

# Chapter 1

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**1.1** Making Plymouth an even better place in which to live; improving its environment; increasing job opportunities; improving housing, leisure and transport facilities; are all valid objectives. They are, however, easy to state, but difficult to achieve, especially with the limited powers and resources at the Council's disposal. The task is not made easier by the constraints imposed on the City because of its geographical location, and the high quality of its landscape setting.

**1.2** This Local Plan can only deal with land inside the City; and can only contain policies which will operate within its boundaries. It is necessary at the outset to note - without going into detail that the Structure Plan's allocation of insufficient land for housing and employment in the sub-region, makes the production of this local plan extremely difficult. The City Council has been forced in the past to accept quantities and densities of development which are unsatisfactory.

**1.3** The City must not be regarded as second-best in environmental terms, nor should its own environment be threatened by over-development in order to protect the environment of others. The residents of Plymouth are as entitled to the protection afforded by the planning system as any others.

**1.4** The City does not dispute that it is desirable to make the best use of available land in the urban area, rather than to develop on green field sites, and has always worked on that basis. But it is a matter of degree.

**1.5** This Plan is therefore based on the principle that the people of Plymouth are as much entitled to a good environment as anybody else. It therefore seeks to bring into use the limited amount of unused or under-used land in the City, and to achieve a high quality of development, whilst resisting 'town cramming'. It will not accede to the use of unsuitable sites, land with ecological value, prominent skyline sites, or valuable or attractive green spaces, in order to meet unrealistic targets which appear to be careless of the interests of a quarter of the County's population - the residents of Plymouth.

**1.6** Having set the context for the Plan, it is possible now to state its objectives. These are:-

- (a) Improvements to the environment of the City, both in terms of urban development, and areas of the City free of buildings.
- (b) Provision of better job opportunities.
- (c) Further improvements to the housing and other conditions of the older parts of the City.
- (d) Supporting Plymouth's role as the Regional Centre for the South West and the economic development of the region.
- (e) Expansion and protection of leisure facilities in the City for the benefit of its citizens and visitors.
- (f) Improvements to the communication system in the City.
- (g) Seeking a high standard of design in the implementation of proposals.
- (h) Providing for a life style in the City centred on local communities, using the framework created by the communication system, major areas of open land, and topography, and the linkages of locally based community facilities, to heighten the individuality of each area as far as is possible in physical planning terms.
- (i) The statutory requirement - the interpretation on a local basis of the policies and proposals of the Approved Third Alteration of the Devon County Structure Plan.
- (j) Co-ordinating development to make the best use of limited resources.

**1.7** Plymouth is fortunate to have a superb setting between Dartmoor and the sea. It has a generally clean and attractive environment, though as in all major cities, there are areas which require substantial improvement. Great

care is needed to stop the high quality environment deteriorating, and to improve the worst areas.

**1.8** The environment is threatened by poor design; by traffic; and by growth and intensification. There are those who think (both in and beyond the City) that growth can be stopped; that planners can wave a magic wand and remove the need or demand for new houses and factories. But growth is a product of society - we all share in the blame. Even if the population does not grow, people are living in smaller households, and there is therefore a need for more dwellings for the same number of people. We are rightly demanding higher housing standards. Look how the City has grown in area since the War, with only modest population growth. Imagine what living standards would be like if new houses had not been built. New factories are no longer tucked onto tight sites, but are in pleasant landscaped settings with large car parks. They employ less people for each square metre, so it takes much more land today to provide a given number of jobs than it would have done a generation ago.

**1.9** Plymouth must meet its share of these and other needs. There will be some unease at the changes which this brings about, but a City is a living thing, and must be able to evolve and change.

**1.10** However, this Plan must ensure that the City does not suffer by having to accept more than its fair share of this development; that it is directed to suitable places; and that it does not destroy attractive sites and views in the City. It must in particular try to protect public and private open spaces; school playing fields; and similar facilities. And it must try to ensure, so far as it can, that development is of the right quality and density.

**1.11** The Plan is produced amidst a developing awareness of green issues, and strongly reflects green thinking in many areas. There is protection for nature conservation areas and ecologically important sites; a wish to relate new development to public transport routes; and an intent to continue with derelict land reclamation and environmental improvements. The recent transport strategy, 'Moving in a New Direction', introduced new 'green' transport policies. Linked to this is the, now widely accepted, concept of sustainability, which seeks to achieve development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**1.12** With the continuing high levels of unemployment in the City, and the further decline in employment in the dockyard and related industries, the retention, creation and attraction of jobs has been a dominant theme of planning in the City, and is likely to remain so. There is no panacea - we must act on a variety of fronts. Helping existing industries to survive and grow; attracting new employers; developing tourism, leisure, retailing, fishing and port activities - the Plan aims to assist in all these areas. Plymouth should use its position on the north-south axis linking the north of England and the Midlands with north and west France and Iberia, to strengthen its European connections. The continued availability of European and Government grants is critically important, as is the improvement of communications with the rest of the U.K. and with Europe, and the release of land by the Ministry of Defence.

**1.13** Increasingly, attention is being focused on the Inner City areas, where with the help of Government funds, deep-seated problems are being tackled. This work must continue to give the people who live, work and visit there, better housing, job opportunities and environment. The requirements vary from major funding with property clearance and redevelopment, to the tidying up of small corners to improve the appearance of the street scene. The City Council intends to give priority to the regeneration of these areas.

**1.14** Plymouth is the economic heart of a large part of the South West region. It provides services and employment for a large number of people, and is proud to do so. This regional role must be maintained and enhanced, for the benefit of the City and the Region. The City Centre in particular must be nurtured and strengthened, with judicious redevelopment as necessary. Great opportunities also exist on the waterfront to assist economic revival and provide regional facilities. Plymouth's bid for Millennium funds is witness to this potential.

**1.15** Leisure and sports facilities for local people are inadequate, compared with cities of a similar size and standing. It will be a priority of the City to bring these facilities up to a reasonable standard during the plan period.

**1.16** A transport study (the Plymouth and South East Cornwall Environs Transportation Study) has recently been completed. Its conclusions have been incorporated into this plan. Clearly transport (public and private), parking and related

issues are of vital interest and importance to the City, its people and its economy. The Council will be particularly concerned about the environmental impact of transport schemes and initiatives.

**1.17** Reference has already been made to the importance of good design. Plymouth has not, on the whole, been blessed with a high quality of development over the years. Whilst its powers as planning authority are less than it would wish, the Council will do all it can to improve standards. It particularly urges developers - of everything from the smallest house extension to the grandest office block - to take the best possible advice and to pay careful attention to design. This will be an important contribution to the improvement and enhancement of the City. Good design pays in the long run, and enhances the pleasure and quality of life of all who see it.

**1.18** The development of local communities has been the basis of planning in the City since the 1943 Plan for Plymouth, though it has been somewhat eroded in recent years. There has been peripheral growth, sometimes in the form of unconnected development around the fringes of the City. Emerging 'green' thinking suggests a return to community-based planning with a judicious mixing of uses, provided such uses are compatible, in order to reduce journey times. It is

hoped that this thinking will infuse the County Structure Plan. It is already a principle of this Local Plan.

**1.19** Co-ordinating development to make the best use of limited resources, is an essential component of good planning practice which will always be at the front of the Council's mind.

## CONCLUSIONS

**1.20** The publication of this Adopted Plan is a step on a long road to the creation of a better Plymouth. Success will depend not only on the City Council as planning authority, but on the efforts of the quarter of a million or so folk, and their neighbours, who currently and temporarily hold in their hands the future of this City. They, as well as the Council, must exercise that responsibility with vision, with care, and with pride.

**1.21** The City will - must - evolve and change. Its economy must be revived; its environment enhanced; and its housing and other facilities improved. But this must be done with quality and with care. If it is, Plymouth can maintain its position as a lively, prosperous and attractive City, and the whole region can benefit from its prosperity and dynamism.

## MAP 1.1 PLYMOUTH AND NEARBY DISTRICTS

