

CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

BULLETIN

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Belmont Business Park, Durham, DH1 1TW

TRUST MEETING

Our autumn lecture will be given by **Colin Jubb** on 'Old Durham Gardens: Past and Future' on **Saturday 9th October 2010, at 2.15pm in Elvet Riverside 1, room 141**. The Gardens lie a mere one mile upriver from the City centre, and are largely neglected by visitors except during English Heritage Open Days each September. Begun in the 17th century and remodelled in the 18th, a chequered history saw the garden house converted to a public house from the mid-19th to early 20th century. The complex is of sufficient interest to merit detailed entry in Pevsner.

The grounds were laid out in distinctive fashion, with an upper walled garden, with a terraced- and lower walled-gardens. A period of long neglect came to an end when the property was bought by the City Council in 1985. Restoration and replanting was undertaken and the gazebo reconstructed, but funds proved insufficient to maintain the project. Now, however, hope may be at hand. A committee has been formed, 'The Friends of Old Durham', which aims to assist the County Authority to arrest the decline and bring back to life what could again become a valuable historic asset to our City.

The lecture on this exciting project, Colin Jubb, is treasurer of the newly-formed Friends. He is also, of course, a City of Durham Trustee, a fact which indicates our interest and encouragement for the scheme. Do come – and learn for yourselves the potential which is currently lying dormant.

CHRISTMAS CARD

This year's card can truly be described as historic. It shows the equestrian statue of Lord Londonderry in its original position. The colour photograph, taken from inside the Guildhall, emphasises the relationship of the statue to the buildings of the Market Place, one of the reasons for the Trust's opposition to its relocation.

The photograph was taken by **Jean Rogers**, a long-standing member of the Trust, on a Heritage Open Day in September 2008. A sample card is enclosed, along with a general order form for Trust publications.

TRUST PUBLICATIONS

This autumn the Trust has issued three new publications.

Since 2010 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Trust's architectural award scheme, Trustees considered it appropriate to assemble a more permanent record which had previously appeared in the Bulletin, year by year. Hence, *The City of Durham Trust Architectural Awards, 1990-2009*. The editing was undertaken by **Timothy Clark**, who supplemented the illustrations by many of his own photographs. Descriptions of all award-winning buildings, together with many of those which were highly commended, are included. The volume shows at a glance how much good architecture has been added to the City in recent years.

A second publication is *The Unmaking of Durham's Historic Market Place*, which is based on the lecture given by your **Secretary** after this year's AGM. It analyses the still barely believable outcome of a project which evoked 10,000 public objections (with but one registered supporter), objections from 14 architects/planners (with none in favour) and objections from every civic quarter – Mayor, M.P., the Trust and all residence/community groups.

The third publication is *In the Steps of the Masters: Durham in Paintings*. A characteristic feature of our City is its incomparable views of the peninsular climax from surrounding vantage points. It is a characteristic recognised by early travellers through to UNESCO in its Statement of Universal Value for Durham's World Heritage Site. Little wonder, then, when landscape was deemed an acceptable subject for artists in the second half of the 18th century, Durham offered obvious potential. In the present volume your **Secretary** has assembled eighteen paintings, each depicting the scene from a different location. 'Steps' in the title alludes to an accompanying series of present-day photographs from the same locations – in so far as art permits such a comparison.

These publications, together with the Christmas card, will be on sale at the Open Meeting on 9th October.

THE COUNTY PLAN

The Authority's strategy for reviving the fortunes of the County by changing the nature of our City as we know it was mentioned in the *Annual Report*. The *Core Strategy Issues Paper* consultation document (October 2009) had discarded the balanced approach of the two previous County Structure Plans. Trustees' submission arguing for moderation fell on deaf ears.

In June the County issued its major document in the process, *Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper*, along with *The County Durham Settlement Study (Consultation Draft)* and *Green Belt Assessment Scoping Paper*. Trustees submitted 15 pages of reasoned comment for this second round. While hope springs eternal where 'consultation' is concerned, in this instance there is the added knowledge that the County's final proposals will have to be put before an independent inspector at an Examination in Public – and that the Inspector (or Secretary of State) will have the final say.

The envisaged Durham City would have another 5000 houses (which would require taking land from within the recently-designated and modest Green Belt), major office development (including ideally an international head-quarters at Aykley Heads), development of cultural facilities to achieve the status of a major international tourist destination, more retailing and two new roads (Northern- and Western- Relief Roads).

In the words of the document, the City "needs a critical mass of population, employment and visitors....to maximise this potential for the benefit of the County." The County Planning Officer recently re-emphasised this view: "The population is too small to attract many of the facilities we want. Population is really holding Durham back in many respects" (*Durham Times*, 6th August 2010). Your Secretary has previously likened such policy as subjecting the City to steroidal growth.

The scenario just outlined is technically what the *Core Strategy* calls "Option A – Promoting Economic Development." In theory, therefore, there is an alternative. "Option B – Targeted Regeneration", which would not concentrate so much of the development on Durham City. But, strangely, although the document has 64 questions, each with "options for [us] to choose from", there is no question to permit the key choice between Options A or B. This is unsatisfactory in the extreme, since, apart from Housing and Development, the choice for many of the questions is based solely on the reasoning of Option A.

In Trustees' view the Core Strategy has fundamental flaws in its presentation of the present County. (1) The economic trough from which it is planned to lift the County is painted darker than actuality. – Certainly darker than other recent reports emanating

from the Authority itself. Thus, for 'decline' one should often read 'improvement' – although, admittedly, not as fast as desired or other areas. (2) Housing predictions are based on a survey before the current economic recession took hold. (3) The County is treated as an island, isolated from the close ties and interaction with the large urban centres bordering it to the north, east and south. (The City of Sunderland, for instance, is not mentioned.)

Perhaps the final word should be given to the *Durham Times*, which weekly continues to give a full and balanced view of happenings in and around the City. In its editorial for 6th August 2010 on the County's strategy headed 'There's no Plan B', it wrote: "But the City of Durham Trust is right. The price to be paid is a fundamental change in the nature of the city.....The future of Durham is at stake."

BUS LANE FOR SHINCLIFFE

The County Authority is proposing to construct a bus lane on the A177 at Shincliffe in the 120-yard run-up northwards to the lights at the junction with Mill Lane (B1198). Modelling has shown that between 8 and 9 a.m., and again in the afternoon peak, when the lights are red, a bus will be able to pass up to 15 queuing vehicles, thereby contributing to a possible saving of 64 seconds per bus on the journey from Coxhoe to Durham.

The engineering works required involve a widening of the carriageway, replacement of a layby and a new footpath/cycleway, which will be backed by a retaining wall. The cost will be £125,000. (In its consultation response, the Authority remarked that the money was obtained from regional sources under the County's current Local Transport Plan, and could not be used for other purpose. Under its project, known as Transit 15, there is to be a series of such short-length bus lanes across the County).

Trustees have always expressed general support for making public transport more attractive vis-à-vis the private car. At the same time they have had past reason to query particular Highway Authority plans which seem divorced from reality – by which is meant, blinkered plans which pay no heed to other factors or to the overall environmental context. With regard to bus lanes, the mile-long lane into the City along the A690 dual carriageway is appropriate, but one for 120 yards on the A177 to save up to 64 seconds is hardly in the same league.

FINCHALE ABBEY: A CORRECTION

In the *Annual Report* it stated that "The recent regularisation of occupation, with certificates of lawfulness for static homes, at Finchale Abbey Caravan Park represents a much-needed step in this environmentally sensitive area." Unfortunately the brief item was listed

under 'Environmental Pluses', which was hardly the case. Trust member Jean Rogers pointed out the error at the AGM and here presents a corrected, fuller version of recent history.

“The Caravan Park lies in Green Belt land by the river Wear, adjacent to the ruins of Finchale priory, where monks of Durham once spent holidays. The ruins and setting have continued to make this an attractive recreational spot, although the proprietors of the caravan site have reduced access to the riverbanks, including the traditional location of ‘Godric’s Garth’, the heritage of St Godric.

The Trust has been urging the City Council to prevent unauthorised development here since May 2006, when major building work commenced. The Council declined to intervene. Only after the proprietors were already marketing what they described as an ‘Eco Village’ was retrospective planning permission applied for. Despite the interest also shown by two local MPs on this issue, planning permission was granted under delegated powers for the engineering works, without any of the conditions that the Trust had urged.

Alongside the applications for engineering works, including new concrete bases for ‘park homes’ to replace the existing run-down static caravans, certificates of lawfulness for the caravans themselves were applied for. This was a protracted process, as the Council repeatedly extended the deadline for the applicants to revise and improve their evidence, which was not initially adequate. The Council seemed determined to grant them, giving the applicant multiple opportunities to change submissions in the light of the Trust’s comments.

The Trust’s relief that this process has now been completed led to its inclusion in a list of ‘pluses’, though it is at best an administrative, rather than an environmental advance. The positive aspect is that the site now has planning permission for mobile homes, and it is possible, though by no means certain, that the Council will ensure that any future changes are within the terms of that planning consent. The net effect, though, is that, despite the Trust’s best efforts, an unplanned retirement village has been established in the proximity of the Priory, and a crucial stretch of riverbank remains inaccessible.”

D.C.D.P.

APPLICATION FORM

I/We wish to become a member of the City of Durham Trust and I/We enclose cash / standing order / a cheque payable to The City of Durham Trust.

Full Name & Address (capitals) Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

.....

.....

.....postcode

Tel. No.....

Email.....

GiftAid: I pay income tax and, unless I cease to do so and notify the Trust, I would like the tax on my subscriptions and any donations to be reclaimed by the Trust.

Signed.....Date

Current annual membership subscriptions:

	<i>Please Tick</i>
Please tick Ordinary	£10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Joint (couple).....	£12 <input type="checkbox"/>
Senior (over 60).....	£5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Joint senior (both over 60)	£7 <input type="checkbox"/>
Student	£5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Dependent solely on State Benefit	£5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Life.....	£150 <input type="checkbox"/>

Completion of the following Standing Order form will enable your bank to make the payment now for this year and on 1 January of each subsequent year. Most members pay by this method which is convenient for them and for the Trust.

STANDING ORDER

To:(Your bank's name)

(address)

Please pay to the Co-operative Bank plc, 29 High Street, Durham DH1 3PL now and on each 1st January starting

1st January 20... until further notice, the sum of £.....

For the credit of the 'City of Durham Trust'

(A/c number 50410022, sort code 08-90-70) and debit

my account; number.....

Signed.....Date

Name (capitals)

Address (capitals).....

.....

.....Postcode

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST is a society set up in 1942 by local people who saw the need to conserve and encourage the appreciation of the historic City of Durham and its surroundings.

Our members are people who take a keen interest in what goes on in Durham City. They appreciate the role the Trust plays as a strong independent voice, free from party political agendas, that can put their concerns forward.

What do we do?

Most people first hear of the Trust because of the campaigns we run, for example to save Brown's Boathouse, to oppose the growth of large pubs in the City centre, and to get a Green Belt for the City.

Behind this lies a solid body of work: around 1000 planning applications relate to the Durham City Area each year. The Trust reviews them all, and makes representations where appropriate. Once or twice a year we will put our views at a Public Inquiry. We have also had input into the County Structure Plan and City Local Plan, which set the planning policies in the longer term. We also make representations on the licensing of pubs and clubs.

We restored the statue of Neptune in the Market Place and the teapot in Saddler Street. We make annual awards to the architects and clients of the best new or restored buildings. The Trust has placed plaques on buildings of interest, and provided trees for sites such as Stockton Road and Old Durham Gardens.

The Trust keeps its members and the wider public informed by holding public meetings and lectures, by

publishing Annual Reports, Bulletins, books and leaflets about the City and via its web site (www.DurhamCity.org).

We co-operate with other City organisations and pressure groups. We have joined other bodies like ourselves by affiliating to the Civic Trust. We also consult with national bodies such as English Heritage.

How do we do it?

The Trust is managed by its Trustees, up to 20 in number, who are elected from the membership by the members. The work of running the Trust is carried out by the Honorary Secretary, the Trustees, and other members who are able to give their time and expertise to the Trust. The Trustees meet monthly in Alington House, North Bailey. Members are welcome to attend these meetings, and may speak with the agreement of the chair. But if members want to bring anything to the attention of the Trust, they are encouraged to approach any Trustee, all of whom live in or around the City.

So why not join us?

The effectiveness of the Trust depends on the support and size of its membership. We hope you will want to help the work we are doing by becoming a member. Please fill in the membership form and send it to:

**The Honorary Secretary,
The City of Durham Trust,
c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt,
Kepier House,
Belmont Business Park,
Durham. DH1 1TW**