

CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

BULLETIN

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DURHAM CITY VISION & MASTER PLAN

The future of Durham for the next 15 years is in the process of being decided. Hitherto, County Structure Plans and City Local Plans have provided for a management of change, and been largely incremental in nature. Now, a Durham Steering Group (made up of representatives of the County and City Authorities, in liaison with the Cathedral and University) is exploring - if not encouraging - a much greater rate, scale and nature of change. Trustees feel it imperative that members are fully aware of the background and implications, hence this additional Bulletin.

TOURISM EXPANSION

The Steering Group's first action was to commission the report, *Planning for the Future of Durham*, published in June 2004. It caused considerable concern among Trustees (see Bulletin 56, September 2004). Durham was summarised as "beautiful...but dull". There was recommendation for a "democratisation" of heritage, and the injection of a "grooviness", not least along the river, our "most under-utilised asset." Here, there was potential for water sports, casual sports area, cafes, bandstand, festivals, themed events. Historical assets needed "to be brought to life - even if it means taking liberties with cherished treasures." The castle should be "opened up", the Tussauds Group should be invited to visit. Elsewhere in the report, the possibility of a Regional Assembly headquarters was welcomed.

NEW ROAD

One constituent of the Steering Group, the County Council, has recently 'pulled out of the hat' a so-called Northern Relief Road. In its Consultation Plan describing the Relief Road, the County strangely made no mention of the Northern Bypass, which is to take off from the Carrville roundabout at the A1(M) junction, heading north-west along a line, reserved in both Structure- and Local Plans, to join the first part of the bypass near the Arnison Centre. Its twin aim is to relieve congestion in the City Centre and to benefit the north-west part of the County.

The new proposal would also take off from the Carrville roundabout, and have the identical twin function. It would, however, travel south-west down the Wear Valley, doing irreparable damage to the Area of High Landscape Value, Green Belt and Conservation Area, and pass close to medieval Kepier Hospital and Crook Hall, before disgorging its vehicles - in the City Centre! (Two alternative endings are offered: the road would either terminate just above Highgate and the over-loaded Millburngate roundabout or, having traversed the DLI landscaped Gardens, it would enter the equally over-loaded roundabout at County Hall).

QUESTIONNAIRE

On 29th June of this year the Steering Group announced that the public were to be consulted (during an eight-week period) by means of a questionnaire. The general nature of the questions indicate it should have preceded reports already completed (but mostly still under wraps) on tourism, retailing, highway development, even architectural studies. Nevertheless, it is the one opportunity the public has to express its opinion. Moreover, the Communications Consultant of the Vision project has written to the Trust specifically wishing to involve Trust members "since they will all have the future of Durham very much to heart." To this end a stock of questionnaire leaflets has been delivered to the Trust for distribution. One is enclosed here. You will see that 18th August is given as the closing date for submission of questionnaires. Completed forms should be returned by Freepost, to the Council Offices at 17, Claypath, Durham, DH1 1RH - or by hand, of course.

An accompanying 'touring road-show' is currently planned for 11-13th August in the Market Place. Meanwhile, copies of a VHS video or DVD are available from the Council Offices.

TRUSTEES' VIEWS

At the outset, Trustees feel they must refute for the umpteenth time the charge that the Trust is against all change, progress, development, or of wanting to preserve the City in aspic as a museum. Nevertheless, there is

serious concern at the series of commissioned reports, which have gained a momentum of their own and which could radically change the scale and character of Durham. In view of what has already been revealed, Trustees are wary of what would appear to underlie some of the questions. A summary of Trustees' views on specific questions is offered below. Members, of course, will make up their own minds, but please ensure your opinion is recorded!

Ranking of Factors: Of the 12 factors listed, 'Protecting Heritage' is ranked by Trustees as No.1, while 'Increasing Tourism' is ranked lowly. (In view of what was suggested by commissioned experts. The present leaflet regrets Durham "fails to attract the same numbers of tourists as other heritage cities.")

23. 'Do you think enough is made of the river?'
Yes! (The alternative is the recommended 'grooviness', etc. in the tourist package).

24. 'Better access between the City Centre and the river?' What might be envisaged here? An unqualified 'yes' could lead to some undesirable developments underpinning No.23.

30. 'Do you find it easy to get from Millburngate Shopping Centre to the Market Place?' Yes! - Implicit here could be a new footbridge across the river between Framwellgate and Leazes Bridges. Given the small scale and fine detail of the City, another bridge is undesirable from a (historic) townscape point of view, as well as being unnecessary. (One of the entries for the Millennium project included a footbridge - another had an aerial cable-car system! - at which time Trustees countered with a suggestion that, if further pedestrian flow needed to be accommodated, then a redesigned walkway could be attached to Leazes Bridge, together with improved access at both ends. Polycarbonate protection from traffic, and even weather, could be incorporated. Such solutions can be found on continental Europe).

39. 'Which of these ways could help commuters - Northern Relief Road?'
Emphatically no! (It is neither 'northern', nor a 'relief' road, but will be environmentally disastrous).

Over to you!

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/Cheque payable to *The City of Durham Trust*.

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

.....

.....*postcode*.....

Telephone.....

E-mail.....

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*.....

Annual membership subscriptions:	<i>please tick</i>
Ordinary	£5
Joint (couple)	£7
Senior (over 60)	£2
Joint Senior (both over 60)	£4
Student	£2
Dependent solely on State benefit	£2
Life	£100

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:.....(*subscriber's own bank*)

Address.....

.....

Please pay the Cooperative Bank plc, 29 High Street, Durham, DH1 3PL (sort code 08-90-70) now and on 1 January of each year the sum of £..... until further notice, for the credit of *The City of Durham Trust* (a/c no. 50410022), and debit my *Account Number*.....

Signed.....*date*.....

Name (in capitals).....

Address (in capitals).....

.....

.....*postcode*.....

