

New exhibition building at Locomotion gets planning approval

June 23, 2022



Plans for a new exhibition building at [Locomotion](#), Shildon have been approved by Durham County Council, marking a key milestone in the museum's Vision 2025 development.

The plans were approved by a Durham County Council planning committee at a meeting held on Thursday (23 June 2022).

The building, which will be known as 'New Hall', will house up to 50 vehicles from the national collection and will mean that [Locomotion](#) will be home to the largest undercover collection of heritage rail vehicles in the world.

- [Locomotion to highlight 70 years of the railways to celebrate Platinum Jubilee](#)
- [Flying Scotsman to visit Locomotion this summer](#)
- [Museum plans in the spotlight](#)

[Locomotion](#) is aiming to increase its visitor numbers by 50,000 people through the redevelopment and improvement of its site to reach 250,000 people per year.

The new development will also allow **Locomotion** to engage its audiences in new ways. It will be able to tell a more involved and coherent story of the railway industry from its earliest days in Shildon to the present day, while looking at and acknowledging its national and international impact.

Situated on the former Ashfields site, it is expected that the building will open in Autumn 2023 in time to host part of the celebrations for the 100th birthday of the world-famous *Flying Scotsman*.

Sarah Price, Head of **Locomotion**, said: "We're really pleased that the planning committee has approved these plans which now allow us to transform a disused piece of wasteland into a vibrant and inspiring new collection space for both our existing and new visitors.

"This planning decision allows us to continue to be a central part of our community for years to come alongside ensuring that the new building can be open in time for the Stockton & Darlington Railway 200 celebrations in 2025.

"We believe that it is both exciting and something to be proud of that Shildon and County Durham can be known as the home of the largest undercover collection of heritage railway vehicles anywhere in the world.

"Nearly 200 years ago people looked to Shildon to find out how railways could change the world; this new building will help us to continue this tradition and be a proud part of Shildon's history as the world's first railway town."



Proposed new collection building; credit AOC Architecture with J & L Gibbons landscape

Alongside the new building, wider improvements and redevelopments will be taking place at **Locomotion** as part of the museum's Vision 2025 plans. Gaunless Bridge, designed by railway pioneer George Stephenson, is one of the first iron railway bridges in the world and it will be moved from the National Railway Museum in York to its new home in Shildon.

Work has already been carried out on the historic railway buildings that **Locomotion** maintains to make them wind and watertight and plans are taking shape to look at how the buildings will now be used. Further stabilisation and repointing work is to take place on the Coal Drops with funds received from Durham County Council's successful £20m Levelling Up Fund bid for the Bishop Auckland parliamentary constituency.

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, the council's Cabinet member for economy and partnerships, said: "We are delighted to see **Locomotion** broadening its already impressive visitor offer with the plans for 'New Hall'.

"This expansion of the museum celebrates County Durham's role as the cradle of the global railway industry and will result in significant economic benefits across our communities through increased tourism and visitor spending. It will also complement the work that our successful bid for £20m Levelling Up funding is helping make possible elsewhere on the site.

"We look forward to New Hall being at the heart of the exciting celebrations planned to mark 200 years of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 2025."

A tender process is currently ongoing to appoint a construction company to build 'New Hall', and once appointed, they will work with building designers **AOC Architects** and **J&L Gibbons** landscape architects to deliver the project.

It is thought that the build could begin in October 2022 with the development taking around a year to complete. 'New Hall' is expected to open in Autumn 2023.

You can find out more about Locomotion's Vision 2025 plans by visiting:
www.locomotion.org.uk/about-us/our-future-vision-2025.