact, showing how it has functioned to refashion the image of the borough.

Right:
Still from
BBC One
station ident
footage,
2001

2.22 *The Angel* is a truly **iconic** work. It is one of the most replicated symbols of Tyneside through image recognition, media attention and place-branding across Gateshead, Tyneside and the North East. The expectation at the time of commissioning – that it would become as famous a landmark as the Tyne Bridge – has proven to be the case. Its image is ubiquitous across Gateshead, Tyneside, the North East and nationally. Few representations are themselves



significant: its image remains more significant than any reproduction of it. It features in the recent redesign of the UK passport, has been on a Royal Mail stamp, and is one of 12 'English icons' on a DCMS-funded website (along with Stonehenge, a cup of tea, Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII and the FA Cup). The popular media have played a key role in building *The Angel's* iconic status. It filled the front page of the 1 January 2000 edition of *The Times*. From 2001, it was the star of one of several national 'station idents' broadcast daily on BBC One; this saw a hot air balloon over *The Angel* against a clear sky with football being played on the pitch in its lee, popularising a wider view of the sculpture in its setting. *The Angel* remains a flagship image for regional BBC TV news and is seen daily in other print and broadcast media (eg. Sky Sports and local TV channel Made In Tyne & Wear). In 2017 it was the only public art included in a BBC online article on 'UK landmarks that tell you you're nearly home'. It is used in local tourism campaigns, and is the subject of both considered artistic representations (such as work by local artists Corinne Lewis and Ben Holland) and all manner of commercial merchandise and branding. Examples of its image being adopted by local businesses include a nearby pub changing its name to the Angel View Inn, a Tyneside estate agent branding itself as the Agent of the North, and a specially-liveried bus route. A popular representation with global reach was a CD cover by pop group Lighthouse Family (who formed on Tyneside), released in 1998 when they were at their commercial height. In almost all of these representations, imagery concentrates on the pure, close-at-hand form of its structure expressed by the voids around it, using the head-on or front ¾-profile view as a motif, often against a clear sky or in silhouette.

2.23 The various scale **maquettes** of *The Angel* made during design development are now very collectable and have attracted high valuations by Sotheby's and BBC *Antiques Roadshow*. Maquettes now in public collections include Gateshead's own (Shingley Art Gallery and Civic Centre), the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, Brussels Airport and the National Gallery in Canberra. One is in the private local collection of Pet Shop Boys front-man Neil Tennant who was born on Tyneside.

Significance to people

- 2.24 In its development phase, *The Angel* project attracted some lively opposition locally, but four years after the sculpture's installation, around two-thirds of Gateshead residents were reported to have made a special visit to it. At least 2,000 people were reported to have attended the celebrations for its 10th birthday in 2008. One recent study argues that the presence of *The Angel* actively contributes to the wellbeing of local residents in Gateshead, serving to reinforce feelings of homecoming and local pride. 72% of people surveyed in that study said that they felt good when they saw it.
- 2.25 *The Angel* is arguably the best known and most easily recognisable public artwork in the UK. It is also one of the most instantly recognisable pieces of modern art in the country. During the twenty years since its completion in 1998 it has regularly featured in national media lists of the 'top ten' public artworks. It was voted the most recognisable landmark in the UK by a Travelodge poll, took fourth place in the top 100 classic designs of the 20th century compiled by the BBC in 1998, and was named the 6th Wonder of the World by the RAC. Such popular acclaim highlights the high levels of recognition and affection *The Angel* generates from the public as a piece of contemporary public sculpture.

Angel Education programme, 1995

Image: Mark Pinder

- 2.26 A communicative bond between people and *The Angel* is well recorded. For example, the installation *Dear Angel* based on public creative writing (dearangel.org), the poem *I married the Angel of the North* by local poet Peter Mortimer, and poems written by the public at www.verses4cards.co.uk/angel-of-the-north-poems.html are some of the many expressions of communing with the sculpture which it has generated. The teenage protagonists in the Jonathan Tulloch novel *The Season Ticket* (2000), and its film adaptation *Purely Belter* (2000), are seen to pray to *The Angel* to help them achieve their goals. The sculpture has developed public and private meaning, a location where people take friends and visitors, and where they choose to celebrate life changes, including civil ceremonies and as a personal memorial, with flowers and tributes often placed nearby. Such a high profile communal relationship between people and public art is very rare, and demonstrates a sense of connection and 'ownership'. This can be directly attributed to the site-specific purpose designed into it: Gormley says "*The work stands, without a spotlight or a plinth, day and night, in wind, rain and shine and has many friends*". Physical accessibility is important to this; touching and sitting on it are freely permitted.
- 2.27 Other more informal evidence on social media shows people's engagement with *The Angel*. For example, Farley (2014) has begun to classify tweets about *The Angel*. Image-based tweets tended to fall into three categories: (1) links to others' images, (2) original images of close-up encounters, and (3) original images of landmark shots or glimpses when on the move linked to notions of 'sightings' or 'arrival'. Text-based tweets tended to (1) see *The Angel* as a progress marker, (2) offer emotional or imaginative responses to it as art, (3) link it to wider public art discussions, or (4) ascribe the work's title to someone or something else, often ironically. Such everyday, wide-ranging interaction with public art in social media is unusual, and it is significant that much of it relates to the viewer's experience of the work in the landscape, often whilst travelling.



Significance of the artist

Right:
Antony Gormley with one of the scale maquettes of *The Angel* made during design development

Image:
Gateshead Council

- 2.28 *The Angel* was created by internationally renowned artist Sir Antony Gormley OBE. Born in 1950, Gormley was at the forefront of a generation of celebrated younger British artists who emerged during the 1980s. He is an alumnus of Trinity College Cambridge, Saint Martin's, Goldsmiths and the Slade. He has exhibited work around the world and has major public works installed in the UK, USA, Japan, Australia, Norway and Ireland. Public work in Britain can be seen in locations as diverse as the Scottish coast and Birmingham city centre. He has exhibited in the Victoria & Albert Museum, Tate Gallery, British Museum and the Henry Moore Sculpture Gallery in Leeds. He has created work through the influential Cass Sculpture Foundation.
- 2.29 Awards for his work include the 1994 Turner Prize, the 1999 South Bank Prize for visual art, the 2007 Bernhard Heiliger award for sculpture, and 2012 Obayashi Prize, and the 2013 Praemium Imperiale laureate for sculpture. He became a Royal Academician in 2003 and is an Honorary Fellow of both the Royal Society of Arts and the Royal Institute of British Architects. He is a trustee of the British Museum and a former trustee of the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art.
- 2.30 In 1997 Gormley was awarded an OBE for his services to sculpture. He was knighted in the 2014 New Year's Honours for services to the arts.
- 2.31 *The Angel of the North* is arguably Gormley's most internationally famous work. It is a very intellectually accessible 'public gateway' piece to one of Britain's leading contemporary public artists. The relationship between the human figure and its setting is fundamental to Gormley's portfolio. He repeats the metaphor of a sculptural figure in a mysterious relationship with the landscape in much of his open air work, including *Haavman* in a Norwegian fjord (1995), *Another Place* on Crosby beach (2005), *Horizon Field* in the Austrian Alps (2010-12), and *Grip* on the Kintyre coast (2014). Other *Angel* references are seen in much of his work, such as the use of a very large scale figure in *Waste Man* (2006) and *Exposure* in Leystad (2010), and the outstretched embrace in *Field* (1984-85) and *Poles Apart* (1996).
- 2.32 Gormley has said of *The Angel*: "People are always asking, why an angel? The only response I can give is that no-one has ever seen one and we need to keep imagining them. *The Angel* has three functions – firstly a historic one to remind us that below this site coal miners worked in the dark for two hundred years, secondly to grasp hold of the future, expressing our transition from the industrial to the information age, and lastly to be a focus for our hopes and fears."
- 2.33 He has said of *The Angel's* site: "The hilltop site is important and has the feeling of being a megalithic mound. When you think of the mining that was done underneath the site, there is a poetic resonance. Men worked beneath the surface in the dark. Now in the light, there is a celebration of this industry. The face will not have individual features. The effect of the piece is in the alertness, the awareness of space and the gesture of the wings – they are not flat, they're about 3.5 degrees forward and give a sense of embrace. The most important thing is that this is a collaborative venture. We are evolving a collective work from the firms of the North East and the best engineers in the world."



Contextual notes

Methodology

- 2.34 Several strands have been used to prepare the above outline statement. Historic England sets out a way of evaluating the significance of heritage assets. *The Angel* will be 20 years old in 2018 and so is already part of the historic environment¹, meaning it could be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset². That would make it worthy of a degree of conservation³, the degree of which should be defined by how significant it is. Historic England's four themes of significance are: evidential survival, historical interest, aesthetic merit, and communal value⁴. Significance can come from the heritage asset itself and also from our experience of the asset in its setting⁵.
- 2.35 The above outline statement also uses themes relevant to the evaluation of art objects, such as provenance, rarity, visual and sensory impact, historical meaning, and the object's creative, engagement or economic potential. It also uses themes seen in landscape character assessment, such as topography, land use, views, cultural associations and history. All of these themes are woven into the outline statement.

Sculpture and public art

- 2.36 The following definitions provide context:
- **Sculpture** is an artistic form in which hard or plastic materials are worked into three-dimensional art objects. The sculptor produces the work by applying creativity to a series of basic variables.
 - **Public art** is any artwork (temporary or permanent, in any medium) which can be accessed and appreciated by members of the public (whether the site is publicly-owned or not); it includes art which is inside publicly-accessible buildings.
- 2.37 Public sculpture is very abundant in our landscape; one estimate puts the number of works of public sculpture in England at around 15,000. Historic England recognises that the best will have high prominence, historic interest and aesthetic merit. For some this will be defined by location, setting and context.
- 2.38 There is a large amount of public art in England from the post-war period: maybe around 6,000 works, mostly sculpture and murals. Perhaps 4,000 of these were commissioned in the last 30 years, demonstrating its growth as a movement in recent decades. Works comprise everything from abstract metal sculptures to fibreglass reliefs on buildings. They can be sited in both formal and everyday settings, and can be by artists ranging from the internationally known to the totally unknown.
- 2.39 Some post-war public art is listed, including over 90 works of sculpture, over 30 sculptural World War II war memorials, and over 70 murals in or on listed buildings.

1 Historic environment: "all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora." (National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012, DCMS, Annex 2)

2 Heritage asset: "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. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)." (ibid)

3 Conservation: "The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance." (ibid)

4 Communal value: "the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory." (Conservation Principles, 2008, English Heritage)

5 Setting: "The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral." (NPPF, 2012, DCMS, Annex 2)

A brief history of public sculpture in England, emphasising the post-war period

Right: One of the earliest pieces of monumental public sculpture in England: Monument to the Great Fire of London, 1671-77, London

Image: Eluveitie CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18860993>

- 2.40 The history of public sculpture in England stretches from the mysterious carved hill figures of prehistory, through the intricacy of medieval churchyard monuments, the grand planning of the Classical landscape revival, and the 'statuemanía' of the 19th century, to the great progressive statements of 20th century civic pride.
- 2.41 Public sculpture spread into Britain during the Stuart period first as a way of commemorating royalty. In the Georgian period, architects and sculptors contributed to a rise in open air, freestanding sculpture often as part of designed landscapes and formal architectural compositions. New work commemorated individuals and events, or used iconographic statements such as obelisks and columns as part of a Baroque rediscovery of Classical antiquity. This was fed by the acquisition of Classical sculpture as 'souvenirs' from the Grand Tour which were installed in Picturesque gardens across England. But whilst this was open air, much of it was only seen in private parks.
- 2.42 The early 19th century saw a big increase in the public patronage of sculpture, with Parliament voting to spend £40,000 on national monuments between 1802-1812, often to adorn grand landscaped squares. So began the British tradition of commissioning urban public sculpture. Ostentatious public statuary saw a golden age under the Victorians due to their fascination with history, fame and pride, and a desire to aggrandise growing towns and cities with public symbols of civic pride, including in public parks. Yet in most cases, 19th century 'plinth and pedestal' public sculpture had only a tenuous relationship with its site; it was the subject matter which was key.
- 2.43 The idea that free-standing sculpture could have a conscious relationship to its site, and particularly to landscape, emerged in the 1930s with Modernist sculpture, and specifically with the work of British artists Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. The mid-20th century institutional promotion of sculpture – characterised as bringing art to the people – was an intrinsic part of post-World War II reconstruction. Early activity included opportunities to view temporary outdoor sculpture, culminating in the 1951 Festival of Britain where 8 million visitors saw over 30 sculptures exhibited in a positive relationship with buildings, showing how it could form part of the modern townscape.
- 2.44 From the late 1940s, public authorities began to commission open air artworks, often in housing estates and schools. London County Council, and Leicestershire and Hertfordshire education authorities were pioneers. This widened from the mid-1950s with more civic, educational and commercial developments incorporating art, particularly in the new towns. Some sculptures were thoughtfully incorporated into buildings by enlightened architects, but much was commissioned separately without reference to site or architecture, and sometimes looked out of place as a result.
- 2.45 Truly site-specific – as opposed to merely open-air – sculpture is rooted in the Land Art and Minimalist movements of the 1960s and 70s. Here the site was not just the setting for a sculpture but was an intrinsic part of an artwork's meaning. From then on, public sculpture became increasingly site-specific, such as by referencing local history or taking a cue from the landscape. Several sculpture parks were established at this time.



Right: an example of post-war open air sculpture. 'Draped Seated Woman' 1957-58, Henry Moore, Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Image: David Sands, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=13042598>

- 2.46 By the 1980s, public art creation was increasingly professionalised, and it reconnected art with architecture. A Percent for Art scheme saw new development cover the cost of public art within it. Several National Garden Festivals, from Liverpool in 1984 to Gateshead in 1990, ignited the idea of sculpture as an urban regeneration tool. Gateshead was a pioneer in arts-led regeneration, with the 1998 *Angel of the North* heralding a host of landmark



sculptures across the country intended to publicise their localities. Funders of such works included central and local government, the National Lottery (especially through the Arts Council and the Millennium Commission), the Europe Union, and sponsorship. The 1990s also saw a number of works to mark the new millennium as well as a resurgence in traditional commemorative statuary.

- 2.47 The extraordinary rise in the amount of public art installed in the second half of the 20th century resulted in many areas having more post-war public artworks than the total of works surviving from the previous centuries.

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*The Angel from the
footbridge over the
A1, south of Eighton
Lodge Roundabout
(Junction 66),
2017*

*Image: Jules
Brown, NECT*

Significance from setting

Introduction

- 3.1 The previous section sets out how, as a site-specific landmark piece of art, *The Angel's* significance is greatly defined by an ability to experience it from within its landscape setting. This makes it important to understand the way setting contributes to the site's significance. What *The Angel* means to us will not only be affected by the artwork itself but by its setting as well.
- 3.2 Changes to *The Angel's* setting will affect its significance, so being able to protect *The Angel* will involve managing change in its setting as well as looking after the sculpture itself.

What is setting?

- 3.3 The NPPF says that the setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which it is experienced.
- 3.4 The extent of setting is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, they may affect the ability to appreciate that significance, or they may be neutral (NPPF, 2012, Annex 2).
- 3.5 As the contents of *The Angel's* setting evolve or are better understood, so its contribution to *The Angel's* significance could change. This process of evolution can be abrupt, such as with the construction of a new building nearby, or much slower, such as with the growth of trees or a gradual increase or decrease in road traffic. Understanding how past change has occurred can help plan for future change.

Managing setting

- 3.6 Because *The Angel's* setting evolves, it cannot be fully defined or mapped for all time. Change in its setting is inevitable, so being able to manage it in the best interests of the sculpture is central to protecting what makes *The Angel* special.
- 3.7 The ability of *The Angel's* setting to accommodate change without harming significance is called its sensitivity. Not all parts of the work's setting will have the same sensitivity to change, so understanding the nature of the relationship between *The Angel* and its setting helps us understand how much it can change without causing unjustified harm.
- 3.8 Armed with this information, *The Angel's* setting can be managed more successfully. For most changes, this is managed through planning policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and related government Planning Policy Guidance (PPG), and in other national and local planning policy and guidance. For some changes, it may be managed through other public policy arenas, such as national infrastructure planning or environmental impact assessment, or in local management decisions unaffected by planning policy.

Right:
Sections
across *The
Angel's
setting* at
approx.
1:50,000

1. East-west
section
across *Team
Valley* from
Ravensworth
to Springwell

2. North-
south
section from
Newcastle
upon Tyne to
Chester-le-
Street

In both
diagrams,
the land
profile and
the scale
of *The
Angel* are
exaggerated
by a ratio of
1:4 to make
them easier
to see on the
page

Images: Arup

Understanding *The Angel's* setting

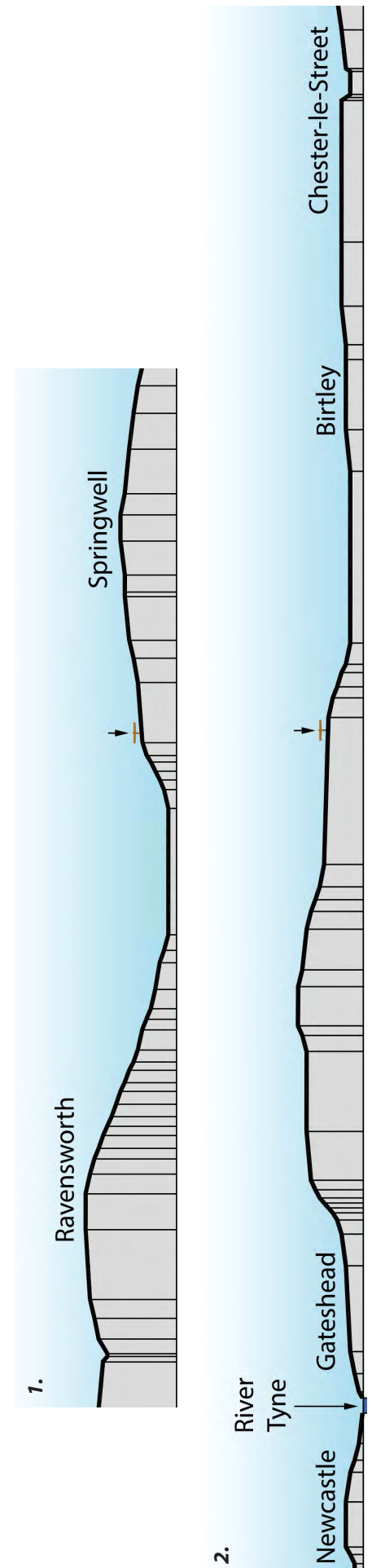
3.9 To help protect what makes *The Angel* special, we need to understand the nature, extent and level of significance afforded to it by its setting. This stems from its physical surroundings and the way it is appreciated from and within them. This is analysed below using a series of themes. They are, in no particular order:

- **topography,**
- **prominence,**
- **visibility,**
- **communing,**
- **amid the ordinary,**
- **openness.**

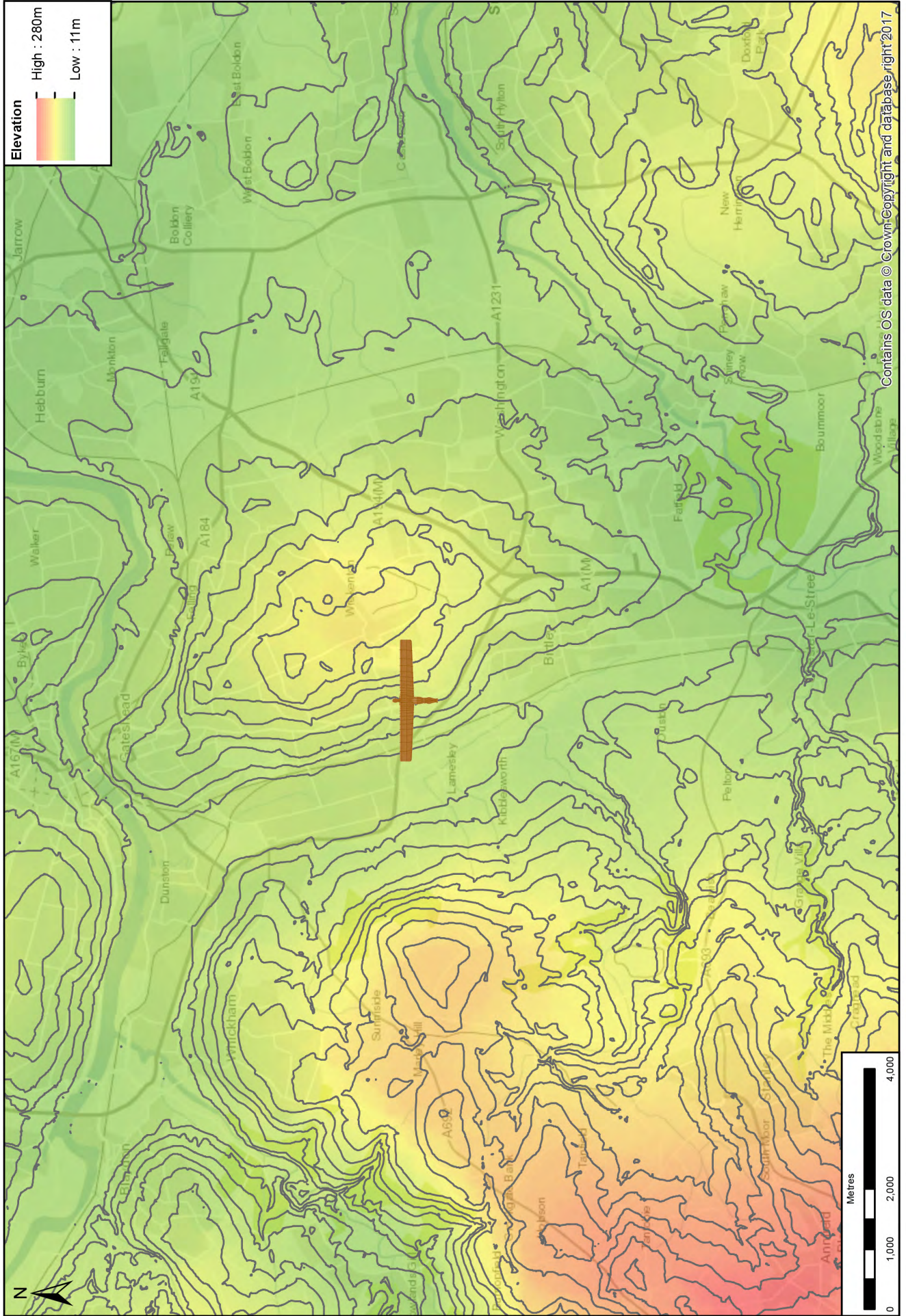
3.10 These themes are drawn from the above analysis of *The Angel's* significance informed by guidance in *The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3* (Historic England, 2015). This is published to provide information on good practice to assist local authorities and others in implementing historic environment policy and guidance.

3.11 In addition to these, there are several over-arching themes which apply across the analysis:

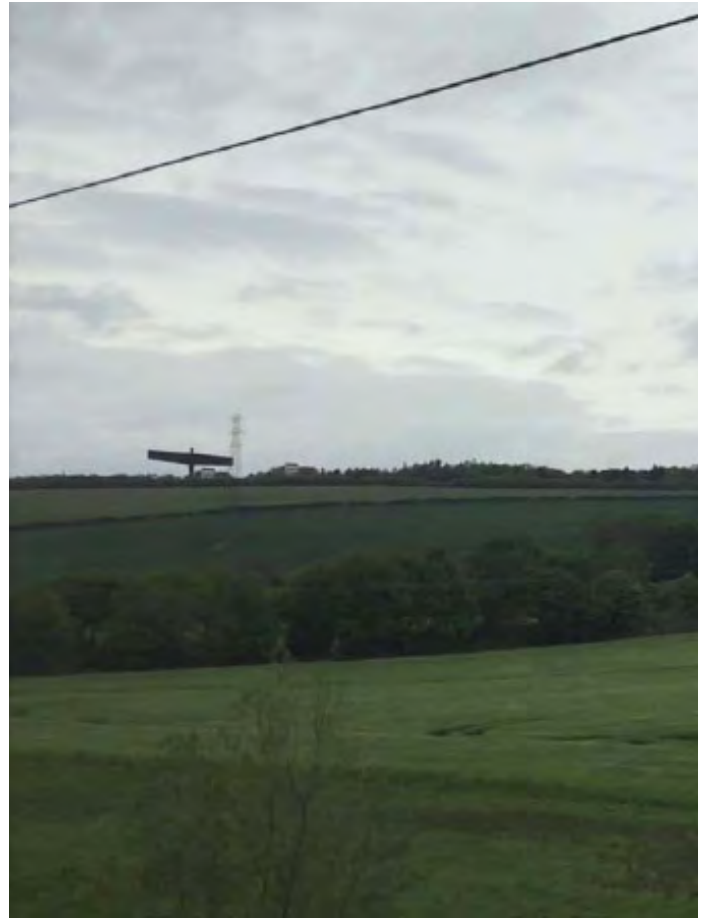
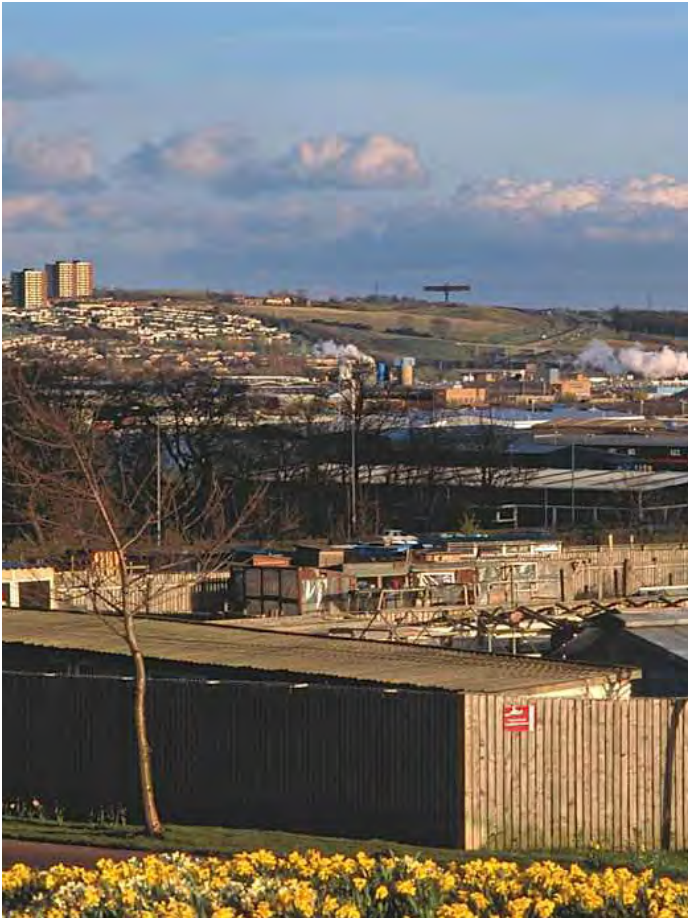
- The themes relate primarily to views, but **not only to views**. As brought out in the discussion below, other aspects are also important such as spatial characteristics, meanings, other physical senses including touch and sound, and other feelings such as a sense of anticipation or of excitement.
- The themes are **not defined only by how public the experience is**. As *The Angel's* significance is greatly defined by it being a piece of public art, public access to the experience will usually make it a stronger contributor to *The Angel's* significance. Yet the quantity of members of the public accessing an experience will be less relevant, because part of *The Angel's* significance is in the personal, private relationships that individuals have with it as a piece of art. There are some views from private spaces which demonstrate the quality of the relationship it has with its setting.
- The themes are linked to **economic and social viability**, both of *The Angel* as a part of Gateshead's cultural offer, and also to other component parts of its setting as an everyday part of suburban Gateshead.



Below: The Team Valley and adjoining Tyne Valley, showing the position of The Angel Image: Arup



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Clockwise from top left: *The Angel seen across Team Valley from Beggarswood Allotments, Lobley Hill, 1998; image: Colin Cuthbert. The Angel seen from the train along the valley floor, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT. Looking north from The Angel's feet towards Newcastle on the north bank of the Tyne including three West Road tower blocks on the horizon, 2017; image: Jules Brown NECT. Looking south-west from The Angel's feet across Birtley and, in the far distance, Durham Cathedral, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT*

Topography

The physical shape of the land

- 3.12 Topography is a key attribute of *The Angel's* setting which contributes to its significance.
- 3.13 It is in Tyne & Wear Lowlands National Character Area, which is gently undulating, incised by river valleys and heavily urbanised but with wide agricultural areas. The Gateshead Urban Character Assessment identifies *The Angel* as a constant and positive landmark in the area. The Team Valley is very wide compared to narrower, steeper, incised stretches of the Tyne and Wear valleys nearby. It is also different from the very much smaller incised valleys of the tributaries which empty into the Team. It is likely that the Wear once ran through the Team Valley and emptied into the Tyne, later being diverted eastwards to leave the scale of the Team Valley as something of a topographical anomaly.
- 3.14 This topography was a key consideration in choosing the site for a piece of landmark sculpture. The site was selected in part for the following topographical reasons:
- **Its elevated position.** This would (1) give the sculpture the chance of being very prominent in the landscape over some distance, and (2) allow long views from the sculpture.
 - **Its position at the valley entrance.** Because of its topography, the valley had become a natural passage for principal communication routes in to Gateshead and Tyneside from the south. This would increase the numbers experiencing the artwork by including those travelling past it rather than just to it. *The Angel* stands at a point of topographical contrast where the open, flatter agricultural land of north Co Durham – through which the A1 and the East Coast Mainline travel – turns into the slopes of the Gateshead fells.
 - **The short length of the valley compared to its width.** This creates a bowl effect at a scale which can be readily appreciated in the round from *The Angel*. The choice of the elevated site inside the valley, rather than at the top of the valley sides, creates an enclosing effect when looking out from the site. It is possible to see a near-continuous 360° landscape horizon from the site, giving the sculpture a sense of commanding a defined domain that is large for *The Angel* and thus enormous for

people. This emphasises *The Angel's* scale.

- **The ability to see both the Tyne valley and the Wear valley from *The Angel's* site.**

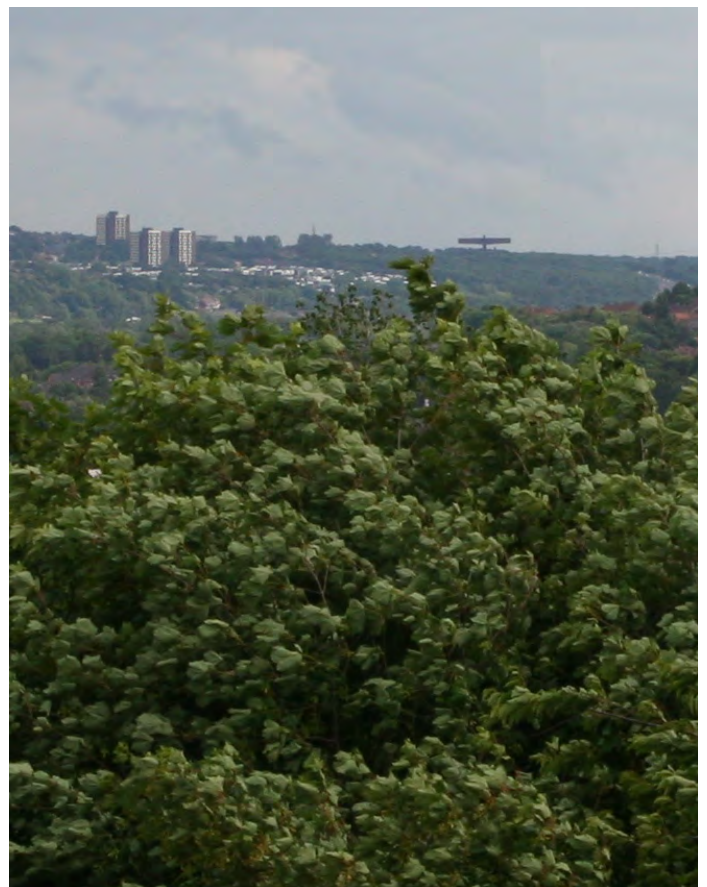
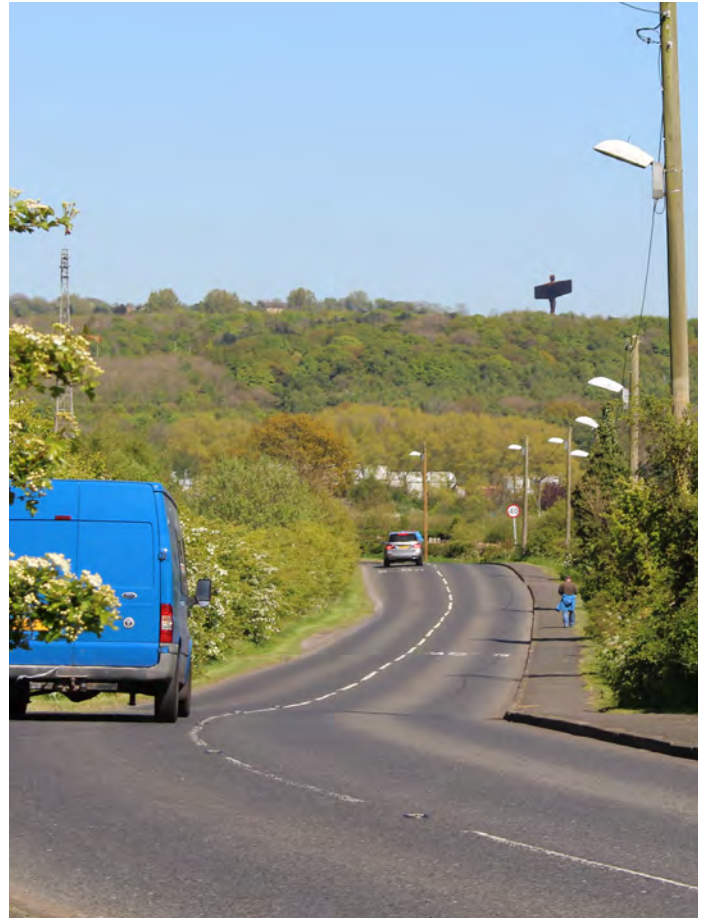
The topographical form of the Tyne is seen in views north from *The Angel*, its steeply sloping north bank forming a distinct vista filled with Newcastle's western suburbs, framed by the Team valley. Although the shape of the Wear valley is not distinct in landscape views south from *The Angel*, it is possible to see Durham Cathedral's tower on the horizon when stood at its feet, marking the position of the Wear valley from *The Angel* by using that river's most significant asset.

“The scale of the sculpture was essential, given its site in a valley that is a mile and a half wide, and with an audience that was travelling past on the motorway at an average of 60 miles an hour” Antony Gormley

- 3.15 These basic topographical characteristics of the site informed the sculpture that was created. Its design was informed by the large but distinct scale of the valley in which it could be appreciated, the commanding position over several well-used main communication routes through the valley, and the topographical and visual relationship the Team Valley has as a link between the valleys of the Tyne and Wear.
- 3.16 **This characteristic of *The Angel's* setting underpins the piece as a landmark sculpture. It was also foremost during commissioning.**

Imagine if things were different...

What if *The Angel* were sited at the top of the east valley slope, eg. at Eighton Banks? It would have a longer, wider, disappearing horizon, and so a much looser, less distinct relationship with its setting. It would seem smaller as a result. The site of nearby Penshaw Monument was chosen to afford the longest possible sight-lines to and from it in every direction. This means its design has an exaggerated, monumental scale. So although *The Angel* is very large indeed compared to people, its scale is a careful, direct response to that of its topographical surroundings.



Clockwise from top left: Looking north on footpath from The Angel to Eighton Lodge roundabout, 1998 (view now obscured by trees); image: Sally Ann Norman. Looking east on road from Kibblesworth to Lamesley, 2017; image: Anna Pepperall. Looking south-east on Chester Pike, Newcastle, 2017; image: Cathy Edy, Arup. Looking south on footbridge over A167, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT

Prominence

Its role as a landmark focal point

- 3.17 Visual prominence within its setting is a key attribute of *The Angel* which contributes to its significance.
- 3.18 *The Angel* is designed to be a focal point in the landscape, and to stand out prominently in the scene. This is the essence of its status as a piece of site-specific landmark public art, and underpins its form as a giant vertical structure.
- 3.19 It is particularly designed to be prominent from the A1, A167 and the East Coast Mainline, which it faces as a symbolic welcoming herald to the conurbation.
- 3.20 The sculpture's subject matter slightly moderates this characteristic: it is prominent rather than being dominant. As a human-like form, the intent is for *The Angel* to be seen as part of the community rather than appearing to either dominate over it, or be dislocated from it.
- 3.21 Physical prominence in the landscape changes with the distance and orientation of the viewer. Further away, *The Angel* appears less prominent and focal in its setting, particularly when it cannot be seen against a clear backdrop or on the horizon. The position of the site within the valley also leaves some development more elevated than *The Angel* itself; it is thus surrounded by its landscape rather than set apart from it.
- 3.22 It is less prominent when viewed at a 90° profile because the wings can almost disappear from view. It is still a powerful vertical structure in such a view, but being able to see the wings is very important to its visual prominence, in the head-on, rear-on and ¾-profile views.
- 3.23 These characteristics generate contrasts in the way *The Angel* is experienced, for example:
 - **People catching *The Angel* in an unplanned way** will often see it from further away in a wide range of glimpsed and juxtaposed views amongst the landscape, such as those shown on p40. In such experiences, it is the relationship the sculpture has with features in its setting which is strongly characteristic, not just the artwork's sculptural form.
 - **When experiencing *The Angel* whilst on the move**, the sculpture is revealed and concealed as the viewer moves through

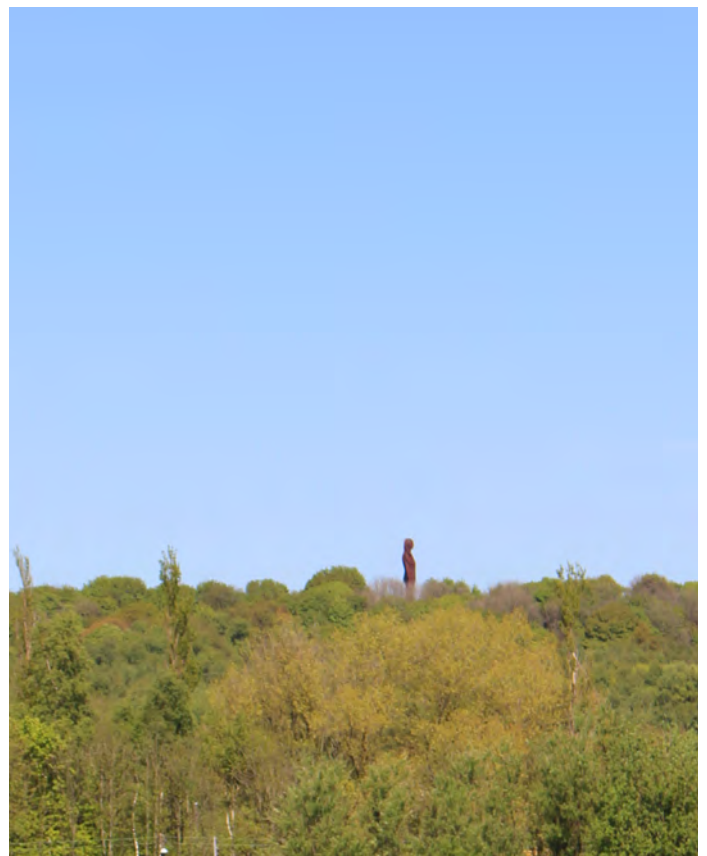
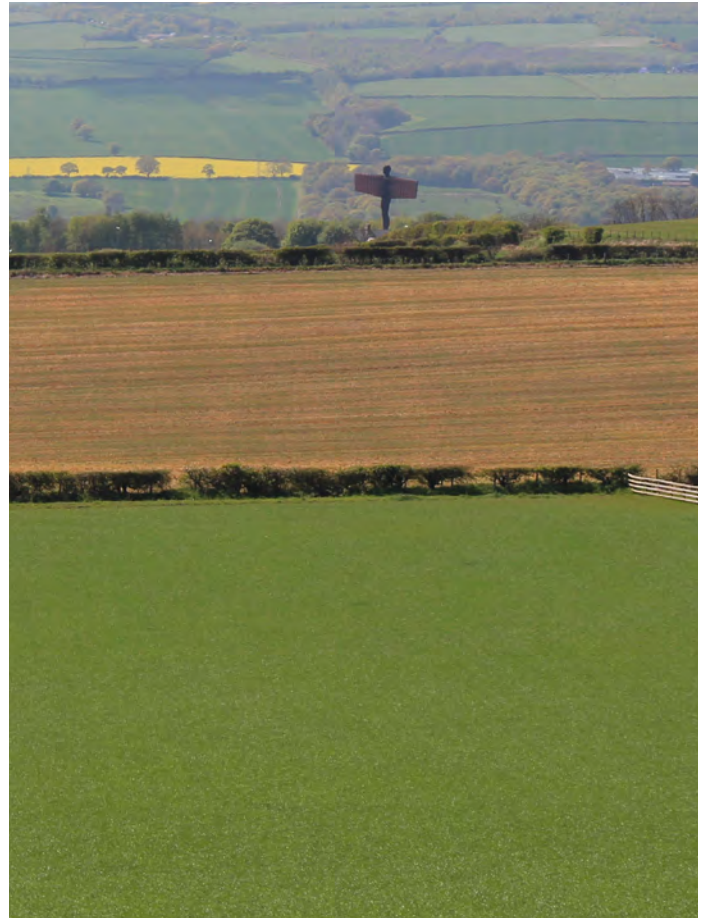
its setting. This affects the degree of prominence it has in the scene. The main moving encounters are discussed from p56. That *The Angel* is out of sight until the start of a moving encounter is part of the drama of the experience: the sense of anticipation of getting the first sighting of the sculpture when travelling is part of its role as a welcoming herald. For this to be effective, once in sight it should remain prominent until it finally disappears as the viewer moves on from the locale.

- **People choosing to visit *The Angel* as a destination** will go right up to it, experiencing the power of its head-on, rear-on, ¾-profile and 90° profile views, in deep perspective against a sky backdrop whilst stood alongside or below it. The sculptural form created by the voids around it becomes the prominent, focal characteristic of that experience.

- 3.24 **This characteristic of *The Angel's* place in its setting is fundamental to the artist's sculptural creativity. It is crucial to the artwork's role in cultural regeneration and re-imagining of Gateshead and the region, and it is key to enabling people to access and relate to the work.**

Imagine if things were different...

What if *The Angel* were a hilltop monument? Like *The Angel*, traditional hilltop monuments such as at Penshaw nearby are designed to be intriguing landmarks. But unlike *The Angel* they are usually built as isolated follies, set apart and at a distance. Their design often does not stand up to scrutiny close-up because they are meant to be viewed from afar. They have a sense of mankind conquering the landscape, and they are often commemorative memorials. *The Angel* is not designed to be like that at all. It is part of the community, not apart from it, and it is designed to be seen close-up as well as from afar. It is not dedicated as a memorial, leaving the viewer to generate their own meaning for it. Although it is undoubtedly prominent, it is also benevolent and communal.



Incidental views. Examples of an almost limitless range of unplanned appearances in the landscape. Clockwise from top left: Looking east from The Angel View Inn car-park, 2017; image: Anna Pepperall. Looking east from Prospect Terrace, Eighton Banks, 2017; image: Anna Pepperall. Looking north-east from Greenford Lane, Lamesley, 2017; image: Anna Pepperall. Looking east from Lamesley Bridge, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT. See also p40

Visibility

Incidental and intended views

- 3.25 Being able to see *The Angel* from features in the landscape, and see features in the landscape from *The Angel*, are key aspects of significance which the sculpture gains from its setting.
- 3.26 *The Angel* is intended to be seen in its landscape setting. It is very visible due to local topography and the artist's creative response to it.
- Most views are **incidental**; these are many and varied in character.
 - A small number of views are specifically **intended**, most linked to transport routes.
- 3.27 Views of it and from it are both important; this varies from view to view as discussed here.

Incidental views

- 3.28 *The Angel* is intended to be seen casually from across its setting, in an almost limitless range of unplanned appearances in the scene. Although intentional, these informal appearances are incidental or fortuitous in character, defined only by the nature of the landscape in which they are experienced rather than by a process of planned or formal design.
- 3.29 In these cases, views of *The Angel* from its setting are most important. Less important are incidental views of its setting from *The Angel*; these can be interesting because the sculpture's site is a naturally strong vantage point due to its topography. But incidental views of the setting from *The Angel* remain less important.
- 3.30 Examples of places where significant incidental views of *The Angel* can be had include:
- **roads, footpaths and bridleways**, a wide variety of urban and rural routes for many miles, including bridges over the A1, A167 and East Coast Mainline,
 - **public open space** such as that woven into the layout of Harlow Green, Low Fell, Birtley and neighbourhoods further afield,
 - **private or controlled open space** such as agricultural fields, playing fields, golf courses and allotment gardens,
 - **domestic gardens** and other private grounds such as pub beer gardens,
 - **private buildings**, interiors and rooftops.
- 3.31 A wide range of views of *The Angel* from such places creates almost infinite variety and

intricacy to the experience of the sculpture as a landmark in the landscape.

- 3.32 As such, they are difficult to categorise, but the same qualities as those discussed for intended views (below) can be used to understand them. This is analysed in the typology of experiences set out in the final section of this study.
- 3.33 These visual experiences are more difficult to understand than the intended views because they rely on casual chance or coincidence. It also requires an understanding of some views which can only be had from private space.

Intended views

- 3.34 *The Angel* is intended to have a distinct visual relationship with four specific 'receptors', ie. identifiable locations at which a view is taken.
- 3.35 Three of these are 'linear receptors', ie. routes from which *The Angel* is intended to be seen. These involve viewing it on the move, thus bringing distance and time into play as well as openness. The three linear features are:
- the **A1** trunk road,
 - the **A167** Durham Road,
 - the **East Coast Mainline** railway (ECM).
- 3.36 Proximity to these features was a major factor in choosing this site for *The Angel*. They give the sculpture a great deal of its significance as a welcoming herald for travellers to Tyneside.
- 3.37 Thus *The Angel* is intended partly to be seen whilst on the move. When travelling past it, the viewer sees a moving target, experiencing a kinetic, 'serial view' of the sculpture, bringing

Imagine if things were different...

What if *The Angel* was invisible? At Felton in Northumberland stands a stout stone obelisk, a memorial to Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar, positioned on the A1 Great North Road as a prominent public statement by a friend of the Admiral who owned land nearby. Later, the A1 was re-routed just to the east, the obelisk fell out of common sight and became shrouded in trees. A structure built at a time of immense public support for a famous national victory, all but invisible 100 years later, forgotten apart from occasional discovery by ardent tourists. What if *The Angel* became forgotten? What if it could not be seen?



Intended views. Views on the move along three 'linear receptor' routes from which The Angel is intended to be viewed. From the top: Heading north on the A1 over Eighton Lodge roundabout, 2017; image: Anna Pepperall. Heading south on the A167 approaching The Angel car-park, 2017; image: Anna Pepperall. Heading north on the East Coast Mainline just after passing under Lamesley Road, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT. See also pp56-63

to life its scale, its winged human-like form and its ribbed surface texture due to changes in light and perspective as the viewer moves. This is a large part of *The Angel's* appeal as three-dimensional sculpture-in-the-round.

“The exo-skeleton seemed the best solution ... This has the added advantage of giving the form a strong surface articulation that deals equally well with volume and light.” Antony Gormley

- 3.38 As the viewer moves along these key linear routes, so other features in the townscape and landscape interact with *The Angel*, passing in front of it and behind it en route, sometimes concealing the sculpture either partially or fully, and either briefly or for a longer period of time. Thus distance, speed, and the degree of openness and interference from other features all help to define the significance of each experience. As these factors change, so the experiences change also.
- 3.39 In all three receptors, views of *The Angel* are most important, although being able to see them from *The Angel* is also a descriptive part of the intended visual relationship.
- 3.40 The visual links between *The Angel* and these linear receptors have changed since it was installed in 1998, mainly due to tree growth. This is discussed in the next section.
- 3.41 The fourth specific receptor is Durham Cathedral (Grade I listed building). This relationship is much weaker, but the artist specifically intended there to be a visual link between *The Angel* and the cathedral tower, which, weather dependent, can be seen in the distance from the foot of the sculpture. Gormley

decided to rotate the axis of the sculpture a few degrees so that it was turned towards Durham Cathedral. This adds some resonance to the sculpture's subject matter.


- 3.42 In this, the view of the cathedral from *The Angel* is most important, but the reciprocal view of *The Angel* from the top of the cathedral tower – accessible for a small charge – is also of interest.
- 3.43 **This characteristic of *The Angel* in its setting is key to it as a site-specific landmark piece. It underpins the artist's choices when designing the sculpture, such as scale, form, proportions, orientation and surface expression, and it is key to enabling people to access and relate to the work.**

Right: Advert for bus travel highlighting visibility of *The Angel*, contained in Great North Forest promotional leaflet (see page 45), 2002

for the best views in life ...take the bus

Travelling by public transport today is quick, hassle free, inexpensive, sociable and environmentally friendly! People use public transport for work and shopping - have you thought of using it for leisure and fun too?

Great North Forest and regional bus and Metro operators have got together to make it as easy as possible for you to visit the countryside on your doorstep. With this leaflet, our website and [traveline](#) there's all the information you need for a great day out and a safe trip home.

 Look out for this symbol inside to find the best bus stop for your trip.





Imagine if things were different...

There is a disused lighthouse in Blyth that, due to land-reclamation, is now half a mile from the sea; it has been quite ignored in the townscape around it. Signals sent need to be received to make sense, and sometimes they prompt a reply. Without being able to see *The Angel's* face and wings – let alone the rest of its full human-like form – can the welcoming message it sends still be understood, and the courtesy returned?

What if your access to the sculpture was controlled? What if you had a ticket with a time on it? Allowed to commune with *The Angel* as you wanted, say for 20 minutes; just you exploring alone around its feet and the mound they stand on. You could get that ideal selfie: 'Just me and my mate *The Angel of the North!*' The perfect secluded experience, managed, organised and commodified. What if the price of being with *The Angel* was literally that – a price?

Clockwise from top left: *Angel Celebration Day, 2008*; image: Rebecca Farley. View from nearby window, 1998; image: Bob Boyes. Sitting on and looking up at *The Angel*, 2009; image: Jules Brown, NECT. Running from *The Angel*, 2004; image: Matt Verlander, Arup

Communing

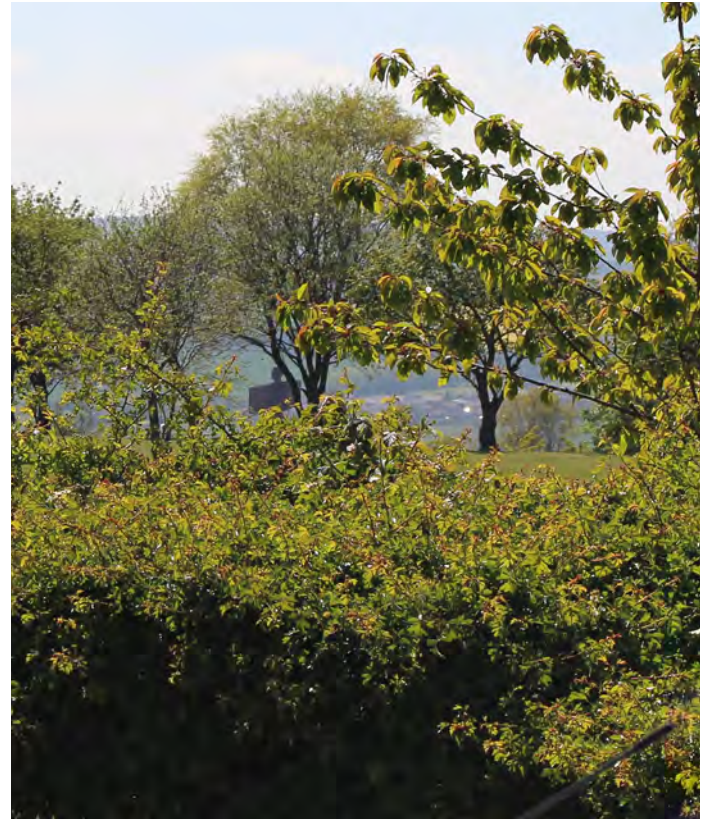
Bonding, at a distance and close up

- 3.44 Being able to commune with *The Angel* from its setting is a key attribute which contributes to its significance. Experiences vary with distance, but they are routed in a communicative bond.
- 3.45 *The Angel's* form and subject matter imply an ability to communicate with it. It may be metaphorical in its design as a piece of art, but *The Angel* is designed to function as a signal, to transmit a message across its setting.
- 3.46 In this respect it is no different to, say, a church tower or a lighthouse which, in different ways, are vertical structures sending messages across their setting: a symbolic message of faith across a parish, or a light of safety across a rocky coast.
- 3.47 *The Angel* is there to be noticed in its landscape and to send a notional message from the local community. Team Valley is one of the busiest places on Tyneside with tens of thousands of vehicles using the A1 each day, large housing and commercial estates nearby, and multiple trains on the East Coast Mainline. Part of *The Angel's* purpose is as a welcome to Tyneside, so it needs the activity of travellers to have this role. It is meant to be seen when on the move.
- 3.48 This is enhanced by it taking on a human-like form: *The Angel's* face is looking south towards those arriving in to Gateshead, suggesting a welcome. Its wings are outstretched and tilted slightly forwards, suggesting an embrace. It is a figurative piece with a complete human-like form to which the viewer can readily relate, so the full form is important in its welcoming role.
- 3.49 Furthermore, being human-like suggests communication might somehow be two-way: a dialogue. A communicative bond with *The Angel* is well recorded (eg. see pages 18-19) and there is significance attached to people's ability to see and commune with the sculpture from its setting, both at a distance and up close.
- 3.50 This might be subliminal, such as a feeling of being welcomed home by *The Angel* after a long train journey north. Or it could be a more deliberate attempt at dialogue, such as 'waving back' as you drive by, or choosing to stand at its feet and chat to it as if it could hear.
- 3.51 Distance has an impact on this bond. When

further away, the experience is often (though not always) more fleeting. Yet the ability to freely get up close and spend time at its feet creates intimacy. The open simplicity of the mound and green spaces at the site allow this. This informal 'blank canvas' allows each visitor to develop their own personal bond with the sculpture, without structure or guide.

"It is a huge inspiration to me that *The Angel* is rarely alone in daylight hours ... it is given a great deal through the presence of those that visit it". Antony Gormley

- 3.52 On most days, visitors are rarely alone at *The Angel's* feet; it sees over 200,000 visitors a year, coming for myriad reasons. In doing so, they may choose to look out as if seeing what *The Angel* sees, or look up at its human-like features, touch its physique and sit on its feet. They may start a dialogue, in their heads or vocally. They may communicate in other ways, such as by leaving graffiti or placing a personal tribute.
- 3.53 In doing so, a personal intimacy is created with the sculpture, rooted in art appreciation. This intimacy is unusual for a work of art; galleries add structure to art appreciation, and even some public art can be out of bounds (eg. war memorials are often fenced off). Yet *The Angel* freely invites you to commune with it up close on a simple, accessible mound without artifice. This encourages personal appreciation as art.
- 3.54 The Team Valley setting allows thousands of travellers to commune with it, yet despite this intense activity, the accessibility of the site also allows great personal intimacy. These two types of experience are linked: the sculpture is powerful enough to fix the visitor's attention without the need to exclude nearby noise and activity; indeed, interaction with the life of *The Angel's* setting it is part of the design intent.
- 3.55 **Being able to commune with *The Angel* is key to the creative choice of a human-like form and its role as a landmark piece. It is also part of its significance as a popular, accessible, iconic piece of art on which people will develop a personal opinion.**



Imagine if things were different...

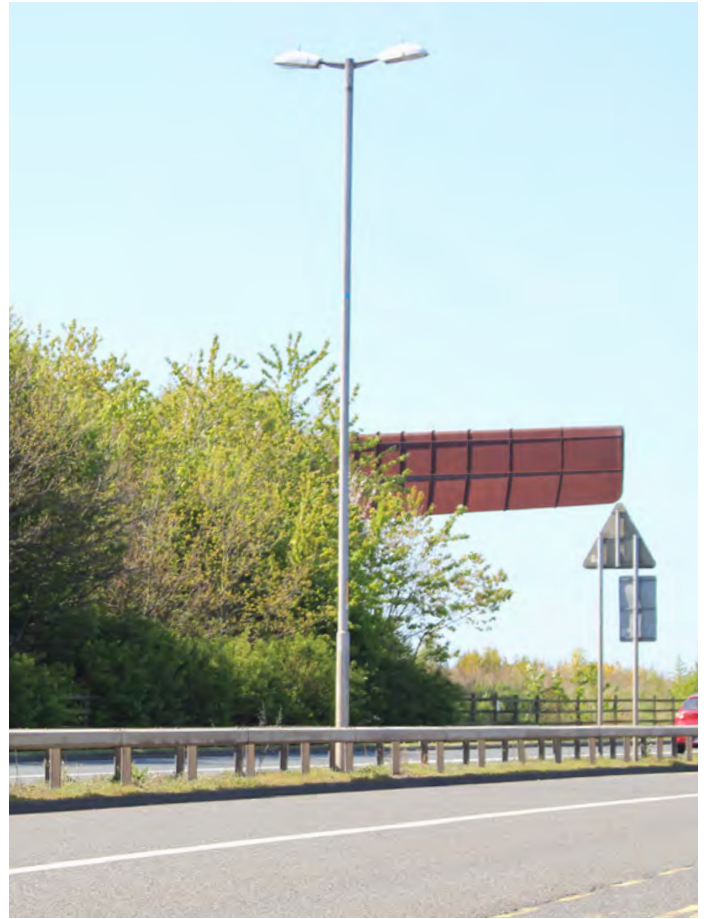
The Angel's welcoming role is striking in some views where an apron of green fields contrasts with the stacked built forms of the Harlow Green hills behind. If Birtley and Harlow Green merged, if Chester-le-Street became a suburb of Gateshead, would the saluting *Angel* still make sense? Could its earthy steel survive in the built heart of Tyneside against the rough angles of its city blocks, bridges and spires? It is not like Grey's Monument, positioned in a planned pattern of streets which channel the viewer's aspect. That would reduce *The Angel's* casualness, that it appears to have just chosen to stop here amongst the everyday. If *The Angel* flew away, would you even know it had been there?

Clockwise from top left: Looking east from the Ravensworth Arms pub beer garden, Lamesley, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT. Looking west from Western View across Ravensworth Golf Course, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT. Looking north from Ouston towards the Harlow Green hills, 2017; image: Anna Pepperall. Looking south from Grisedale Gardens, Low Fell, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT

Amid the ordinary

Something special settled amongst the everyday informal scene

- 3.56 Being different from its surroundings is a key attribute which contributes to *The Angel's* significance. *The Angel* is a bold new symbol of modernity amongst the established everyday. Two aspects are important to this: the land uses around it, and the materials used to make it.
- 3.57 Land uses in *The Angel's* setting make a strong contribution to its significance in two ways:
- **There is a mix of uses.** This mix defines an active, everyday townscape: different types of housing, intense commercial uses, rural fringe activity, dotted leisure uses, farmed land, etc. *The Angel* is intended to be something special amid the everyday, a remarkable landmark to lift an ordinary living, working place.
 - **The specific land uses are an edge-of-town mix:** suburban housing, open country, a trading estate on a trunk road. These define *The Angel's* location at the gateway to the conurbation, not in it but at its very start. It gains a great deal of significance by welcoming travellers from agricultural Co Durham, so it is important that it stands at the seam between built and open land.
- 3.58 The openness of the valley around Lamesley, and the purposeful thick green break between Birtley and Harlow Green are crucial to this edge-of-settlement, suburban fringe character. Having Green Belt around the site formalises this edge of settlement characteristic.
- 3.59 This arrangement adds to the different ways *The Angel* is experienced. For example:
- **Foreground and background.** Longer views of *The Angel* from the south often include a built-up background and an open green foreground because it stands broadly at the junction between the two.
 - **Built juxtapositions.** Many of the most distinctive juxtapositions of *The Angel* with built development are from the north or south, ie. from within suburban Gateshead or with those suburbs as a backdrop.
 - **Clean green scene.** Many of the most distinctive views of it in a plainer green setting are from the east or west, where the rural openness of Team Valley or Eighton Banks becomes a backdrop or foreground.
- 3.60 The second aspect of this characteristic is the contrast between the special materials used to make the sculpture and the ordinariness of those used in development around it. *The Angel* is designed to stand out, which weathering Corten steel achieves. Steel is used in its setting (in common infrastructure such as pylons, bridges and gantries) but very little is Corten, enhancing the presence of the sculpture as something special amongst the everyday.
- 3.61 Yet *The Angel's* materials are not so contrasting that they intrude in the landscape. They are still part of the site-specific response, referencing the historical industrial might of the region, and having a natural earthen hue. Gormley described the grassy mound as “*a tumulus marking the end of the era of coal mining in Britain*”. He saw significance in the link between centuries of mining toil and *The Angel's* deep foundations: both are ‘work going on under the ground’. This association was central to the artist’s response to the site and wider setting.
- 3.62 Under this characteristic, informality is important. There is no formal link between *The Angel* and its setting, and there is only a very small area of ‘designed landscape’ around it:
- **The artificial mound** on which it stands is part of the sculpture’s design, but as a piece of formal landscape it is comparatively small.
 - **The car-park and tarmac paths** were added about 10 years later, the paths formalising earlier gravel paths in the original layout.
 - **The sculptural bollards** are also later. They are designed by Gormley but are a commercial product sold by Marshalls. Whilst neat, they are inconsequential to *The Angel*.
- 3.63 Gormley disliked the idea of a formal designed landscape surrounding *The Angel*. Its presence was intended to be learned (by experience or in advance) rather than heralded from a far by designed features such as planting, signs or lights. *The Angel* has an informal relationship with its setting. Being able to discover it rather than have it presented to you is part of its joy.
- 3.64 **This aspect is key to its role as a landmark city-edge herald. The urban fringe site has helped re-image Gateshead. Site history and ordinariness informed materials, and the setting’s informality is key to its accessibility.**



Clockwise from top left: Looking north-west from fields at Northside Farm, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT. Looking north-west across the A167 from Eighton Lodge Care Home's drive, 2017; image: Anna Pepperall. Looking south from The Angel towards Durham Cathedral which (when on-site) can just be made out on the horizon, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT. Looking north-west from the footbridge over the A1 south of Eighton Lodge roundabout, 2017; image: Jules Brown, NECT

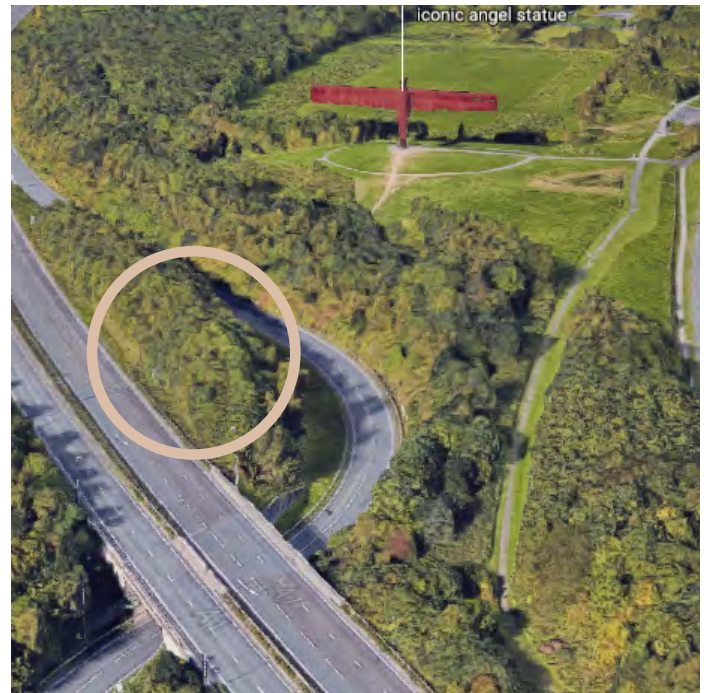
Openness

Exposing or obscuring *The Angel*

- 3.65 A sense of openness around *The Angel* is a key attribute of its setting which contributes to significance. This has reduced since *The Angel* was first installed, altering the relationship it has had with its setting, dramatically in places.
- 3.66 Openness around *The Angel* is intended to contribute to its significance. Its prominence in the landscape, its topographical scale, its form as a piece of sculpture, and the experience of it whilst on the move are all intended to be enhanced by openness. This is intended to create a bold, confident contrast between the three-dimensional shape and the space around it. This contributes in various ways:
- **Scale and prominence.** Having clear exposure of the sculpture emphasises its dramatic scale and prominence in its setting.
 - **Form and subject matter.** The sculpture's key expressive character is in its human-like form and its wings. Exposure around the sculpture means that more of its full form can be readily appreciated. Its human-like subject matter makes more sense when more of the lower half of the body is visible at the same time as the upper half. The form of the wings cannot be fully appreciated unless their full shape is clear against the backdrop they are seen against.
 - **Visibility from key receptors.** As *The Angel* is intended to be seen whilst travelling on three nearby routes (see above), openness between the sculpture and the routes makes that experience possible and more descriptive.
 - **Views out.** Part of the artist's intent is for people to have a view out into the landscape from *The Angel's* feet. This is both specifically of Durham Cathedral tower (see above) but also more generally from *The Angel's* natural vantage point. This is more possible with an openness around the sculpture.
- 3.67 Distance from *The Angel* is a big influence over this characteristic. Generally, the closer to *The Angel*, the stronger the sense of openness, but this has altered dramatically in some parts:
- **Further away:** When further away, other features start to interplay with how *The Angel* is seen. Part of the significance gained from its setting does come from this interplay, creating interesting juxtapositions with other features, or glimpses between, over the top of and amongst other townscape features.
- **Closer to:** When first installed, the area immediately around *The Angel* was much more open than it is today. Today, a strong sense of openness is felt generally from the east and north, on the A167 side. From here, it can be seen against a clear sky with little if anything to obscure its lower portions – a pure contrast between form and setting which, at its most extreme, is a silhouette. However, from the immediate west and south (the A1 side) tree growth has largely enclosed the sculpture and provided a sense of seclusion around it rather than openness.
- 3.68 Distance is not always a measure of openness. One of the most exposed full-frontal and (almost) full-body views of *The Angel* is from Ouston some 4km south. Here, the head-on plane is distinctly exposed against a busy backdrop. Yet the far distance of the viewer in that case diminishes the experience (see p40).
- 3.69 So, when considering exposure and distance:
- a **combination of closer proximity and greater exposure** creates more distinctive experiences of *The Angel* in its setting;
 - both **distant exposed views** and **obscured closer-to views** can frustrate the experience.
- 3.70 This is the case from the three linear receptors that are so important to the intended experience. When moving along the A1, A167 and East Coast Mainline, other features come into play around it. Where these features impact to decrease openness, the contribution made

Imagine if things were different...

What if *The Angel* became the hub of a major new transport interchange, leaving it more isolated amongst a re-worked road and rail layout? When first approached about the work, Gormley said "I don't do roundabout art". Keeping it freely open and accessible is part of its appeal as public sculpture. The lengths we go to to keep a sense of openness around a dominant landscape feature can be radical: £1.4bn is due to be spent removing the visual impact of the A303 from the setting of Stonehenge by building a tunnel.



Comparison views from 1998 (left) and 2017 (right). From the top: Looking north-east on the A1 as it crosses the south-bound sliproad to Eighton Lodge roundabout; left: Colin Cuthbert; right: Google. Oblique aerial view looking north-east above Eighton Lodge roundabout (the island circled was clear-felled in 2016 to assist in creating a more open vista from the A1); left: Colin Cuthbert; right: Google. Looking north-east on the footpath to Eighton Lodge roundabout; left: Colin Cuthbert; right: Jules Brown, NECT

by several other characteristics from setting also decreases, such as prominence, visibility and the ability to commune with it.

3.71 Openness is the characteristic of *The Angel's* setting which has changed the most since 1998, mainly because of the growth of trees. As well as pre-existing trees along the A1 corridor, new trees were planted in the sculpture's immediate vicinity along the A1 and A167 at the time it was installed. Planting took place in phases, most as a result of A1 highways improvements. Some were planted by Great North Forest, a now-defunct community forest initiative set up to provide new green infrastructure around the conurbation linked to regeneration. The original 1991 brief for the sculpture explained that the trees would mature to "eventually provide a woodland context to the artwork" yet at the same time it said it "would retain an open setting" (*Gateshead Landmark Sculpture, Background Information, Gateshead Council 1991*).

3.72 The scale of tree cover around the foot of *The Angel* does have a naturally enveloping effect which can appear to be an advantage when engaging with it up close. However, any sense of intimacy or relief they provide was not the artist's intent: the original concept was for the sculpture to be boldly exposed to the comings and goings of the Team Valley. *The Angel* is intentionally sited in sight of traffic, materials were chosen to withstand everyday pollution, and its structure can withstand the high winds expected of an exposed site. So, even if trees

Top right: As trees have grown up around *The Angel*, views of it from the A1, A167 and ECM have become more obscured

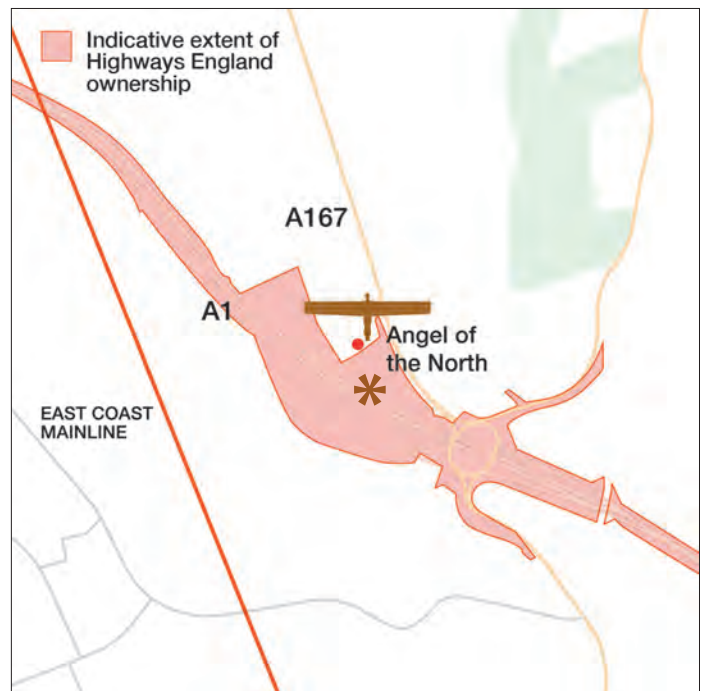
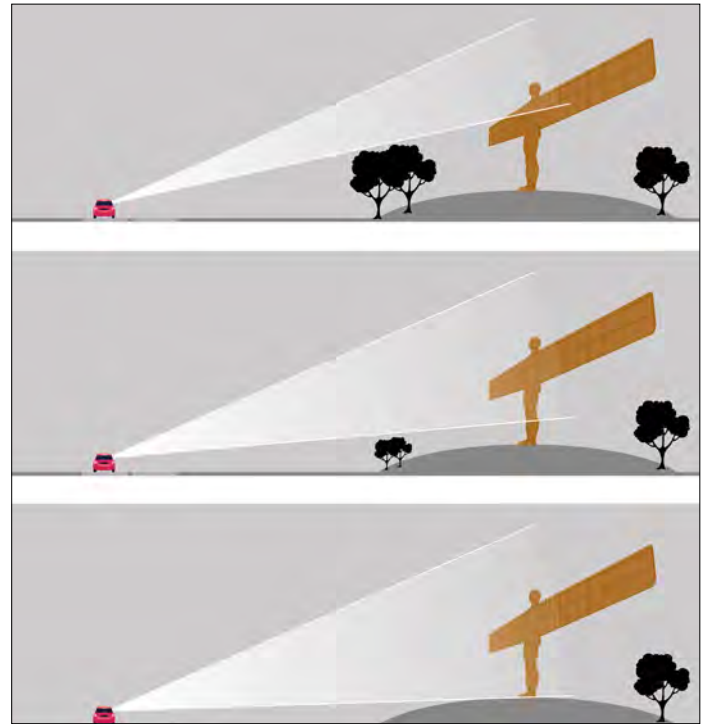
Image: Arup

Middle right: The shaded area is owned and managed by Highways England. They report that the relevant maintenance plan includes tree thinning on a rolling 7 year cycle, and that as the plan is yet to be fully defined, it could be altered to suit the detailed needs of *The Angel*. The area marked * was clear felled in 2016 to help create a more open vista to *The Angel* (shown circled on the previous page)

Image: Arup

Bottom right: The area circled was also felled. It stopped this view from being restricted to a particular angle

Image: Giles Rocholl





Comparison views from 1998 (left) and 2017 (right). *From the top:* Looking north-east on the A1 at the point the north-bound sliproad from the Eighton Lodge roundabout joins; left: Colin Cuthbert; right: Google. Looking north-west from the embankment west of the footpath from The Angel to Eighton Lodge roundabout (approximate location); left: Colin Cuthbert; right: Google. Looking north-west from the road island at Eighton Lodge roundabout; left: Colin Cuthbert; right: Jules Brown, NECT

bring general environmental benefits, there is no significance attached to the artwork from the trees which have grown up around it.

“The work stands, without a spotlight or a plinth, day and night, in wind, rain and shine and has many friends.” Antony Gormley

3.73 As a result of tree growth since 1998, the sense of openness around *The Angel’s* closer-to setting has diminished. This has harmed an appreciation of its scale, concealed its full human-like form and wings from several angles, interfered with visibility of it from the three key linear receptors, and altered much of the view out into the landscape from the site. As a result, characteristics gained from its setting including prominence, visibility, communing and a sense of the topography in which it stands, have reduced.

3.74 This change over the last 20 years has altered our experience of *The Angel*:

- Most of the iconic close-to media images from the years after installation are now partly or fully obscured by trees. It is not possible to experience them today as then.
- Our experience is restricted to particular angles. Openness around the A1 and Eighton Lodge roundabout is eroded, and there are few close-to views from the west and south.
- Today, the best close-to images are from the

east, thus essentially presenting a ¾-profile or 90° profile. It is very difficult to get a close-to head-on wing span view when at the site.

- Time of day has become more important: an afternoon or evening visitor will tend to get a silhouette image of it because it cannot be easily seen from the west when on site.
- Obscuring it from the A1 may encourage direct visits to the site to get a better view, increasing demand for parking at the site.

3.75 As this change is due to tree growth, it has been almost imperceptibly slow. It is only on reflection that the impact of 20 years’ tree growth can be clearly seen in comparable images of *The Angel* from 1998 and today. Images still promoted on Gormley’s website illustrate the artist’s intent for the sculpture’s exposed role in the landscape and, by comparison, the striking changes to the place it holds in its setting which have occurred today. As well as those shown on the previous few pages, the views shown on the front cover of this study and on page 6 are no longer possible: *The Angel* is entirely obscured by trees in these depictions.

3.76 **Openness is key to the sculpture’s visibility as a landmark piece. It allows the artist’s creative choices over form, scale and subject matter, and his site-specific response to the location, to be appreciated as intended. It also allows more people to experience *The Angel* more clearly in its setting.**

Top right: Original views out from *The Angel* into its landscape setting have become more obscured due to tree growth

Image: Arup

Bottom right: An early image taken from the A1 show visitors at the foot of *The Angel* looking out into the distance, giving them an impression of its setting. It is now not possible to get more than glimpses of landscape from the site, nor to see the foot of *The Angel* from the A1

Image: Giles Rocholl





*The Angel from the
footpath east of the
site, 2017*

Image: Jules Brown, NECT

Experiencing The Angel in its setting

Introduction

- 4.1 With an understanding of how setting contributes to what makes *The Angel* special, the different ways the sculpture is experienced from its landscape setting can be categorised. Their significance and sensitivity can then be analysed. This should make it easier to manage change in *The Angel's* setting to protect what makes it significant.
- 4.2 This analysis is set out using the following structure:
 - a **basic typology** in 3 parts,
 - a **range of characteristics** which combine to create different experiences; these are evaluated for their significance and sensitivity,
 - a small number of **examples**.
- 4.3 In this analysis, it is assumed *The Angel* faces south. This is not quite true (it faces slightly south-east) but for ease of analysis and subsequent management decisions, a southward-facing *Angel* is a practical starting point.

Typology

- 4.4 A typology is an analysis of different types of something. Our experiences of *The Angel* in its setting can be classified into different types. This helps to work out their significance and sensitivity to change, allowing a focus for management decisions. The typology of experiences set out below is:
 - **A. Noticing** *The Angel* from its landscape setting,
 - **B. Travelling by** *The Angel* on the A1, A167 and East Coast Mainline,
 - **C. Visiting** *The Angel* to explore it up-close and appreciate its landscape setting.
- 4.5 Most but not all types of experience of *The Angel* in its setting are visual. Analysis concentrates on views, but does bring in non-visual characteristics where relevant (see p28). Because the experiences are primarily visual, environmental conditions such as weather, visibility and the time of day or year will affect their impact.

Characteristics

- 4.6 The different types of experience can be discussed using various characteristics of *The Angel* as a sculpture, drawn from this study:
 - **horizontal plane:** head-on, front $\frac{3}{4}$ -profiles, 90° profiles, rear $\frac{3}{4}$ -profiles or rear-on,
 - **vertical angle:** from below, at the same level or from above,
 - **movement**, whether the experience is static or on the move,
 - **distance**, how far away from *The Angel* the experience is,
 - **exposure and obscuring**, how features in the scene interact with *The Angel*.

Significance

4.7 In the analysis below, a scale of 1 to 5 is used to help evaluate the characteristics and examples given. This demonstrates how important an aspect is to what makes *The Angel* special. The grading used is:

- **1. OUTSTANDING** Seminal aspects which emphasise key features of *The Angel*, or its relationship with its setting.
- **2. SPECIAL** Distinctive aspects which add special interest to features of *The Angel* or its relationship with its setting.
- **3. INTERESTING** Less stimulating aspects which are part of *The Angel's* characteristics or its relationship with its setting.
- **4. NEUTRAL** Aspects which neither add to nor detract from *The Angel's* characteristics or its relationship with its setting.
- **5. NEGATIVE** Aspects which detract from *The Angel's* characteristics or its relationship with its setting.

Examples

4.8 A number of examples are given below. The very nature of *The Angel* in its setting means that our experience of it is almost limitless. As a result, case by case understanding of the impact of changes in its setting will be important in the future.

Conclusion

4.9 At the end of this section is an overall summary and conclusion.

Analysis form

4.10 A questionnaire form is included for use to help understand whether a change in *The Angel's* setting, such as new development, other physical works or a management action, might harm what makes the sculpture special. Using the form will identify when *The Angel's* setting is likely to be affected, thus identifying opportunities to manage that change through, for example, the planning system or other relevant decision-making process.

A. Noticing

Noticing *The Angel* in its landscape setting offers the most extensive and varied types of experience

- 4.11 **WHAT:** The essence of this is casual chance. Interaction of *The Angel* with its setting creates a range views, predictable and surprising, static and on the move, distant and close-up, exposed and part-obsured, and at all angles and planes.
- 4.12 *The Angel* might catch your eye in the distance when driving along a local road, or you might spot it on a countryside walk. Purely by chance, it might form a prominent part of the view from your back garden or your front room. It might appear on the distant horizon on your daily route to school, or it might look over your shoulder as you sit in your favourite beer garden. You might see a striking silhouette as you cycle down the hill, or you might just spot a dark brown giant amongst the trees.
- 4.13 The experience is defined by coincidence, not design intent – other than that in the basic creative choices made by the artist to provide a prominent vertical sculpture intended to be openly visible across a wide topography.
- 4.14 **WHERE:** The extent of this experience is very wide and includes very long distant views as well as some closer-to. It is usually a middle or

long distance experience because *The Angel* can only be encountered close-up accidentally by those who are totally unaware of its existence or who do not know exactly where it is.

- 4.15 **WHO:** This will be the most common way for local people to experience *The Angel*, those who move daily around the neighbourhoods in which it appears. Non-locals will also have some experience of this, but not in a pre-planned way. Enthusiasts might embark on a purposeful 'Angel spotting' tour of the local area; others will notice it accidentally like everyone else.
- 4.16 **HOW:** This is an almost entirely visual experience; it is not possible to touch *The Angel* by chance. The experience will be defined by both static views and encounters when on the move. Environmental conditions will influence our perception of the experience. For example, a crisp silhouette will often be more engaging than a murky, tree-shrouded view.
- 4.17 **WHEN:** Local conditions will have a big impact on the experience. A bright winter's day would provide a much clearer view than a rainy dusk in summer, when the same view might disappear in tree-filled low light. After dark, fewer distant encounters of this type are possible. As it partly relies on impact, repeated familiarity might dull some experiences.

Looking north-west from
Blackfell Way, Birtley, 2017

Image: Jules Brown, NECT

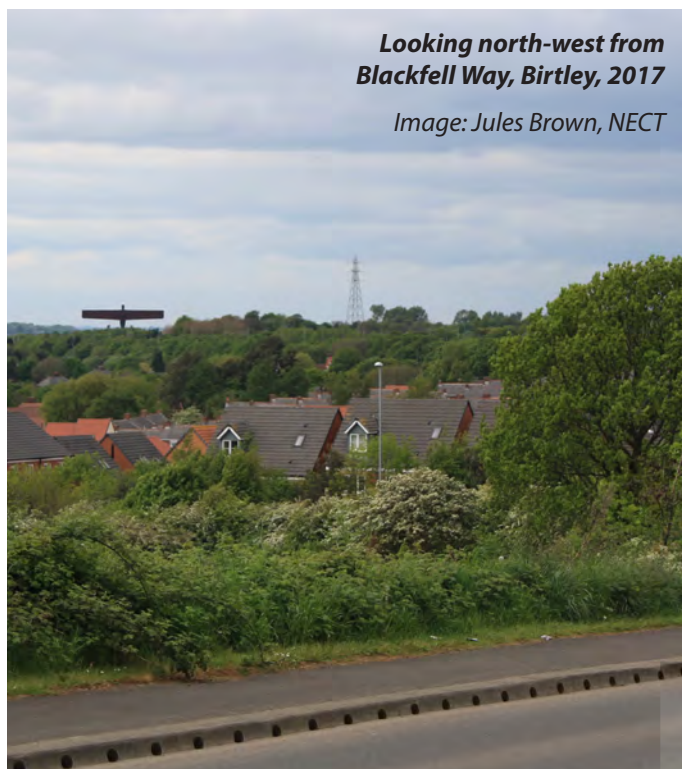
These experiences emphasise:

Significance of *The Angel*:

- site-specific landmark art
- public art
- regeneration and re-imaging
- figurative form, subject matter
- scale, proportions
- voids

Significance from *The Angel's* setting:

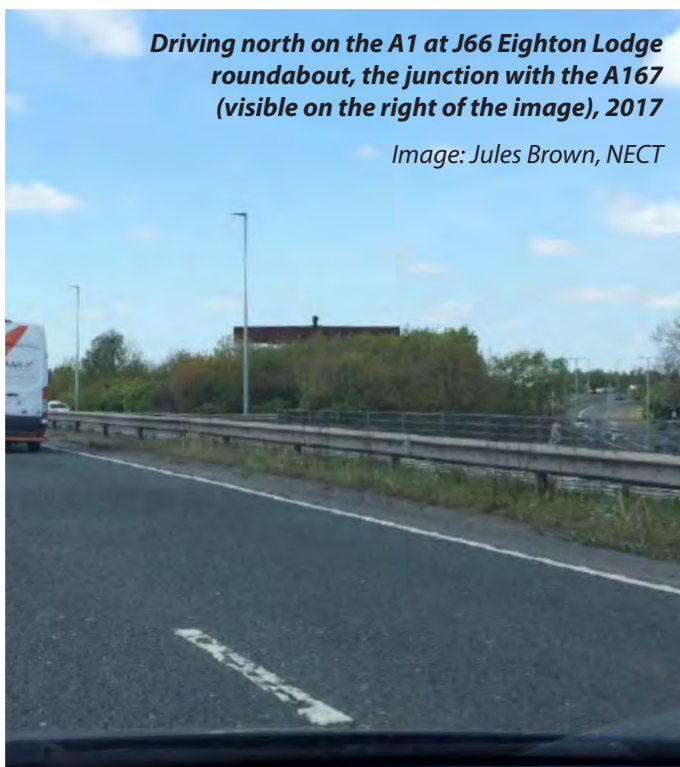
- topography
- prominence
- visibility
- amid the ordinary
- openness



B. Travelling by

Journeys on the A1, A167 and East Coast Mainline create dynamic, exciting experiences of *The Angel*

- 4.18 **WHAT:** This is, in effect, a specific version of type A 'noticing'. Here, *The Angel* is the focus of a linear, kinetic experience whilst on the move. The sculpture is seen as a moving target usually at some speed, and thus the experience can change quite rapidly along the route.
- 4.19 By road, *The Angel*, or part of it, is first viewed in the mid-distance, is hidden by trees and other features as the viewer moves closer, and is then revealed more fully before disappearing behind the viewer as they travel on. By rail, there is a single viewing 'window' between buildings and trees, only easily viewed if seated facing north.
- 4.20 Each experience has a start and an end. These are defined by the topography of *The Angel's* site, the position of the roads and railway, and the location of features – mainly trees but also some buildings – between the viewer and the sculpture. *The Angel* is seen from below.
- 4.21 **WHERE:** There are six versions of this type of experience: travelling north or south on each of the A1, A167 or East Coast Mainline. The start of the journey south on the A1 is the most vague as the sculpture can be glimpsed on the horizon from some distance north on the A1 including near the MetroCentre. The others have a more definite start and end defined by topography and intervening features.
- 4.22 **WHO:** This will be the prime way for non-local people to experience *The Angel*, including those who do not even stop in Gateshead as they pass through. But the A1 and the railway are also used locally, and the A167 is primarily a local route. The high numbers travelling these routes are the main reason for the claim that such a large number of people – almost half a billion – have seen the sculpture since 1998.
- 4.23 **HOW:** This is a visual experience enhanced by it being on the move, which adds a degree of excitement. Those in the know will have a sense of anticipation before first sighting; those unaware of *The Angel* will feel surprise. Control over it is out of the viewer's hands, especially by train: route and speed are defined, but cars could decide to turn off to make a specific visit.
- 4.24 **WHEN:** As *The Angel* is less distinct at a distance in low light or bad weather, environmental conditions will affect the impact of the start and end of each experience. After dark, *The Angel's* outline is often still visible close-up due to background light pollution. As it partly relies on 'revelation', familiarity may dull the experience.



These experiences emphasise:

Significance of *The Angel*:

- site-specific landmark art
- public art
- regeneration and re-imagining
- figurative form, subject matter
- scale, proportions
- orientation
- articulation, compositional balance
- voids

Significance from *The Angel's* setting:

- topography
- prominence
- visibility
- communing
- openness

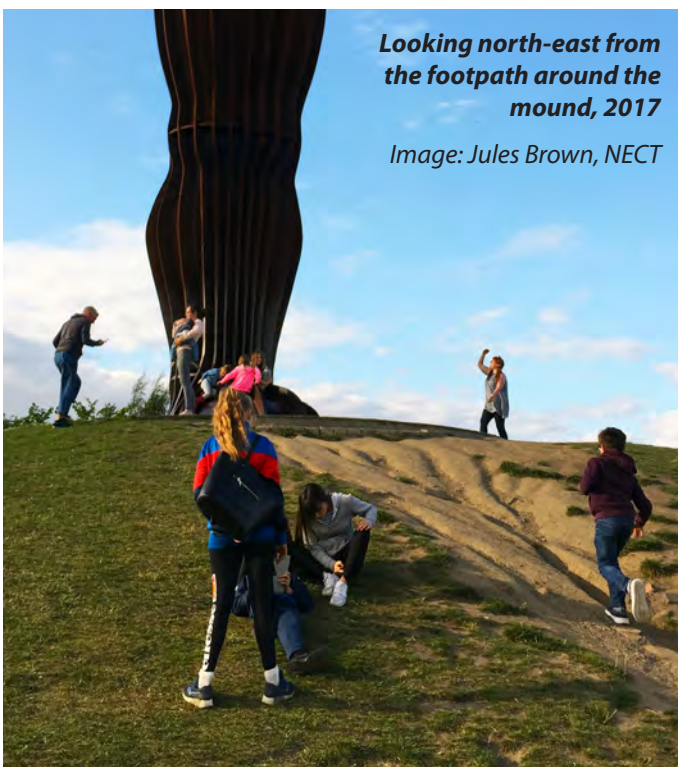
C. Visiting

Making a specific visit to get up close to *The Angel* offers some of the highest impact experiences

- 4.25 **WHAT:** This is defined by *The Angel* as a destination, either on a pre-planned trip or by making a decision to detour from a journey. *The Angel* becomes the focus of a site-specific visit at leisure, allowing the sculpture to be explored and understood up close, and giving an appreciation of its landscape setting.
- 4.26 Visitors arrive on foot, or by car or coach:
- **Two footpaths** run past *The Angel*: (1) to the west from Smithy Lane to the Eighton Lodge roundabout through woodland, and (2) to the east alongside the A167, also partly secluded in woodland. This one also reaches the local bus stops some 100m to the south.
 - **Car and coach** visitors use the small car-park and join the footpath alongside the A167.
- 4.27 *The Angel* stands elevated on its grassy mound and visitors approach on foot along tarmac footpaths which ring the site and run right up to the sculpture. At the top, you can touch its structure and sit amongst the ribs of its feet.
- 4.28 Moving around the site, *The Angel* is always in view but tree cover along the footpaths can quickly begin to obscure it. Views of it from the

south are channelled by a clearing in the trees. It is hard to view it well from the west of the site. It is also difficult to get a clear view out of the site into the Team Valley setting, but some clear glimpses are afforded by gaps in trees.

- 4.29 An interpretation board gives facts and figures. Bollards (designed by Gormley but unrelated to *The Angel*; see p41) prevent vehicular access.
- 4.30 **WHERE:** This experience is specific to the site. On foot, it bleeds along the adjacent footpaths but *The Angel* quickly becomes obscured by tree cover. On arrival by road, the experience is kinetic, akin to travelling by (see type B).
- 4.31 **WHO:** Both visitors and local people will have this experience. An infrared counter on a timber post makes a rough count of people walking up to the sculpture from the east side.
- 4.32 **HOW:** This is mainly a visual experience but is enhanced by being able to touch the sculpture and to read about it and the artist. Visitors are exposed to the elements, so conditions will affect the visit's impact, mainly the ability to see out in to the landscape setting. The site is freely accessible so people are in control of their visit.
- 4.33 **WHEN:** Close up, *The Angel* has an impact day or night and in all conditions. But conditions might help decide whether to embark on a visit.



Looking north-east from the footpath around the mound, 2017

Image: Jules Brown, NECT

These experiences emphasise:

Significance of *The Angel*:

- site-specific landmark art
- public art
- regeneration and re-imaging
- figurative form, subject matter
- scale, proportions
- orientation
- articulation, compositional balance
- materials, surface expression
- voids
- the artist






Significance from *The Angel's* setting:

- topography
- prominence
- visibility
- communing
- amid the ordinary
- openness

Characteristics

4.34 The presence of *The Angel* in each type of experience can be described using characteristics drawn from this study. Their nature, significance and sensitivity is discussed here. See p50 for the significance scale used.

Horizontal plane



Type, Significance	Discussion	Sensitivity
Head-on 1. OUTSTANDING 	Seen broadly from the south as a full-frontal. A powerful, stark image illustrative of form, figurative subject matter, compositional balance, orientation and expressive character. Emphasises prominence, visibility and communing. Depends greatly on the clarity of the shape of the wings as defined by the voids around them.	Sensitive to intrusion into the voids around the wings (background and foreground). Strongly symmetrical, so sensitive to even slight obstruction from either side.
Front ¾-profiles 1. OUTSTANDING 	Seen broadly from the south-west or south-east, at an angle from the front. A powerful, energetic image illustrating form, subject matter, composition, surface articulation and expressive character. Emphasises prominence, visibility and communing. Similar to the rear ¾-profiles but more expressive as it includes the face. Does not require exact positioning to experience.	The nearest wing is prominent so it is sensitive to obstruction. The further away the viewer and the less pronounced the vertical angle, the less expressive the image becomes.
90° profiles 3. INTERESTING 	Seen side-on from the west or east, so the wings 'disappear': depending on vertical angle, the torso hides the wing furthest away and the closest wing is indistinct in front of it. A rare, unexpected view which emphasises <i>The Angel's</i> human-like form, yet it leaves the sculpture without its key expressive feature. Requires exact positioning to be experienced.	It requires exact positioning for the wings to 'disappear'. As it emphasises human-like form, it is sensitive to obstruction which leaves only upper parts visible.
Rear ¾-profiles 2. SPECIAL 	Seen broadly from the north-west or north-east, at an angle from behind. Like the front ¾-profiles, powerful, energetic and illustrates form, figurative subject matter, composition and surface articulation, yet slightly less expressive as it hides the face. Emphasises prominence and visibility. Does not require exact positioning to be experienced.	The nearest wing is more prominent so it is sensitive to obstruction. The further away the viewer and the less pronounced the vertical angle, the less expressive the image becomes.
Rear-on 2. SPECIAL 	Seen broadly from the north, directly from behind. As powerful and stark as the head-on, and as illustrative of its form, figurative subject matter, orientation and composition, yet it is slightly less expressive as it hides the face. Emphasises prominence and visibility. Depends greatly on the clarity of the shape of its wings defined by the voids around them.	Sensitive to intrusion into the voids around the wings (background or foreground). Strongly symmetrical, so sensitive to even slight obstruction from either side.

Movement

4.35 *The Angel* is at its most striking when seen as a static portrait. Yet it is intended to be seen on the move, emphasising its site-specific nature, orientation, surface expression, the importance of voids, topography, prominence, openness, that it is amid the ordinary, and its role in regenerating and re-imagining the region.

Type	Static	On the move				
Signif.	1. OUTSTANDING	2. SPECIAL	3. INTERESTING	4. NEUTRAL	5. NEGATIVE	

Vertical angle

Type, Significance	Discussion	Sensitivity
From above 3. INTERESTING	Seen from higher ground. Rare and unexpected, this is largely experienced from the Eighton Banks area and from inside Harlow Green's tower blocks. It emphasises scale, proportions, topography, prominence and being amid the ordinary. The background is usually land not sky. The angle is never very sharp.	Due to the background being land not sky, it is sensitive to changes which create a busy backdrop.
Level 1. OUTSTANDING 	Seen from about the same elevation as the sculpture. A frequent experience when some distance away, illustrating many characteristics: scale, form, subject matter, proportions, etc. Emphasises topography, prominence and being amid the ordinary. Can be a busy or clean scene and sometimes obscured.	Sensitive to partial obstruction of the lower portions because the viewer is at a similar elevation.
From below 1. OUTSTANDING 	Seen from lower ground or when close-up to it. The angle varies from distant and shallow to close up and sharp; the less pronounced the angle, the less expressive the image. Illustrates scale, form, proportions, articulation and character. Emphasises prominence and openness. Often a sky background.	Sensitive to partial obstruction of the lower portions because the viewer is always lower down.

Distance

- 4.36 Considering distance alone, significance increases the closer the experience is to *The Angel*. Proximity emphasises its site-specific nature, scale, proportions, articulation, material and surface expression, as well as prominence, visibility and communing. Fewer aspects are emphasised when further away, mainly scale, form and voids. Distance also emphasises topography and being amid the ordinary. Experiences further away will be less sensitive to changes: there will be greater impact where *The Angel* is more prominent, closer to.

Type	Close-up			Long distance	
Signif.	1. OUTSTANDING	2. SPECIAL	3. INTERESTING	4. NEUTRAL	5. NEGATIVE

Exposure and obscuring

- 4.37 The way features in *The Angel's* setting interact with it changes an experience's significance. A 'clean' scene where its essential character can stand out has higher significance: a contrasting background, a plain foreground and nothing obscuring it from the viewer. This emphasises scale, form, subject matter, compositional balance, proportions, topography, prominence, visibility and openness. The silhouette is the purest version of this. A well lit version presents the sculpture as if in a gallery.
- 4.38 A 'busy' scene does not necessarily detract from this because *The Angel* is intended to interact with its setting. Busy scenes can also be special, such as a built-up background, a busy apron in front, or when juxtaposed alongside another feature. However, an overly busy scene will have a lower significance or can be negative.

Type	'Clean' scene		'Busy' scene		
Signif.	1. OUTSTANDING	2. SPECIAL	3. INTERESTING	4. NEUTRAL	5. NEGATIVE

- 4.40 *The Angel* is more sensitive to being obscured. Some obscuring can add drama or anticipation to a busy scene, but the more obscured it is, the more frustrated the experience becomes. It is most important that the wings – its most expressive feature – are unobscured, maintaining a void around their full shape. Partially obscuring *The Angel* can emphasise scale and that it is amid the ordinary, but it tends to detract from other characteristics such as form, subject matter, compositional balance, prominence, visibility and openness.

Type	Fully exposed		Part-obscured		Fully obscured
Signif.	1. OUTSTANDING	2. SPECIAL	3. INTERESTING	4. NEUTRAL	5. NEGATIVE

Examples

A1 introduction

4.41 On the A1, the experience is closer, slower, longer, clearer and more expansive than by rail, yet the amount of the sculpture visible en route varies due to structures and trees in its setting. The original brief for the sculpture estimated that viewing times when on the A1 would be roughly 15 seconds travelling north, and 2 minutes travelling south. The latter was due to the longer incline approaching *The Angel's* hill and because traffic heading south was slower at that time. Today, this has changed partly because the A1 has since been widened and traffic now travels south faster.

A1 travelling north

4.42 See images to the right and the key below.

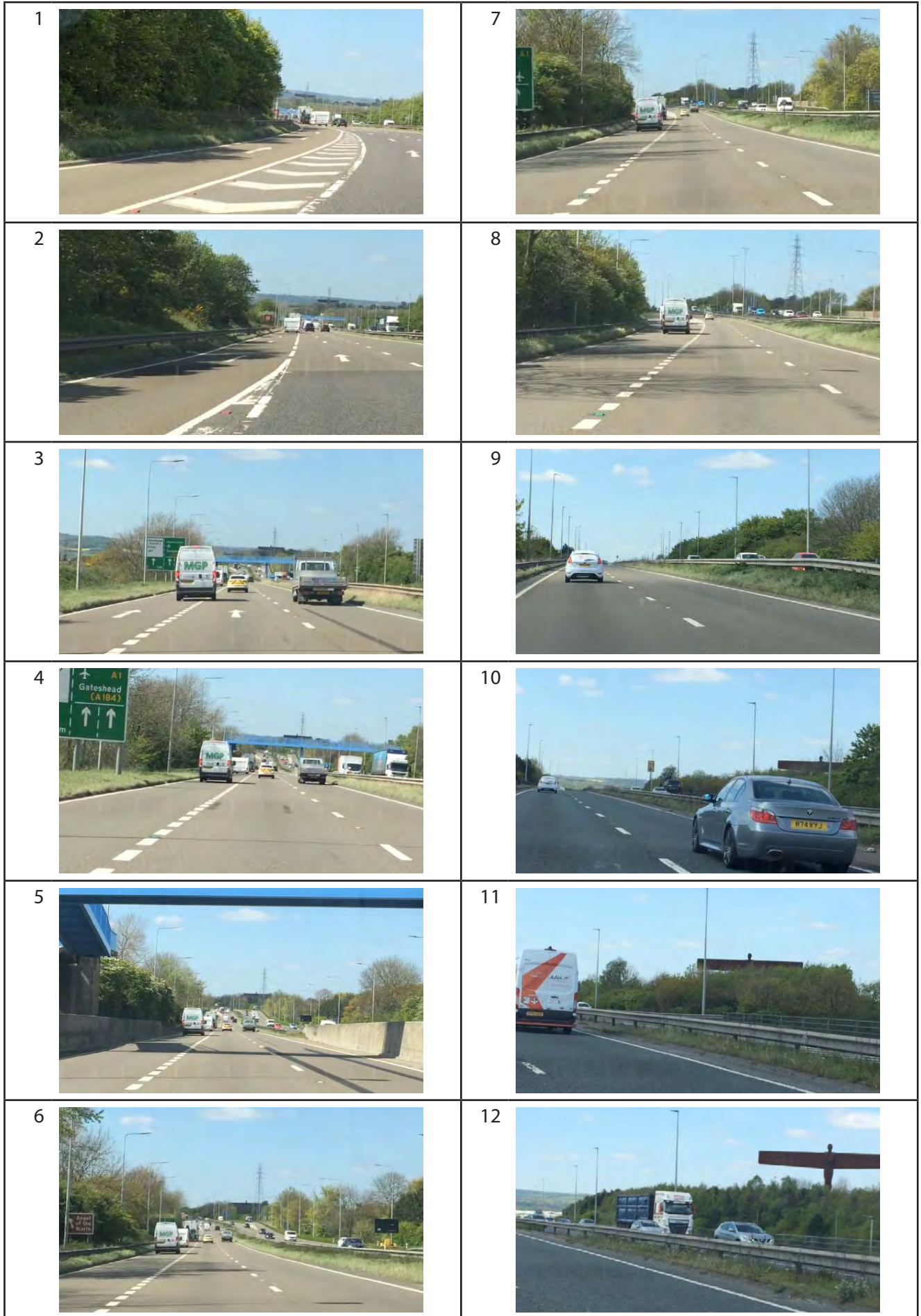
4.43 *The Angel* is first revealed as the A1 curves round from its junction with the A194(M) [1]. It is not exposed on the horizon until very close to it because on approach along the A1 [2], just at the point where perspective allows the

landscape backdrop to fall away and reveal *The Angel* on the horizon, so tree growth in front of the sculpture begins to obscure it ahead of the viewer [3]. At the same time, an electricity pylon and a footbridge over the A1, painted blue, are directly in the viewer's line of sight with *The Angel* [4]. Only the wings and head are involved in the experience due to the height of trees in front of it [5, 6]. As the journey continues, *The Angel* disappears behind tree cover [7, 8, 9]. As the road travels over the Coalhouse roundabout, it reappears alongside the driver [10], exposing a striking, kinetic encounter which quickly moves from a full-frontal $\frac{3}{4}$ -height view [12] to a powerful $\frac{3}{4}$ -profile $\frac{3}{4}$ -height view. It is soon behind the traveller.

4.44 This fast-moving scene creates a much-interrupted encounter from one of its intended key receptors, without a long exposure. It demonstrates how sensitive a key experience can be to partial and full obscuring by trees and structures, and how frustrating it is not to have a 'clean' background around the wings.



A1 travelling north

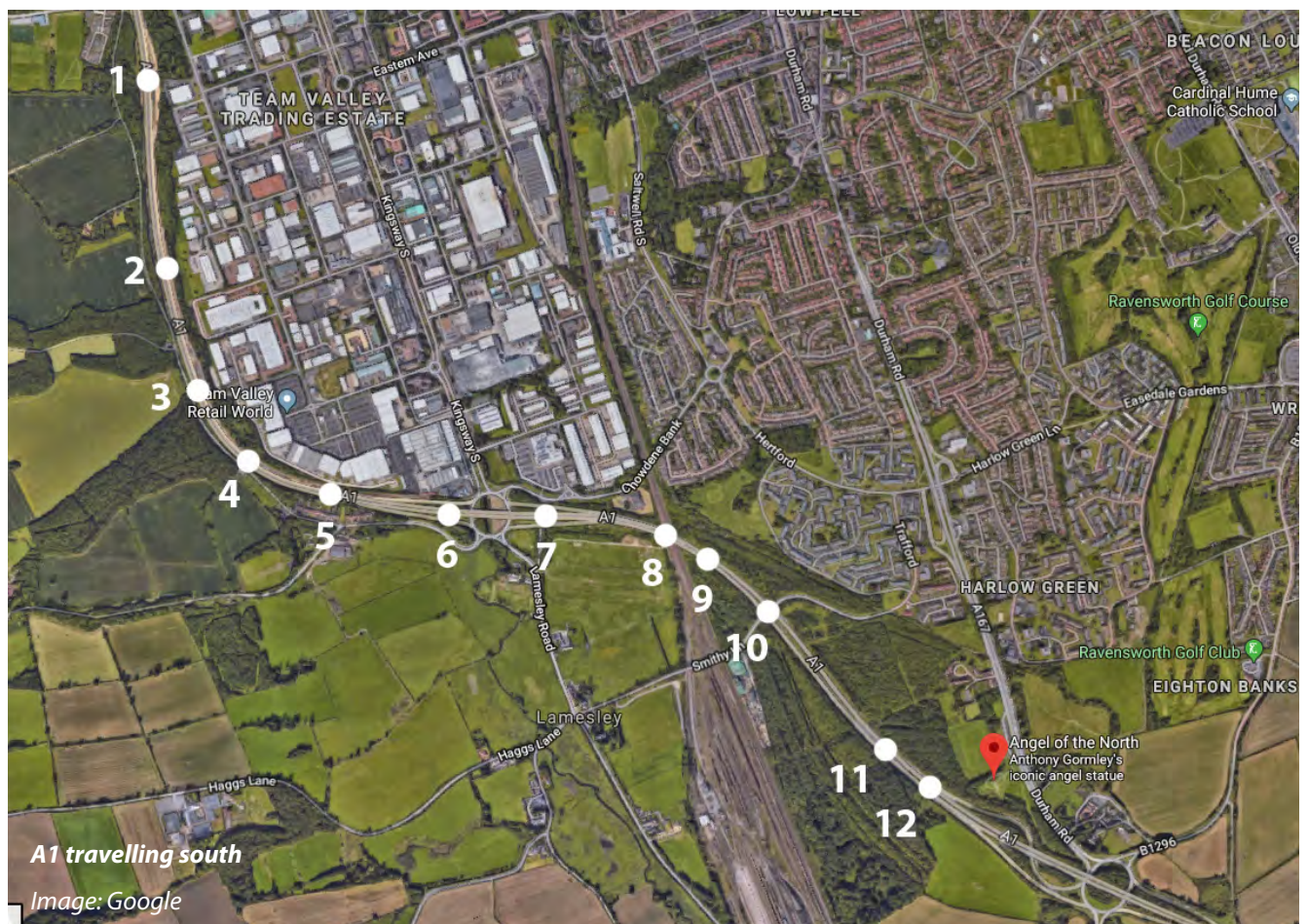


A1 travelling south

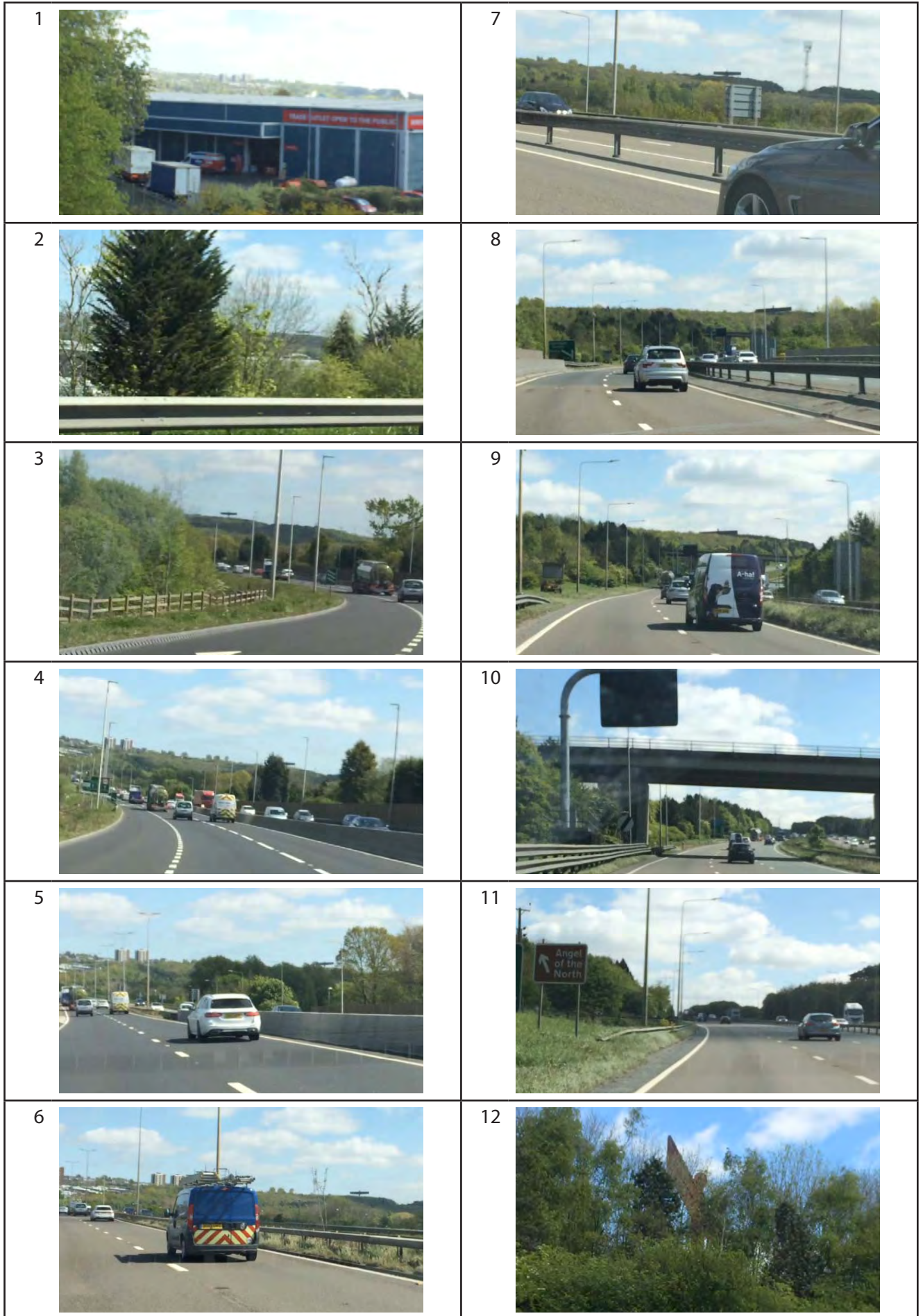
4.45 See images to the right and the key below.

4.46 The amount of tree growth immediately south of the sculpture precludes the original intended long view of it: it is composed of a series of shorter glimpses between trees. Although longer distant views are possible along the A1, the first in the sequence shown right is a distant, full-height horizon glimpse through a gap in the tree cover east of the A1 at the point where a burn running off the Ravensworth estate heads under the road towards the River Team [1]. Once round the Lady Park curve, where it is intermittently obscured by tree cover south of the A1 [2, 3, 4], the back of *The Angel* becomes quite prominently visible on the horizon, visible to just below the wings [5, 6, 7]. On the stretch closest to the sculpture, it can barely be seen due to tree cover [8]. Its head and the top of the wings are most prominent but only just [9]. It soon disappears entirely ahead of the Smithy Lane overbridge [10, 11]. It emerges as a very brief but striking $\frac{3}{4}$ -profile, $\frac{3}{4}$ -height glimpse alongside the traveller, largely obscured by trees [12], before quickly disappearing behind the traveller as the journey continues south.

4.47 As with the journey north, this demonstrates the impact tree cover can have on the moving experience. Distant glimpses interspersed by obscuring by trees can build up the excitement of the encounter, and this is more rewarding in that *The Angel* is clearly visible with a clean horizon backdrop for some distance between [4] and [7]. As with the journey north, the sculpture becomes entirely obscured the closer the journey gets to it, only for the briefest of partially-obscured glimpses before it is gone from view behind the traveller.



A1 travelling south



A167 introduction

- 4.48 The experience on the A167 is the closest, slowest and most revealing of the entire sculpture. It reveals its full scale yet it is also quite fleeting due to trees immediately north and south. The A167 is the only travelling encounter which can involve making a decision to stop and visit.
- 4.49 See images to the right and the keys below.

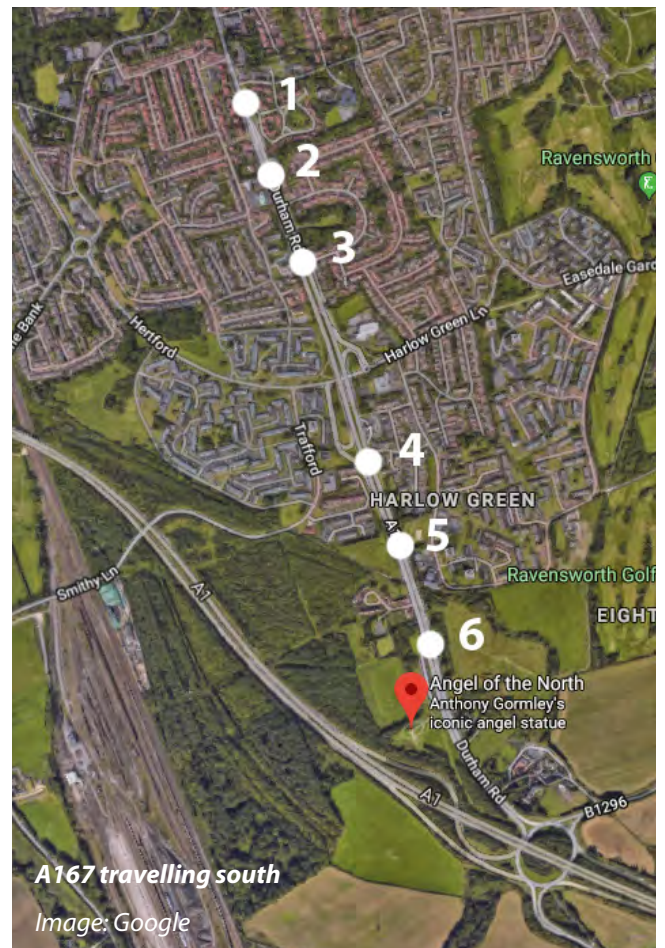
A167 travelling north

- 4.50 When travelling north, it is not visible until off the Coalhouse roundabout when trees to the south-east of the sculpture obscure it until just alongside it [1, 2]. Here a powerful, kinetic full-height view alongside the road moves from a $\frac{3}{4}$ -profile to 90° and then disappears as the journey continues north [3, 4, 5, 6].
- 4.51 The reveal of *The Angel* is at its most dramatic in this experience. Being close-to, completely full-height, and sharply angled makes this a very exciting experience. However, the presence of obscuring tree cover to the south makes the sculpture's appearance rather short-lived as the journey moves north. It is perhaps more of a long glimpse than a sustained encounter. This

might encourage the traveller to stop and visit to experience more.

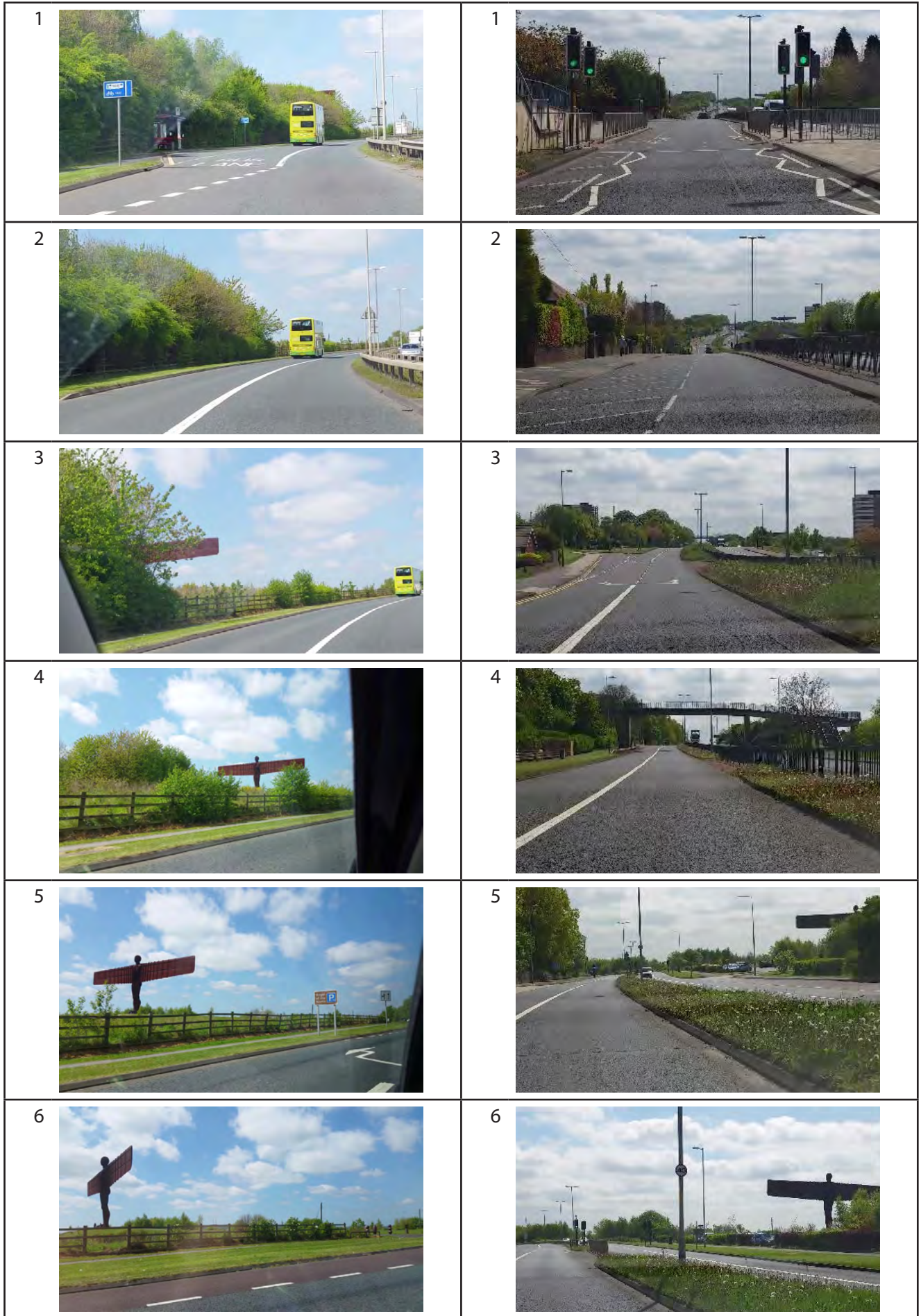
A167 travelling south

- 4.52 Travelling south, the back of *The Angel* from the waist up protrudes strikingly above townscape and trees on the left-hand side of the road [1], fleetingly interplaying with housing at Harlow Green [2]. It then disappears behind trees [3, 4] to be revealed again for a short, dynamic encounter from the knees up [5], moving from a $\frac{3}{4}$ -profile to 90° view alongside the road [6], then disappearing behind the viewer as the journey continues south.
- 4.53 This is also a dramatic reveal but it is slightly less meaningful as it is clear from this proximity that it is being viewed from behind [6]. The juxtaposition at a distance adds anticipation but, as with the A1, the complete obscuring of the sculpture by trees before it is fully revealed adds frustration and shortens the experience once it is finally exposed. As with the journey south on the A167, it is more of a long glimpse which might encourage a stop to visit.



A167 travelling north

A167 travelling south



East Coast Mainline introduction

- 4.54 The experience on the East Coast Mainline (ECM) is usually at speed and quite fleeting. Train speed and the viewer's position in relation to carriage windows is important to the length and ease of the experience.
- 4.55 See images to the right and the keys below.

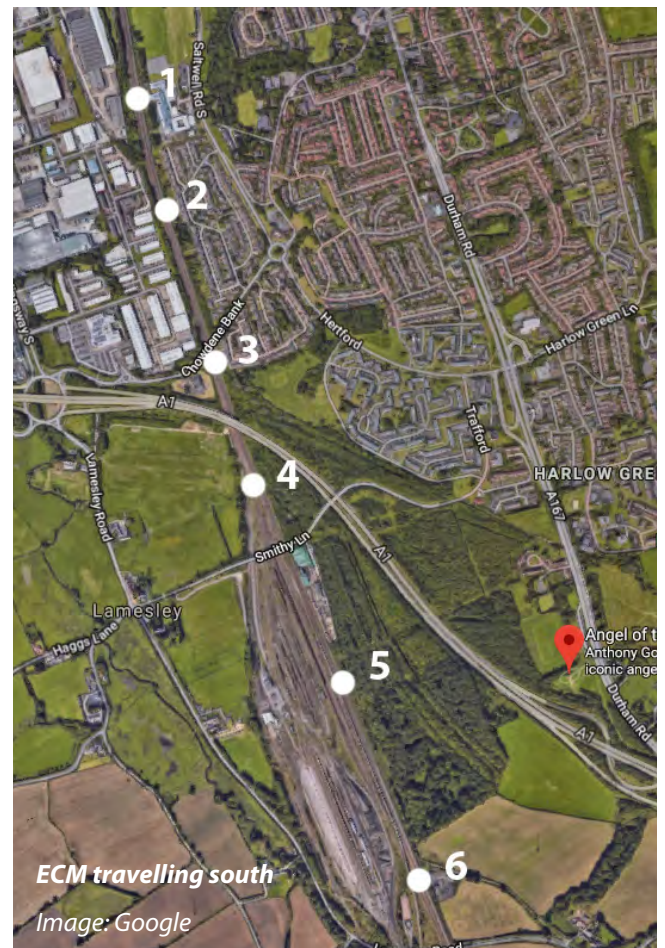
ECM travelling north

- 4.56 When travelling north, topography, industrial buildings and the side-on angle of view out of the train window obscures *The Angel* from view [1, 2, 3]. Only at a significant clearing across fields, just north of the North East Concrete plant in Birtley, does *The Angel* become visible. It is a clear middle-distance feature on the horizon, seen from below against a sky backdrop [4, 5]. It is a tall view concentrating on the torso and wings, which quickly turns in to a ¾-profile view which becomes obscured by trees alongside the railway line as the train moves past the site [6]. It does not reappear.
- 4.57 This is a satisfying middle-distance encounter which is short-lived but crisply outlined as a silhouette against a clear sky. The short 'window' provided by the open fields north of

the concrete plant makes this experience rare, all the more so as control over it is beyond the viewer; no decision to slow down or to stop and visit can be made.

ECM travelling south

- 4.58 Travelling south, *The Angel* is entirely obscured by topography, trees and other structures [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]. It makes less sense when travelling south because the sculpture cannot be seen until the train has moved past it, and thus only if sitting in a backward-facing seat or if craning to look back on oneself [6].
- 4.59 This is the most insignificant of the travelling experiences for these reasons. Yet, for the uninitiated, it can leave a memory as an unexpected, disappearing glimpse on the horizon as the journey continues south.



ECM travelling north

ECM travelling south

1		1	
2		2	
3		3	
4		4	
5		5	
6		6	

Conclusion

- 4.60 Antony Gormley's *The Angel of the North* is arguably the UK's most prominent piece of post-World War II public art.
- 4.61 It amplifies the strong British tradition of public art as civic pride. It is a powerful example of open air sculpture typifying the post-war period. It is the leading example of site-specific landmark sculpture characteristic of the late 20th century in the UK. It has re-defined the significance of sculpture in the field of public art, and it has played a key role in the cultural regeneration of Gateshead, Tyneside and the North East.
- 4.62 The work is strongly inspired by the relationship the site has with its setting in and beyond the Team Valley. The creative response is a work which uses the variables of sculptural design to striking effect: figurative subject matter, form and voids, scale and proportions, orientation, compositional balance, surface articulation, expressive character and choice of materials.

- 4.63 *The Angel's* significance is greatly defined by an ability to experience it in its setting. What *The Angel* means to us is influenced by the artwork and its setting. The contribution setting makes has been analysed using the following attributes:
- **Topography.** The site's elevated position at the mouth of a short, wide valley used for important communication routes.
 - **Prominence.** Being a prominent landscape focal point influences the way it is experienced: (1) in an unplanned way, (2) when on the move, and (3) visiting it up close.
 - **Visibility.** Being able to see *The Angel* from the landscape and vice versa is important. This includes an almost infinite range of unplanned appearances of the sculpture in the scene, as well as four specific views involving the A1, A167, East Coast Mainline and Durham Cathedral.
 - **Communing.** Form and subject matter imply an ability to communicate with *The*

The Angel viewed from Lamesley Road, Lamesley

Image: Jules Brown, NECT



Angel, an experience which varies with distance, but which is rooted in personal art appreciation.

- **Being amid the ordinary.** It stands out from its surroundings because of the materials used and because it is something special amongst everyday edge-of-town land uses.
- **Openness.** A sense of openness around it enhances its prominence, topographical scale, its sculptural form, views to and from it, and the experience of it whilst on the move.

4.64 This relationship between a landmark sculpture and its setting is very rare. Other public sculptures may be of a similar scale (eg. *Dream*, St Helen's, 2009), or be by a high profile artist (eg. *Temenos*, Middlesbrough, 2010), have a defined landscape setting (eg. *The Kelpies*, Falkirk, 2013), or be trying to raise a region's profile (eg. *Willow Man*, Bridgwater, 2000). But none have *The Angel's* specific combination of these and other factors, a sub-regional gateway location, an expansive visual and topographical context, and a site-specific figurative design response by a household-name artist.

4.65 Of these attributes, openness is the main one to have notably changed in the last 20 years, mainly due to changes in tree cover around the site. This has harmed an appreciation of its scale, concealed its full human-like form and wings from several angles, interfered with visibility of it from pivotal communication routes, and altered much of the view out into the landscape from the site.

4.66 Comparing some views of *The Angel* from 1998 to now shows a dramatic reduction in some of the attributes which make it special. This illustrates the sensitivity of the sculpture to changes in its setting.

Protecting its significance will involve managing change in its setting as well as looking after the sculpture itself.

- 4.67 Our experience of the sculpture in its setting can be divided into 3 types:
- **Noticing** *The Angel* in its landscape setting,
 - **Travelling by** *The Angel* on the A1, A167 and East Coast Mainline,
 - **Visiting** *The Angel* to explore it up-close and appreciate its landscape setting from the site.

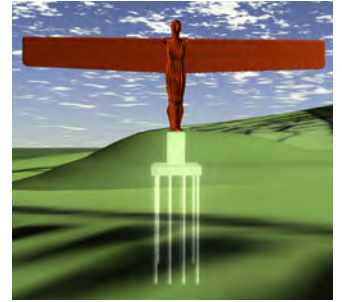
4.68 Some of these are more sensitive than others. For example, the 'window' within which the sculpture can be seen from the fixed route of the East Coast Mainline is relatively short, defined by topography, tree planting and nearby buildings, so it is particularly sensitive to alteration, eg. by it being obscured along that short route. Other experiences are less sensitive to change. The high number and variety of unplanned, incidental views of *The Angel* from a middle distance across Team Valley makes this type of experience less sensitive to changes in general than those which are more rare or closer-to. Some of the highest impact and best known experiences are when visiting it up-close, making these more sensitive to changes that would reduce the characteristics it gains from its setting.

4.69 Within each type of experience, some examples are less or more significant and sensitive than others. This can be analysed by reference to a set of characteristics which define the sculpture in its setting.

4.70 Using a structured process for this, such as the analysis form provided at the back of this report, will provide information needed to help manage the impact of future changes in *The Angel's* setting, helping to protect what makes the artwork special.

Analysis form

As the UK's most prominent piece of site-specific post-World War II public art, *The Angel of the North* gains a great deal of its significance from the relationship it has with its setting. Changes in its setting have the potential to harm what makes it special. Change proposals could include new **development**, other physical **works**, or **management actions** such as a change in nearby access or ownership. *The Angel's* setting is very wide, stretching beyond the Team Valley into the Tyne valley, the surrounding hillsides, and the Co Durham lowlands to the south.



To ensure *The Angel* is protected for future generations to enjoy as designed, changes in its setting should be influenced by the impact they will have on what makes the sculpture special. Where possible (for example, through the planning system or other relevant decision-making process), the impact on *The Angel* from changes in its setting should be managed, so that harm is avoided or minimised with justification, and opportunities to enhance its setting are taken.

An answer of Yes to any of these questions means *The Angel's* setting will be affected. Any negative impact should be mitigated through an appropriate decision-making process (eg. the planning system).

1. Describe the proposed development, works or management action, including its location and whether it is permanent or temporary.

2. Does the proposal have the potential to obscure or partially obscure an existing view of *The Angel*? This view could be public or private, dramatic or modest, and could be close-up or from some distance away.

YES **NO** If Yes, describe the view(s) affected and what the likely effect will be:

3. Where it is unlikely to obscure or partially obscure *The Angel*, does the proposal have the potential to alter the backdrop or foreground to an existing view of *The Angel*?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

4. Does the proposal have the potential to open up a view of *The Angel* or better reveal an existing view?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe the view(s) affected and what the likely effect will be:

5. Does the proposal have the potential to be visible from *The Angel's* site, or alter views out from it?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe the view(s) affected and what the likely effect will be:

6. Does the proposal have the potential to alter visibility of *The Angel* from the A1, A167 or ECM railway?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

7. Does the proposal have the potential to alter the prominence of *The Angel* in its setting, for example by visually competing with it or drawing attention away from it?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

8. Will the proposal increase the amount of external lighting in *The Angel's* setting (eg. street lighting, floodlighting or feature lighting), or the level of noise (eg. from construction, industry or another land use)?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

9. Does the proposal have the potential to reduce the physical openness around *The Angel's* site?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

10. Does proposal have the potential to limit access to *The Angel* up-close, eg. by altering footpaths, or introducing barriers or signs, or managing access at different times of the day or year?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

11. Does the proposal involve the use of 'weathering' steel (such as Corten), or a material of a similar colour, or a material which introduces a bright or strident colour?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

12. Does the proposal have the potential to introduce 'inappropriate development' in Green Belt terms?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

13. Does the proposal have the potential to alter our ability to appreciate *The Angel* as a giant ribbed metal sculptural artwork of a human-like figure with wings?

YES **NO** If Yes, describe what the likely effect will be:

