

**Barnstaple**



# Barnstaple 'Our Town'

## Residents ideas for improvements in their town

*During March 2005 residents in Barnstaple were able to "have their say" during the Barnstaple Our Town consultation. The following is a summary of their comments and suggestions.*

### Traffic, transport and congestion

**Most comments were for a better traffic system reinforcing its status as the number one priority.**

Suggestions to achieve this include:

- Improve public transport frequency, reliability and accessibility
- A reduction of traffic in the centre of town and pedestrianisation
- Improve parking/Reduce or make free parking charges (especially for disabled)
- Complete the bridge
- Establish efficient Park & Ride schemes on the outskirts of the town. (e.g. Whiddon Valley area for South Molton & M5 traffic, Roundswell for Bideford, Torrington traffic & Pottington for Braunton, Ilfracombe).
- Improvements for elderly and disabled access and separate roads/lanes/paths for wheelchairs

People also made comment on:

- Traffic lights and roundabouts
- Traffic flow out of the Square
- Cycle and pedestrian access from Braunton to Barnstaple
- Adding extra time for disabled to park in various short stay car parks and more disabled parking nearer to town
- Allowing surfboards on buses
- Stopping parking on pavements

- Banning traffic from Boutport Street, High Street, Cross Street, Joy Street on a perm basis during the day
- The one way system
- Motorway/duelling of A361
- Signage around town

### **The Environment**

**Most people responding want a cleaner environment. They have concerns about litter, graffiti, dog mess and chewing gum and there were lots of comments about Greensweep.**

**Interestingly, this section did not appear in the top four priorities numerically but is a high priority in the written comments. Many comments were concerned with improving parks and open spaces and linking this to improvements to community life. A substantial number saw the riverfront as a neglected resource – even more if you link this to the number who commented that the civic centre is an eyesore.**

Other comments included:

- Improve quality of the environment and control development
- Make more use of the river/waterfront
- Improve public toilets in Barnstaple
- Develop more quality open meeting spaces
- Refurbish Rock Park (and other open spaces)
- Need for a big open area for people to go for peace and quiet
- Action against people who allow their dogs to foul our streets and then don't pick it up; this is especially bad in parks
- An excellence in design and urban design charter
- Better recycling for trade premises

### **Young People**

**Overwhelmingly, comments related to improving facilities – especially to give children and young people something to do and to get them off the streets. A mixed view emerged about young people – some valuing them and wanting to cherish them and give them much more support, but others who were quite fearful of them or see them as a nuisance (see the community safety comments).**

Other specific comments include:

- Provide space and appropriate equipment so that cyclists, skateboarders and the like (all ages) have appropriate provision
- Stop the skaters – This mainly was through concern re the mosaic etc
- Wider range of indoor/outdoor affordable facilities needed – especially wet weather

- Under 18s night club

### **Town Centre/shops**

**Many of the comments expressed the wish to see more varied and high quality shops in Barnstaple. Many contradictory views were evident between those who want to see more fast food outlets (KFC especially popular amongst the young) and those who want more choice for healthy eating options and see fast food outlets as a source of litter and loutish behaviour. This section also links to culture and leisure use of the town (see environment and leisure sections). Shopping is clearly a majority leisure pursuit!**

Specific comments included:

- Bring back the centre of the town and cut down on the out of town shopping areas, we've lost our heart
- Better facilities and better layout of High Street. Barnstaple needs to be improved to attract more people.
- Healthy food shops/healthy eating
- A big mall like Cribbs Causeway
- A cultural quarter like a mini Barcelona

### **Sports, Leisure and Recreation**

**Added together, this section did have a lot of comments and reinforced the view that we do not have high quality, affordable, accessible and modern facilities – sports and leisure centre and decent swimming pool being the most numerous requested improvements but also cinema and arts facilities. The interest in developing open spaces around the town was also emphasised - not just in its centre – there were links to projects like Forches regeneration and Yeo Community Centre.**

**Many want to see a change to a better quality café and restaurant culture – perhaps linked to comments about open space and town centre developments. The interest in a wider night time experience needs to be seen in the context of the fear of going into town at night (see community safety section).**

Other numerous comments included:

- An ice rink
- Improved affordable and accessible sports facilities
- A purpose built arts centre, wider cultural opportunities, café restaurant culture
- A decent cinema
- Better night life including another large night club
- More restaurants
- Theme park with slides and rides
- An arcade

- Another BMX track
- More activities especially for young adolescents
- Better football club

### **Citizenship, Democracy and Community**

**There is a need to improve the way councils and councillors work and engage with the public. Many want to be involved and consulted and wanted to see a great deal more respect shown to one another. Link this to the wish for more community space and the value attached to people and community spirit in the statistical results of the consultation and this reveals a positive mood for improving the sense of community. There were also a significant number of comments relating to care of older and disabled people.**

Specific comments included:

- Build on good community spirit
- Better facilities, access and care for disabled and elderly
- A campaign to persuade those using the town to respect it
- Listen and involve people
- Ban smoking
- Facilities for the voluntary sector
- Remember locals come first
- Awareness, education to the needs of the town and other people
- Politeness and manners
- Deal with racism

### **Skills**

We received very few comments on this topic, but many of the comments made on the topic of the economy (see below) could link to skills.

Two points that were made were the need for:

- Better services for vocational evening and weekend classes so working people can gain new skills
- A University for North Devon

### **Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour**

**Most people said that more high profile policing was needed. The number of comments, when added to the overall statistical summary, reinforces the importance of this subject, despite the reality – which is that North Devon is one of the safest areas in the country. Despite this fact lots of people expressed a fear of being a victim of crime,**

**especially violence. Interestingly, many young people also highlighted this as a major concern - comments about rival groups and bullying reflecting an underlying worry about their safety.**

Specific comments included:

- Reduce crime
- Take action against vandalism and Anti Social Behaviour
- Take action against drunks and drug addicts
- Rival groups of young people each asked for action to be taken to tackle the other's behaviour
- Stop bullying
- Barnstaple is threatening at night
- Don't like the gang culture
- Increase in security

### **Economy**

**It is well known that Barnstaple is an area of low pay and where many people are struggling financially but this did not emerge in the comments people made – perhaps too personal for such a survey. Comments included:**

- Action needs to be taken on levels of pay vs. cost of living - cost of housing, water rate levels, council tax levels etc.
- Need for well paid jobs and a thriving local economy to raise wages and give people more choice and retain young people
- Help for business
- Reduce tax - inc. council tax
- More varied business

### **Housing**

**Significant numbers are worried about how to get into the housing market – especially first time buyers. Also a concern about homelessness – both a concern for homeless people and a worry about seeing beggars and homeless people on the street – this connects to the fear of crime.**

**The number of comments does not reflect the statistical priority given to this topic (fourth overall) and people may have felt that, having made the point, they wanted to concentrate on other areas of improvement in their comments.**

Specific comments:

- Deal with homelessness and beggars
- Provide a better range of accommodation

- Lack of housing – affordable for young people and couples especially
- Lack of supported accommodation for special needs and older people

### **Development**

**People expressed an interesting sense of wanting to maintain the feel of the town as small and intimate whilst also benefiting from its growing range of opportunities. Specific comments included:**

- Do something with the Civic Centre (link to Riverfront comments)
- Development should be carefully done, preserving what is good and building infrastructure first
- Maintain small town feel
- Balance between economic development and culture, evening economy is poor, we should promote a family friendly place
- As part of the redeveloping of Shaplands, build a municipal building for elderly-disabled and young people. Aged in the morning and youths in the evening.
- Barnstaple waterfront appears dull and uninteresting, maybe a replica sailing ship might help to make it more interesting
- Become a slow town like Ludlow, local specialities, slower pace, be good for tourist industry

### **Health**

**Barely mentioned – possibly, services such as schools and health care are either not uppermost in people's minds (perhaps due to high satisfaction levels) or they used the opportunity of the survey to comment on more day to day issues.**