



HOLLAND
ASSET MANAGEMENT



Contact Us

Phone: 0345 853 094

admin@hollandassetmanagement.co.uk

www.hollandassetmanagement.co.uk



Welcome to Stanley in County Durham

INTRODUCTION

Stanley in County Durham is a former coal-mining town whose character was shaped by centuries of industry, with archaeological evidence showing activity since the Iron Age and medieval records listing it as “Standley.” Its major historic assets include the Causey Arch (1725–27), the world’s oldest surviving single-arch railway bridge, and the Tanfield Railway, a heritage line running along one of the earliest waggonway routes that once transported coal from local pits. Just a few miles away, Beamish—The Living Museum of the North—preserves and recreates the industrial and social life that defined towns like Stanley, reinforcing the area’s strong cultural identity. Community memory is deeply tied to mining heritage, particularly the West Stanley Colliery Disaster of 1909, in which 168 miners lost their lives and which remains commemorated through local memorials and services. Today, Stanley’s civic and commercial life centres on Front Street, a pedestrianised high street with long-established market days, independent traders and ongoing regeneration efforts aimed at improving public spaces and supporting community-led events. Heritage trails linking the town with the Causey Arch and waggonway routes, along with tourism generated by Tanfield Railway and Beamish, contribute to a cultural landscape that blends industrial legacy, community resilience and accessible visitor attractions.





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Investment Overview

Stanley's 2025 investment landscape is defined by strong affordability, high rental yields, and significant long-term regeneration funding that positions the town as one of the North East's emerging value markets. Typical property prices ranging from £120,000–£135,000 and estimated gross yields of around 9% or higher make Stanley particularly attractive for buy-to-let investors seeking low entry points and strong monthly returns. The town has secured £20 million through the national Pride in Place programme, with implementation expected from 2026 onward, targeting the revitalisation of Front Street, improved public spaces, and commercial activation measures such as high-street rental auctions to tackle vacancies. Durham County Council has also launched a Strategic Place Plan for Stanley, shaping future development priorities and encouraging private-sector participation, while public-sector investment continues through projects like the £5.7M refurbishment of the Louisa Centre and new market-led placemaking initiatives supported by regional grants. Strong road links to the A693 and A1(M), proximity to Chester-le-Street rail station, and steady demand from commuters, SMEs, and tourism generated by nearby attractions such as Beamish Museum strengthen the economic case for long-term investment. Although the area still faces retail vacancy pressures and phased delivery timelines for regeneration funding, Stanley's blend of affordability, improving town-centre vibrancy, and committed public investment creates a compelling environment for residential, commercial, and mixed-use investors seeking high-yielding opportunities with future uplift potential.





Growth Sectors

Stanley's economic growth in 2025 is anchored by a combination of retail, tourism, light industrial activity, and business support initiatives, offering multiple avenues for investor engagement. The town's Front Street and surrounding local services benefit from ongoing regeneration programmes, including the Strategic Place Plan and Pride in Place funding, which aim to enhance commercial vibrancy, repurpose vacant units, and stimulate the evening and mixed-use economy. Tourism is a major growth driver, with nearby attractions such as Beamish Museum and the Tanfield Railway attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, supporting hospitality, short-stay accommodation, and leisure-related retail. Light industrial and logistics sectors are expanding due to Stanley's strategic proximity to the A693 and A1(M) corridors and local industrial estates, providing opportunities for small-scale manufacturing, warehousing, and SME operations. Furthermore, regional business support programmes, including grants and mentoring via the Durham Business Growth Programme, encourage enterprise growth in creative, digital, and green economy sectors, while local workforce development initiatives enhance employability and skill levels, underpinning long-term economic resilience. Collectively, these growth sectors present investors with a diverse mix of opportunities across residential, commercial, and mixed-use markets, bolstered by supportive public investment and a strong regional economic framework.





Town Regeneration

Stanley is currently undergoing a multifaceted regeneration effort focused on revitalising its high street, public spaces and community assets to stimulate economic activity and social wellbeing after decades of post-industrial decline. At the heart of the town's regeneration is the Strategic Place Plan (SPP) being developed by Durham County Council in consultation with residents and local businesses; this plan aims to establish a long-term vision for Stanley based on economic strategy, quality of life improvements, and town-specific priorities such as improved public realms, modernised facilities, and enhanced community hubs. Community engagement activities, including street sessions and open consultations, are underway so that the future planning framework fully reflects local aspirations for public space, commercial opportunity, and services.

A major national funding opportunity supporting this work is the Government's Pride in Place programme, which has allocated £20 million to Stanley South over the next decade. This funding — part of a £5 billion nationwide investment — is intended to target high street revival, infrastructure enhancement and community-led projects, and it operates in tandem with Stanley's Strategic Place Plan to ensure that residents, businesses, and stakeholders have a voice in shaping local priorities.

Complementing these strategic and funding frameworks are tangible regeneration activities on the ground: public-private collaborations are bringing community art projects to disused buildings like the Board School to boost vibrancy and town pride while exploring future uses for key properties. For example, County Durham-based arts organisation The Forge worked with local schools and housing partner Karbon Homes to install artwork on formerly vacant storefronts, a quick-win intervention aimed at improving high street appeal and community engagement.

Another high-profile project is the revival of the Stanley Civic Hall (Lamplight Arts Centre); after years of closure, a social enterprise has secured council backing and grant funding to transform it into a mixed-use space for arts, culture, sports and business events — a move seen as central to creating new cultural and economic activity in the town centre. Investment by local and regional authorities also includes facilities improvements such as the £5.7 million refurbishment of The Louisa Centre leisure hub, a project completed to modernise community sports and wellbeing infrastructure, supporting broader quality-of-life and footfall outcomes within Stanley. In addition, regulatory innovations like High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs) are being explored in Stanley to help address persistent vacant units — a common consequence of long-term retail underinvestment — by enabling proactive interventions that match occupiers with space and encourage quicker reuse. Despite these positive developments, local reporting highlights that parts of Stanley — particularly South Stanley — remain among the most disadvantaged areas in the country, reinforcing the importance of regeneration initiatives to tackle deprivation alongside commercial and cultural renewal.





Education Sector

Stanley's education ecosystem is anchored by strong local secondary provision, accessible post-16/FE options nearby, and a growing focus on skills, apprenticeships and adult learning that together support local employment and investor confidence. The town's main secondary provider is North Durham Academy (High Street, Stanley), part of the New College Durham Academies Trust; the academy moved into a new £30m campus in 2013 and provides 11–19 provision with a mixed performance profile that the trust and school leadership have been improving through curricular and pastoral reforms. For post-16 learning and vocational routes, Stanley residents use several strong nearby providers: New College Durham (wide offer of A-levels, T-levels, vocational courses, adult learning and apprenticeships), Durham Sixth Form Centre (broad A-level choices), and regional FE colleges such as Stockton Riverside College for vocational and technical training – all of which provide clear progression routes into employment, apprenticeships or higher education. These providers also run adult and part-time programmes useful for upskilling the local workforce. County-level strategies explicitly link education to local economic priorities: Durham County Council has updated apprenticeship and skills strategies (2025–28) and an all-age careers framework that coordinate training with employer needs, local growth sectors (light manufacturing, green economy, tourism/leisure) and regeneration projects – improving the town's human-capital case for investors who need a stable local labour pool. The council also delivers adult-learning and employability programmes (Durham Learn / Adult Learning & Skills Service) helping residents re-train and access local jobs. Key strengths for investment linked to education are: (1) the presence of an 11–19 academy on a modern campus (North Durham Academy) that supports local families and stabilises demand for family housing; (2) strong nearby FE and sixth-form provision supplying skilled entry-level labour for SME, hospitality and light-industrial employers; and (3) active county apprenticeship and adult-learning programmes that increase workforce adaptability. These factors reduce occupational risk for residential and small-scale commercial investors because they underpin steady rental demand and local labour availability. Challenges and considerations: educational attainment and outcomes vary by neighbourhood and cohorts – investors should examine micro-level school performance and catchment dynamics (use DfE performance tables and school reports) because areas with weaker attainment can correlate with rental-management profiles requiring higher asset management input. Also consider local transport links for students commuting to FE/sixth-form providers (Chester-le-Street, Durham city and nearby colleges), which influence demand patterns for rental properties near reliable bus links





Visitor Economy

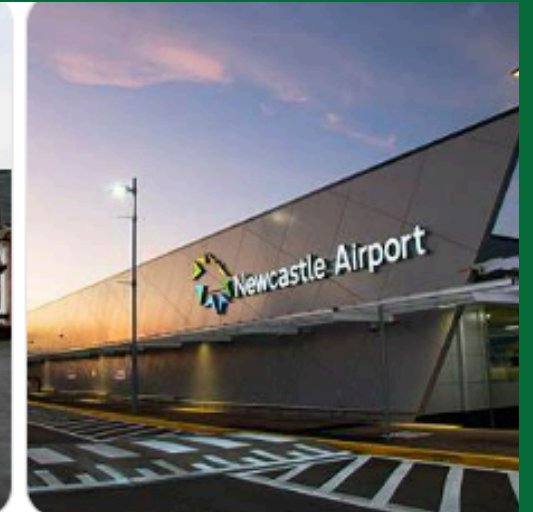
Stanley benefits from a strong and growing visitor economy driven by major regional heritage attractions, most notably Beamish – The Living Museum of the North, which drew 838,632 visitors in 2024 and continues to rank among England’s top paid-for attractions, creating consistent footfall and demand for local hospitality, retail, and accommodation. The wider County Durham tourism market recorded 21.56 million visitors and £1.38 billion in expenditure in 2024, with staying visitors—though only 8% of total trips—accounting for 43% of all spend, highlighting substantial opportunity for Stanley to convert day-visitors into overnight stays through improved hospitality provision and packaged experiences. Nearby attractions such as Tanfield Railway and Causey Arch add to the local draw with heritage rail events, steam galas, and walking routes that encourage longer dwell time, while year-round programming and event calendars at Beamish and Tanfield help smooth seasonality and expand off-peak demand. Strategic public investment through the Stanley Strategic Place Plan and Pride in Place funding is enhancing public spaces, accessibility, and high-street vitality, improving the environment for private-sector tourism projects. Despite current gaps in boutique accommodation, visitor-grade F&B options, and integrated itineraries, Stanley is well-positioned to capture higher-value tourism by developing small hospitality ventures, experiential food and retail offers, and collaborative event-led packages with nearby attractions—supported by strong regional branding, high-profile heritage demand, and a growing market for domestic short breaks.





Local Transport

Stanley benefits from a well-developed and multi-layered transport network that supports everyday local mobility, regional commuting, tourism and business activity. The town's central bus hub on Front Street provides frequent Go North East services linking Stanley with surrounding neighbourhoods and key centres including Durham, Newcastle, Sunderland, Consett, Beamish and Chester-le-Street, making buses the primary mode for local residents, students and workers. Strategic road connectivity is strong, with the A693 offering fast east-west movement and direct access to the A1/A1(M), enabling efficient travel to regional cities and positioning Stanley well for light-industrial, logistics and commuter demand. Although the town has no railway station, nearby mainline hubs at Chester-le-Street, Durham and Newcastle—typically 25–40 minutes away by bus or car—provide robust national rail connections. Newcastle International Airport, located within a 20–35-minute drive, further enhances domestic and international accessibility. The area is also enriched by high-quality active-travel routes such as the Waskerley Way and stretches of the C2C cycling network, improving walking and cycling access while supporting leisure and tourism activity. Planned A693 junction upgrades and ongoing bus, cycling and public-realm improvements contribute to safer, more efficient mobility and complement wider regeneration programmes. Although reliance on buses and localised congestion present some operational challenges, Stanley's combined local bus coverage, regional road access, rail proximity, airport links and active-travel assets create a resilient and well-connected transport environment that supports both residential living and future economic investment.





Housing and Property Market

Market snapshot & headline prices

Stanley's housing market remains highly affordable compared with regional and national averages. Over the last 12 months the DH9 postcode (which covers Stanley and nearby settlements) recorded average sold prices of c.£129k, while Rightmove's Stanley-specific average is around £121k – though averages vary strongly by property type (terraces c.£82–94k; semis c.£122–133k; detached much higher). These headline figures show modest annual uplift in 2025 but leave Stanley as a low-entry market attractive to yield-seeking investors. **Micro-market variation (street/neighbourhood level)** Stanley is not uniform – some streets show very low sold prices (examples on Rightmove show terraced streets with averages under £40–£60k), while newer estates (Tanfield / Murray Park / Station Fields) and recent new-build phases command higher prices (family semis/detached from ~£250k–£350k on new developments). This micro-variation matters for underwriting: buying in priority regeneration corridors near Front Street or close to new-build nodes will behave differently to purchasing older terraces in South Stanley. **Supply, new-builds & listings** There is active new-build activity around Tanfield Lea / Station Fields (national housebuilders listing family homes), and local estate agents show a steady pipeline of resale stock (from low-priced terraces to mid-range family houses). New developments are increasing the choice for owner-occupiers, while older stock continues to provide investor-grade buy-to-let opportunities.

Rental market & yields Stanley is widely reported as a high-yielding buy-to-let location in the North East: local agent commentary and market guides indicate gross yields typically ranging 7–11% depending on street and property type (terraced investors can see the higher end). Regionally the North East shows some of the UK's stronger average yields (~8%+), supporting Stanley's investor case – but national rental growth moderation in 2025 (Zoopla/The Times reports slower rent rises) should be allowed for in cashflow modelling. Expect longer average let times than in tight urban markets. **Transaction speed & market dynamics** Smaller towns like Stanley typically show longer market-to-sale cycles than big cities, though particular auction and portfolio sales (local investor disposals) periodically bring concentrated blocks of stock to market – useful routes for scaling PRS investments. Time-on-market and valuation spreads mean underwritings should use conservative exit/growth assumptions. Social housing, council activity & policy context Durham County Council's housing strategy and recent municipal programmes (including modular housing pilots and targeted social housing delivery) are active in the county and influence local supply and affordability patterns; regeneration programmes (SPP + Pride in Place) also aim to improve neighbourhoods, which can support future capital uplift for adjacent private housing. Investors should monitor council plans for social-housing pipelines and modular schemes which may change local supply balances.

Demand drivers & demographic context Demand is supported by local workforce needs, proximity to employment centres (Durham/Newcastle), and by steady rental demand from local families, lower-income workers and tenants priced out of larger towns. Tourism and visitor economy growth (Beamish/Tanfield) provide secondary demand for short-stay accommodation in the catchment. Demographic challenges – pockets of deprivation and lower incomes in parts of Stanley – mean tenant profiles can be mixed; this requires robust property management.

