

## INTRODUCTION

1. The City of Durham Trust agrees that the underlying aim of a County Durham Plan should be to improve the well-being of all who live in County Durham. We also agree with the Authority that the way to achieve this goal is by improving the economy of the county and accept that Durham City has an important role to play in this task. But while agreeing with the general objective of the Plan, we **object** to the preferred strategy to be adopted to achieve the same.
2. The degree of over-concentration on Durham City is a strategy contrary to county-wide planning which has characterised planning in County Durham hitherto. This new strategy focusing on the county town will be at the expense of the rest of the county, and represents an opportunity lost. It is not at all clear from the document that the preferred Spatial Approach does in fact draw – as claimed – upon the strengths of Option B, for there is still heavy reliance on the favoured Option A with its hoped-for trickle-down effect from an expanded county town. It is a high risk, inappropriate strategy, as will be shown.
3. The document appears reluctant to acknowledge the county’s position sandwiched between two metropolitan areas. In this respect, the frequent references to the importance for Durham City to achieve a “critical mass” are unrealistic, for the county town will never become a third metropolitan area or regional capital. (No indicative numbers are given for ‘critical mass’, but even a doubling in the City’s size would still leave it trailing in Newcastle’s shadow.) Rather, the Authority should seek to capitalise on the county’s comparative advantages.
4. It is noticeable that the proposed over-concentration on the City has coincided with the abolition of both regional and district authorities, which has meant that there has been no body to oversee context or speak specifically for the City. Within this new administrative context the County Council is acting in a quite unprecedented manner in proposing a Plan which will alter the character of the City as we know it.
5. Over-concentration on the City has characterised the present plan-making from the outset in 2009. Despite rounds of consultation, which have generated the submission of many carefully-argued suggestions for adjustment, the Authority has taken scant notice of the public’s feedback for a more balanced approach. (The anodyne content of the ‘summary boxes’ in the present document, which purport to tell ‘what we told you’, reinforces this conclusion. No quantification or weighted analysis of responses is indicated in any of the summaries.)