

DURHAM CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FEEDBACK ON CONSULTATION DRAFT

The Consultation Plan showed NO plan submitted by Durham County Council OR the objections made by others submitted recently.

The Durham City Neighbourhood Plan - the Draft Plan did NOT appear to have a plan AND the persons on the team did NOT appear to have any idea of a plan.

Their plan was a list of Vision and Objectives along with Themes. They were brilliant aspirations. They, however, needed to be put down with a draft proposal for positive or negative constructive feedback for residents to comment on.

It is, therefore, difficult to provide constructive feedback on a plan that has NOT been seen.

This response below is based on that.

Theme 1: A City with a Sustainable Future

S1.

Durham has a sustainable future due to its historic importance and events held in the city. BUT student development is partly destroying it - Durham University student numbers are TOO LARGE for a SMALL city. I am not convinced that the university really cares about the city - its prime objective appears to be its FISCAL POLICY for the Durham University (it is not about students and their education!).

Durham City needs a Ring Road to take traffic out of the city. Junction 61 development and another by-pass would assist this. Another Ring Road is needed at the north of the city to link the A690 to the A691.

More Park & Ride facilities are needed - expanding and/or additional. Additional electric buses would be needed to support that.

Less car parking in the city centre should be the incentive with more pedestrianisation. Cars entering the city should be for residents and business access ONLY.

Open spaces such as Wharton Park, Botanic Gardens, River Wear Corridor, University accommodation gardens and other open spaces are vital for wildlife, relaxation and leisure. These should be maintained and NOT built on. There should be a ratio between development and open space which should be maintained and NOT exploited for commercialism.

Open spaces should also be maintained to give pleasure and opportunity for residents and visitors in the city (e.g. improve the river walk footpaths, its fencing, etc.).

Visitors and local people also require public conveniences in the city centre. Durham City lacks these facilities. These MUST also be included in the city facilities and they must also be maintained to a high standard for all to use in the city.

Visitors and local people could take ill while enjoying being in the city. To date, I have not seen any defibrillators in the city anywhere for use in the event of an emergency. They are not too expensive and could be life saving. This should be a Vision and Objective.

S2.

All in-fill of properties, homes, businesses, university accommodation is partly being built on open spaces such as Mount St Oswald Golf Course. This is NOT sustainable as the River Wear floods - more built areas will aggravate this problem and enhance flooding severity and frequency. That is unconnected to climate change BUT due to significant additional building programmes all over the city. This is the result of commercial greed.

The Vision and Objectives in the Draft Plan are correct but Planning Permission rule relaxation by government is in conflict with these for a number of renovations and extensions. Developments will be exploited by builders and encouraged by the council. Environmental issues will be overlooked deliberately as they are not easily quantified. Linking such developments to river flooding MUST be done by planners and environmental assessors.

Theme 2a. A Beautiful and Historic City - Heritage

H1.

Less traffic in the city will lead to less air quality pollution which will help protect the Durham Cathedral structure and enhance its life.

I was encouraged that the County Hospital development to a student accommodation site was initially rejected due to sky line which was above the level of the cathedral. Well done the planners at the council.

H2.

Some properties have changed their exterior glazed panels without permission in the conservation area. Is it policy to ignore these OR will action be taken to address that. North Road is an example of the mismatch on this?

H3.

Is it part of the plan to upgrade the Character Areas and then to maintain these? This will come at a cost to each property.

H4.

Flower beds are provided by the council at a variety of sites across the city. Are these based on political or site enhancement policy decisions. NO flower bed at Neville's Cross. This is a major crossing in the city and is very unattractive.

Theme 2b. A Beautiful and Historic City - Green Infrastructure

G1.

School playing fields will NO longer be sold off for development ? Is that a Vision and Objective for Durham? Durham city needs those open spaces.

G2.
Residents are NOT aware of Neighbourhood Plans to identify and designate Local Green Spaces! Will the residents be listened to, if so, will those be listening and if so will they hear what is being said. Consultation in Durham previously has been a joke - decisions are made and then the council claim to discuss with residents, teaching assistants, etc. - knowing that there will be NO changes to the decisions already made, planned for and budgeted.

G3.
Is the Emerald Network pie in the sky like the Necklace park OR will it become a reality?

G4.
Will the new County Hall be built on Green Belt. I asked this question during the consultation and was informed that it the new County Hall would be built along the River Wear Corridor near to Crook Hall because the councillors wanted this to be in the city centre - a vanity project for them.

Theme 3: A City with a Diverse and Resilient Economy

E1.
Office space does NOT necessarily have to be in the city centre. Open spaces should be maintained. Office spaces are better built on existing business parks and industrial sites. Aykley Heads and Mountjoy should be left alone.

E2.
Recognition of other employment sites is good.
There is a serious concern with access via a single entry road to HMP Frankland - should there be a prisoner security threat. Another access road should be made available.

E3.
Retail development is vital to Durham city. Durham is NOT a decent shopping centre. Residents and visitors do NOT come to Durham for shopping but go elsewhere to the bigger towns, cities and outlying shopping centres.
Bigger shops are located outside the city at the Arncliffe Centre, Dragonville Estate, etc. which limits the availability in the city.
More smaller independent shops and business should be invited and encouraged to set up business in Durham which in turn would make the city more vibrant for shopping.
High business rates are probably restricting the number of independent shops and small businesses from setting up their businesses in the city - slightly lower rates and more businesses would give a similar yield. Look at the number of empty current retail spaces.

E4.
More choice of leisure activities is welcome in the city.
Previous developments have closed down the North Road Cinema, ice rink, bowling alley, Aykley Head Sports Centre, etc.
New cinema and bowling alley developments being built are welcome.
BUT there are too many food outlets, drinking establishments and hot food takeaways.
Residents and visitors also need open spaces to relax and enjoy.

Theme 4: A City with Attractive and Affordable Places to Live

D1.

Residents versus students - this is the problem in Durham.

Students come into the city after their first year 'in halls of residence' as they want to enjoy the 'student experience'. However, there is conflict between the number of students and the number of residents for the properties available. This has inflated the property prices in Durham to make them unaffordable and not available for residents.

D3.

Developers always seem to be given the green light to their developments. That is why Durham City needs a CITY COUNCIL and not one that was located in east Durham County. An excellent move by the Member of Parliament.

However, for Durham city it is too late and too many Purpose Built Student Accommodation developments have been built. They are government backed - Build To Let - with significant financial advantages over Buy To Let properties.

Some of these sites have been built for financial reasons ONLY - they do provide accommodation for students and to support Durham University BUT do nothing for the Durham City.

Proof of demand for these developments MUST be made more stringent.

Conditions laid down by the planners MUST be met and the planners should have more "teeth" and less "bones" to achieve this.

D5.

Affordable housing in Durham city is not achievable as builders want to maximise the property prices - so fewer properties will be made available.

Government and planners MUST support this policy.

D6.

New property and existing property developments/extensions, loft conversions, etc.

should provide detailed architect drawings to ensure that they comply. A neighbour did an extension on the "back of a fag packet" sketch for Building Regulations - it was rubbish - but it was approved by them.

Theme 5: A City with a Modern and Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

T1.

Less cars in the city centre will support this plan.

More Park & Ride extensions / additional facilities would support this - along with more electric buses.

More bicycle routes would be advantageous.

T2.

Train and bus links are good in Durham.

However, access to each is not good.

Train station access is not easy - surprised there have not been many accidents at this road junction.

Bus station onto a pedestrianisation area is also not good - accidents have happened there - including a fatal one.

More safe walking would be desirable.

More bicycle routes would be advantageous.

T3.

Extending the Residential Car Parking in the Controlled Parking Zone would be welcome.

Reduced speed limits on roads - particularly at schools - 30mph max - preferably 20mph would make Durham safer. Durham seems to give cars priority over pedestrians.

T4.

Bicycle and mobility aid storage should be made compulsory.

Theme 6: A City with an Enriched Community Life

C2.

A Tourist Information / Information Hub would be beneficial to Durham City.

Durham should have never have eliminated this. The Visitor Centre near Palace Green and the Durham Pointers do brilliant work but this was set up independently of Durham Council. Durham Council probably take the credit for it.

C3.

What new community facilities! - NO new developments have these to date - this is ridiculous.

Builders and their developments are not going to waste money on these unless they are compulsory.

New housing estates have NO shopping facilities.

New housing estates put extra demand on public services - schools, doctors, hospitals, dentists, etc.

Public services MUST be integral to the developments being built - and be designed as a package.

C4.

These should be used by the residents and maintained / protected.

C5.

Existing urban open spaces MUST NOT be built on.

