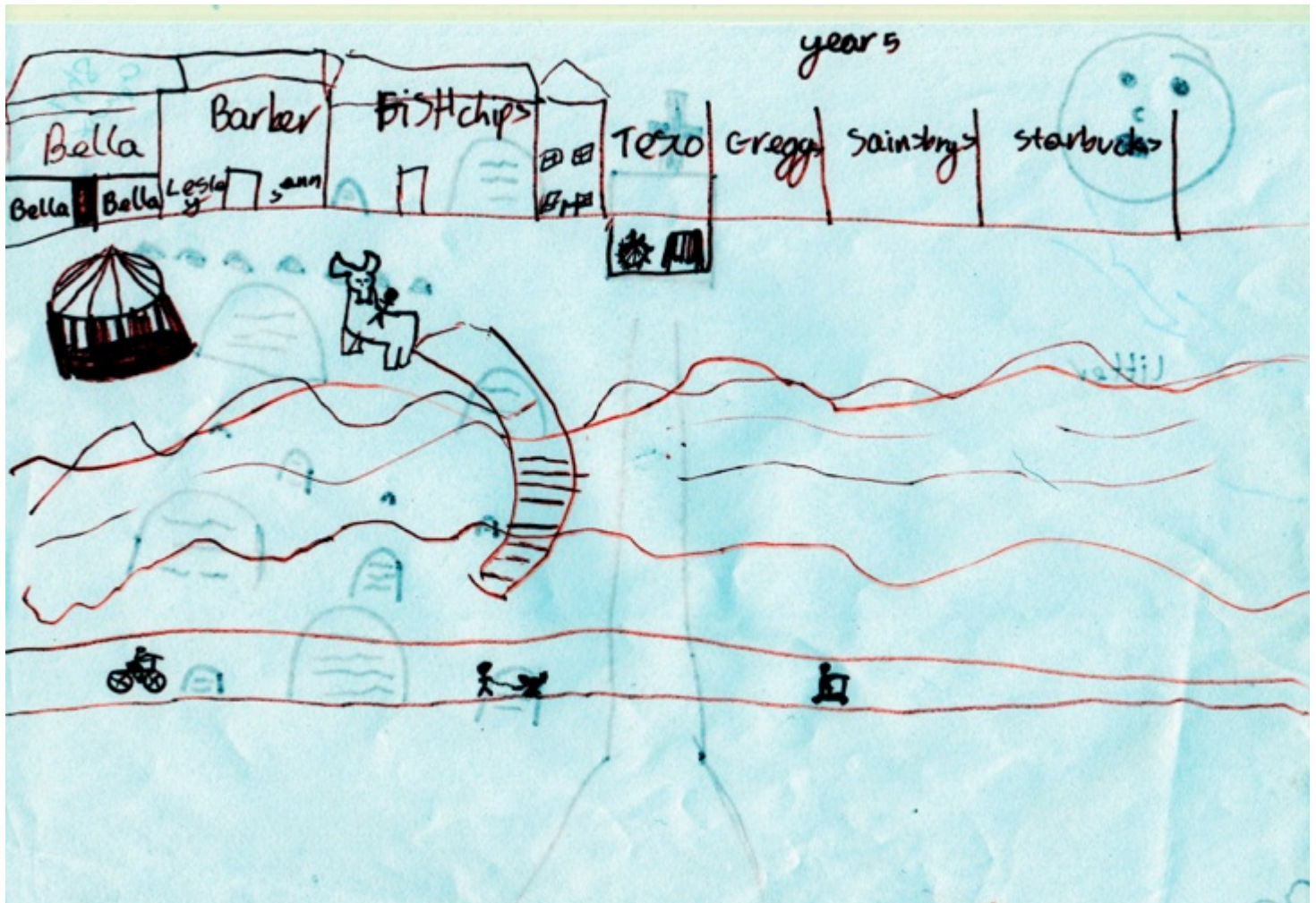


# 'What you think of Durham City Centre - now and in the future?

Young people's views on Durham City  
With thanks to pupils from  
St. Margaret's C of E Primary School, St. Oswald's C of E Aided Primary & Nursery School,  
St. Leonard's Catholic School and Durham Sixth Form Centre

Pippa Bell  
September 2016



As part of the process of public consultation to inform the Durham City Centre Neighbourhood Plan, we have sought the views of children and young people who study at primary and secondary schools in the Neighbourhood Plan area: St. Margaret's C of E Primary School, St. Oswald's C of E Aided Primary & Nursery School, St. Leonard's Catholic School, and Durham Sixth Form Centre.

Over a period of 5 months (October 2015 – March 2016) meetings were held with members of each school's council, which represents the pupil body from each year group. A total of 70 children and young people of both genders, aged between 5 – 18 years took part.

Thank you to all the pupils who took part and particularly to Mrs G. Harrison, St. Oswald's Primary School; Mrs H. McDaid, St. Margaret's Primary School; Mr D Murray, Susan Mitchell & Sarah Baillie, St. Leonard's Catholic School; Hannah Haygarth and Mr Robinson, Durham Sixth Form Centre.

### **Questions and visuals shown**

The pupils were asked to answer the same three open-ended questions, accompanied by photos<sup>1</sup> of Durham City, which had been asked of adults at the Open Meetings in Durham Town Hall in June & July 2015,

**What is good about Durham City?**

**What is bad about Durham City?**

**What do you think needs to change?**

The groups were given space to discuss the questions, and to write or draw their ideas<sup>2</sup>. At the end of each meeting the pupils were asked to feedback to the whole group and discuss their viewpoints.

This report is a resume of their responses and the themes and priorities, which emerged from the meetings.

The themes were

1. Environment and heritage
2. Community
3. Infrastructure
4. Housing
5. Leisure
6. Retail

Through discussion the pupils identified the following issues as the main priorities:

- **Traffic and road safety**
- **Bus station & public transport**
- **Environment & streetscape**
- **Leisure – including Retail, Heritage & the River**

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<sup>1</sup> Visuals – Appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Detailed analysis from each school – Appendix 2

## **Traffic and road safety, bus station and public transport**

Traffic, parking and public transport emerged as the main priority for young people of all ages, although each age group were concerned with different issues. Each group raised safety concerns, which they would like to see addressed; the flow of traffic, the interaction between pedestrian and cars, overcrowded pavements, traffic jams and pollution, and car parking preoccupied the younger age group. Whereas the older age group, who are regular users of public transport, were most concerned about the state of the bus station and the buses, and the social problems associated with using these, in some instances the pupils had witnessed drug exchanges at the bus station. They also objected to people smoking whilst waiting for buses, the lack of a safe waiting area and the disorganized queuing system.

Some of their suggestions for addressing these issues and improving safety:

### **Road safety & parking**

- Faster traffic lights
- Wider pavements
- More pedestrian crossings
- Cycle tracks so cyclists don't have to ride on the pavements or roads
- More parking
- Increase park and ride spaces and opening hours

### **Buses and Bus station**

- Improve the bus station by providing a waiting area, creating a safe queuing system and installing better lighting
- Use bigger buses at peak times
- Cheaper bus fares

## **Environment & Streetscape**

All pupils were aware of the condition of the city environment particularly issues relating to litter, smoking in public, and the state of North Road, the latter was raised by every age group. Their concerns ranged from pavement hazards for pedestrians, such as shop signs cluttering the pavements and uneven paving stones, to feeling intimidated by crowds, hawkers, beggars and drunks.

To address these issues they have suggested:

- Improve the streetscape of North Road, particularly shop fronts
- Use hanging shops signs
- More litter bins, designed to blend into the streetscape
- Ban smoking in the city
- More visible police and security, particularly at the bus station

## **Leisure, Retail, Heritage and River**

The young people all had a strong appreciation of the heritage and architecture of the city and a discernible pride in the historic centre, particularly the cathedral and castle. They all enjoyed the river and the river walks, and felt that even more could be made of the riverbanks to improve access and leisure opportunities.

On the whole the young people thought the retail experience in the city centre was good, although there was a desire for more specialist shops, which, depending on age, varied between more sweet shops and better clothing shops!

They all enjoyed the events staged in the city, particularly Lumiere, which was praised, as were the specialist markets. However, the young people felt that entertainment on the whole was more '*focused towards adults*' and young children, rather than teenagers.

The following are their suggestions to improve the retail and leisure offer in Durham:

- Enhance the heritage assets to attract more visitors
- Improve the existing parks, and add more parks
- Keep the riverbanks clean, make them more accessible and promote nature
- More open air city centre events eg. An activity week like the one in Chester-le-Street, and an open air cinema in the summer
- Indoor activities such as a climbing wall and a bowling alley
- An indoor space where teenagers can meet so they don't have to use coffee shops
- A shoppers crèche -somewhere to leave children where they can be entertained whilst parents shop
- Shops more attractive to teenagers so they don't have to visit the Metro Centre

Two additional issues, **Housing** and **Employment**, were raised which were of particularly concern to a minority group of respondents.

**Housing** was a negative issue for pupils from three of the schools (St. Margaret's, St. Oswald's and St. Leonard's) where many of the pupils are resident in the City centre. Their comments echoed those of the adults from the public consultation and referred to noise from neighbours, too many resident students and the issue of building houses on green spaces, which they disagreed with. Their suggestions for improving the housing supply in the city included re-using derelict buildings as homes, building more affordable homes and returning student housing to houses for families.

The pupils from St. Leonard's and Durham Sixth Form Centre, where some respondents were school leavers, were concerned by the lack of **employment** opportunities in Durham City. They also felt that the choice of jobs in the City is limited. They would like a wider choice of permanent jobs to choose from and more part-time jobs to be made available to young people, particularly in the proposed new entertainment venues in the City.

## **Conclusion**

All respondents had a positive appreciation of Durham City, its heritage, environment, and community, which is evidenced by their comments, and on the whole they thought the City was a good place to live.

Durham County Council has addressed a number of the issues raised during the consultation; for example the redevelopment of Wharton Park and the installation of Scoot traffic lights to help the flow of traffic through the city. The emerging *Durham City Sustainable Transport Strategy* is an indicator of the Council's intention to improve pedestrian and cycling in the City, although this is still a work in progress. However, other issues the respondents raised such as the state of the bus station, North Road, crowded pavements, road safety, leisure and employment will help to inform the Durham City Centre Neighbourhood Plan, which along with the County Durham Plan will shape the future regeneration and development of Durham City, and enhance the life opportunities for young people in Durham City

# Appendix 1

Visual images shown to the pupils

## Environment

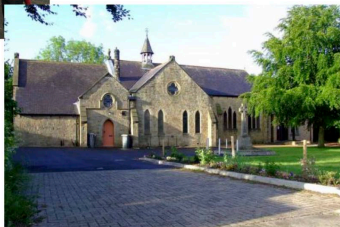


## Heritage

Views, conservation areas, buildings

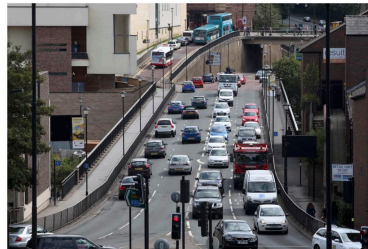


## Community



## Infrastructure

Transport and utilities

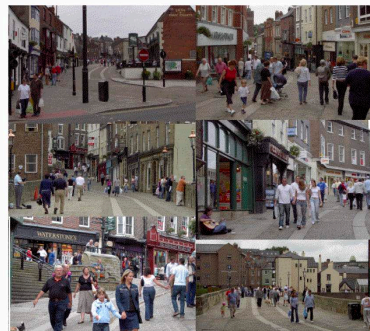


## Housing



## Economy

Business & Leisure

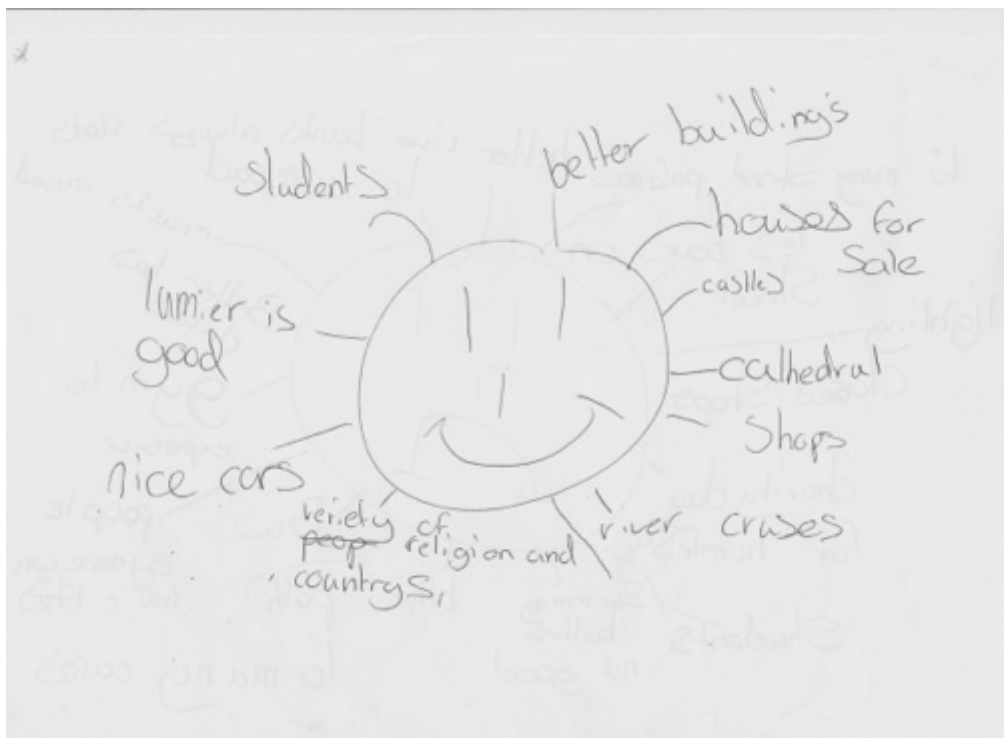


## Appendix 2

Key: The different coloured type indicates the responses from each participating centre of education

- St. Margaret's C of E Primary School, Crossgate Peth, Durham, DH1 4QB (pupils aged 6 -11 took part in consultation)
- St. Oswald's C of E Aided Primary and Nursery School, Church Street, Durham, DH1 3DQ (pupils aged 4- 9 took part in consultation)
- St. Leonard's Catholic School, North End, Durham DH1 4NG (pupils aged 11- 18 took part in consultation)
- Durham Sixth Form Centre , The Sands, Durham DH1 1SG (pupils aged 16- 18 took part in consultation)

## What is good about Durham City? 😊



### 1. Environment and heritage

I like the landscape of the town centre  
Bridges so we can walk across the river  
Good location  
Nice trees and wildlife  
Good countryside  
Cathedral and castle  
Nice architecture

River around city  
Good countryside for walking  
Nice views  
Fresh air  
Nice historic buildings  
Cathedral and castle

River  
River walks  
Walking in general  
City centre is old but has modern facilities  
Public sculpture  
Cathedral  
Castle  
Heritage and the history of the City in general  
Beautiful buildings  
Great buildings for exploring

Lovely views  
Good variety of heritage sites to visit  
Walking around the cathedral  
Lovely architecture, fits in with the environment and would like this preserved so any new developments will be in keeping with the historic environment.

## **2. Community**

Small place and most people know each other  
Good support for charities  
Church  
Nice MP

Listening to buskers  
Everyone treated fairly  
Going to school to learn

Homely  
Safe  
Festive  
Tourists  
University  
Lots of community buildings

Good community, feel safe and secure in the City.

## **3. Infrastructure**

Nice and tidy  
Clean

Walking from the bus station

Well maintained buildings  
Clean- well maintained city

Beautiful and well-maintained City centre

### **Roads & transport**

Not slippery roads

Park and Ride

### **Bus station and buses**

## **4. Housing**

Mansions and private drives

## **5. Leisure**

### **Sport**

Good for bikes, good terrain, lots of hills.

Healthy runs and bike rides to participate in

Good health races

Maiden Castle Leisure facilities

Wharton Park regeneration

Trampoline Park and Infinity Air

### **Entertainment & Events**

Some fun things

Good entertainment

Lots of Fairs in the City centre

Miners Gala

Big Ride

Parades

Lumiere

Gala Theatre

Lumiere

Good celebrations

Theatre

Library

Lumiere

Good range of events, bring people into the City

Freemans Quay

Gala

Millenium Place

River cruises

Lumiere

Festivals and specialist markets



Lots of events

## 6. Retail

Good  
Conveniently placed shops

**Shops**  
Everything you need is in Durham  
Durham markets

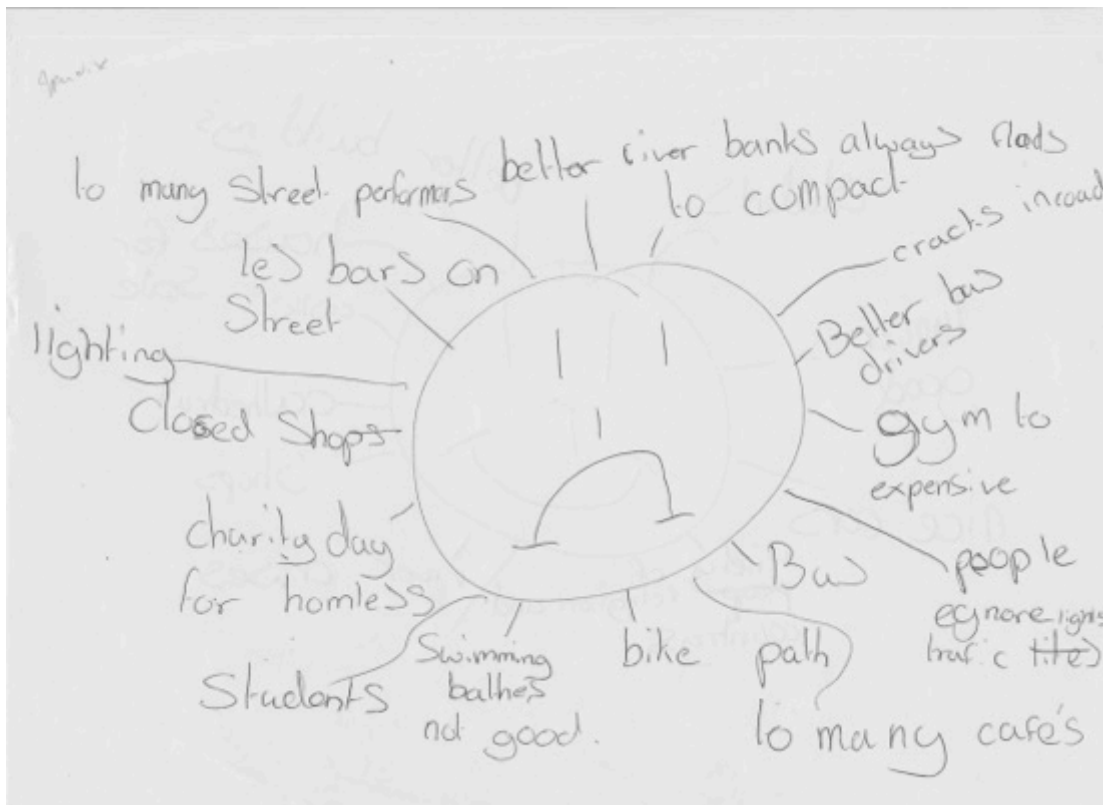
**Food outlets**  
Good restaurants  
Lots of fast food  
Battered sausage  
Non-processed chicken nuggets

Coffee shops in Durham – cake and croissant  
KFC

Lots of cafes



# What is bad about Durham City? ☹️



## **1. Environment & Heritage**

Smoking in public – particularly on North Road

View of the top of North Road from leaving the railway station

North Road needs to be tidied up

Flooding

The prison is scary

Churches are open access to anyone

Nowhere dry to sit in the City centre if it's raining, unless its in a coffee shop (expensive)

Too many people smoking

Lack of greenery in some areas

## **2. Community**

Drunkenness

Alcohol

Drunken student parties

Too many homeless people

Church

People not saying thank you

Trying to sleep when students are making a noise outside

Too many visitors in town

Town is very noisy

Too many students  
Students don't notice young children

People in the City center pester you about charities  
Intimidated by drunk on Framwellgate Bridge, which is a gateway to the city and this is not a welcoming site for tourists  
Hawkers selling badges/charms/joke books and charity subscriptions  
The fruit stall guy on North Road who shouts is too loud

### **3. Infrastructure**

Lots of litter  
Litter in graveyards  
Dumping of rubbish  
Not enough litter bins  
Litterbins smell  
Graffiti  
Vandalism

Lots of litter, particularly on paths  
Pavements and flagstones are uneven which makes them wonky so you can't cycle properly  
Shop signs and adverts on the pavements are cluttering up the street so it's difficult to walk.

Uneven pavements  
Dirty streets  
Need more public toilets and to keep them clean

The river is filthy and polluted  
North Road is dirty  
Litter  
Poor maintenance of cobblestones, narrow pathways and river pathways  
Millennium Place has litter and chewing gum on street

#### **Roads & transport**

Traffic lights too slow  
Traffic jams  
Temporary traffic lights  
Too many cars, cars are not good for the world  
More cars in the city less in the countryside  
People cycling on paths  
Parking fines  
Parking is expensive

No parking spaces  
People driving too fast and smelling diesel  
Too many cars  
Traffic jams  
Rude car drivers who don't let you cross the road

Students blocking the pavements outside school when we are trying to get home. They bustle about and don't notice you and nearly knock you over.  
Don't like using the car on a rainy day  
Bad visibility and roundabouts, my mum nearly crashed at County Hall roundabout  
Cars driving too fast  
Lollipop people help stop the traffic but cars ignore them  
Buses are too high

Heavy traffic in the City  
Busy roads, concerned about road safety  
Too many cars trying to drop off at school  
Not enough car parking spaces  
Not enough pedestrian crossings

Lollipop people close to Neville's Cross crossroads cause frequent delays at peak times.  
Traffic lights take too long by The Gates  
Traffic congestion, particularly Gilesgate Bank

### **Bus station and buses**

Bus station too small  
Unsafe  
The roof leaks  
Dirty  
Dangerous –Can't easily see the bus numbers without walking out in front of a parked bus  
No permanent member of staff at the bus station  
People hang out there and cause trouble  
The busiest buses always have 2 queues whilst people wait, and this blocks the station  
Not well planned  
Buses are often in the wrong bays  
Bus drivers are unfriendly  
Bus fares are too expensive  
At peak times there are too many people for the bus station to cope with  
Need more information about the bus routes  
Have to pay to use the toilet  
Bus drivers don't pull down the ramp for pushchairs or disabled people  
First aid kit is needed on buses, a bus I was on braked hard and I was cut & there was no first aid

Public transport is frustrating:

- buses are always late because they change drivers at peak times
- layout inside is too small
- people smoking

Buses are too expensive  
Bus station is cramped and looks old  
Bad first impression for tourists  
Have to pay for toilets  
Café shut  
No seats for sitting whilst waiting  
Late buses sometimes refuse to take you  
People taking drugs at the bus station

Drug exchange at the bus station near bins and on buses

#### 4. Housing

Less student homes  
Houses are too close together so you can hear your neighbours  
Neighbour noise  
Saxophone practice

Building houses on sports fields

Too many houses  
Not enough housing  
Housing that is built on green spaces

#### 5. Leisure

##### **Sport**

Not enough green areas to go to, Wharton Park is closed, can use the Sands  
Not enough leisure facilities, bring back the ice rink  
Swimming pool in Freeman's Quay is too cold  
Not enough parks

##### **Entertainment & events**

Not a lot of entertainment for young people

Not enough for young people to do apart from shop

Not a lot to do, it is more focused on adults than young people

#### 6. Retail

Need a greater variety of shops  
Not enough chocolate shops

##### **Food outlets**

Too many coffee shops

Lack of fast food outlets

Too many coffee shops and not much else

# What needs to change in Durham City?

## **1. Environment and heritage**

Better scenery – lakes  
More trees  
Don't cut down trees  
Improve river to attract more wildlife  
Do something with the old swimming baths  
Improve North Road

More trees to attract nature  
Protect nature and small creatures

Protect the riverbanks  
Be more environmentally friendly, and have more plants and flowers in the City centre  
Keep the City tidy  
Reduce pollution  
Keep the riverbanks clean  
Add some more heritage activities to attract visitors  
More statues  
Better disabled access for the cathedral  
Better looking Milburngate House when it is redeveloped

Improve the whole of North Road

## **2. Community**

More respect  
Stricter university police

No smoking anywhere  
Let more immigrants live in Durham  
Better law and order, no more robbers

More police and security

Better security at the bus station to handle the drug problem

## **3. Infrastructure**

Less graffiti  
More bridges  
Improve river safety, put up railings

Collecting garden rubbish in bins should be free  
Hanging shop signs so standing ones don't clutter the pavement

Safer river  
More lights around the river

More benches around the river  
More litter bins, particularly near the river  
Well designed litter bins so that they blend into the background and are not an eyesore  
Wider pathways, there are too many pedestrians in the City and the paths get crowded  
Better pavements  
More bridges  
Good flood defence wall instead of mud banks to stop flooding

Improve the shop fronts on North Road and make them brighter and cleaner

### **Roads & transport**

Faster traffic lights  
More parking spaces so you don't spend a lot of time looking for one.  
Cheaper parking

Cars to go slower, decrease speed limit and put up more road signs  
More car parking spaces  
Free parking  
Cheaper parking  
Less cars travelling through the city  
Better traffic lights to keep traffic moving and roundabouts safer  
More cycle tracks for bikes so that they don't have to ride on the roads or through the city centre  
Wider pavements so you can accommodate children and students

Have dedicated cycle paths  
More pedestrian crossings eg. By leisure areas, libraries and swimming baths and the Salutation Inn at Framwellgate Moor  
Faster traffic lights  
Better access to public transport throughout the city  
Keep park and ride open until later  
More parking  
Less expensive parking

Make the traffic lights faster, install smart traffic lights  
Give lollipop people better training so that they synchronise with the Neville's Cross traffic lights

### **Bus station and buses**

Have bigger school buses to fit more pupils in  
More buses  
Refurbish the bus station, make it bigger and cleaner  
Cheaper bus fares for young people

Cheaper public transport fares  
Revamp the bus station, improve the lighting and signage  
Knock through the upstairs of the bus station building to make an open plan waiting and café area like Kings Cross station in London

#### **4. Housing**

Turn student flats into homes for families  
Sort out derelict buildings and turn into new homes  
Increase council spending to house the homeless

Build more flats for residents, which cost less to live in so that people with not much money can live there

#### **5. Leisure**

##### **Sport**

Freeman's Quay, More swimming and playtime for children  
More parks – there are not enough near where I live in Neville Square  
Improve the parks

More sports facilities to play tennis and to swim  
New climbing and gymnastic facilities in the leisure centre

Get a waterslide for Freemans Quay  
More sports events for young people such as the Junior Great North Run  
An activities week like Chester-le-Street's with a climbing wall in City centre  
More undercover leisure facilities as Durham gets cold in the winter  
Bowling alley  
Ice rink

##### **Entertainment**

Theme park with a roller coaster  
More cinemas  
More entertainment for young people such as an ice rink

A soft play are with racing cars in the City, where adults can leave children whilst they shop

A dedicated entertainment venue to hold organised events, and weddings and birthday parties

A leisure park like Metroland  
More activities in the library for younger children  
Open air/ Drive-in cinema like Beamish Hall  
More free activities

Need another cinema as well as the Gala  
Turn the old cinema on North Road into a bowling alley  
Ice rink  
Use Millennium Place, the Market Place and Palace Green for events and markets  
Have tourist information boards at the bus station

#### **6. Retail**

##### **Shops**

Cheaper shops



More goorly (sic. girly) shops  
More shops

Better shops to make me shop in Durham as I usually go to the Metro Centre to shop  
A good make up shop  
Hollister  
Outside markets  
More convenience shops like the Co-op

Better shops

### Food outlets

Less sweet shops

Another Starbucks  
More fast food outlets  
Ice cream parlour

Cheaper food for teenagers

## 7. Employment

More jobs in Durham  
There are not many available jobs when you leave school  
Wider variety of jobs for young people

Hope for more part-time jobs (temporary or seasonal) in the proposed new entertainment venues

