

Central Park

Context

5.53 Central Park is a strategically important parkland area for the city as a whole. It is some 94ha (232 acres) in size, situated to the north of the City Centre, though physically separated from the City Centre by a steep valley. The park borders a number of the city's neighbourhoods, stretching from North Prospect and Pennycross in the north to Peverell and Mutley in the east and Stoke to the west.

5.54 Land was assembled for the park in the mid 1920s and a design sought from the then eminent Mawson family of landscape architects. Sadly the elegant and engaging design that they put forward, and the city embraced, was never fully realised as the Second World War and its aftermath concentrated the city's attentions elsewhere. Pragmatic decisions of the post war years have resulted in some fundamental departures from this original design.

5.55 The Park has a number of key elements, these include:

- A dynamic landscape of both high hill top and deep valley providing rare inland panoramic views of the city and Plymouth Sound and shady woodland, home to a variety of wildlife
- A composition of buildings and facilities to the west of the park incorporating the city's football club Plymouth Argyle, a large swimming pool, recreation centre, events field and car park
- An open plateau sports park offering a variety of activities
- A network of wide tree-lined formal pathways
- A large Victorian villa and associated formal gardens known as Pounds House
- A patchwork of informal sloping meadows
- An extensive series of allotment gardens to the western margins of the park and to the south.

5.56 Central Park provides a unique opportunity to unite the central neighbourhoods of the city with one another and the City Centre, giving citizens convenient access to quality recreational and leisure facilities. It also offers the city an ideal location for a new outstanding and integrated facility of sporting and recreational excellence, known as the "Life Centre", which, with improved high quality public transport facilities, can be made accessible to the citywide community.

5.57 Whilst some excellent work has been carried out in recent years, with the delivery of a new play area and youth skate park, Central Park fails to make the most of its obvious potential. The following priority issues for regeneration can be identified:

- The need to integrate the proposals for Plymouth's new Life Centre within the existing parkland landscape
- The poor relationship of existing recreational buildings, facilities and spaces and lack of visible activity
- Degraded sense of place, where key spaces are too large and featureless to form an exciting and memorable environment
- The remoteness and relatively poor quality of private and public transport facilities
- The difficulty people have in accessing the park from surrounding neighbourhoods and the City Centre by virtue of the busy highways that ring the park and the challenging topography
- The relatively unsafe nature of existing footpath links to surrounding neighbourhoods and limited choice for alternatives
- The poor relationships between the edge of the city and the park to the south and to the Peverell neighbourhood to the north and west
- The urban separation caused by the City Bus Depot between the park and communities in the Stoke neighbourhood
- The general lack of public facilities within the park.

Approach

5.58 Central Park is a cherished environmental asset for the people of Plymouth. The protection and enhancement of the park's valuable green spaces, its role in providing positive benefits for the health and quality of life of the city's population are at the heart of this strategy.

5.59 The Core Strategy highlights the strategic importance to the city of the development of a "Life Centre". This will involve regenerating the existing built core of the park to form an outstanding venue of regional and national significance for active recreation, health, art, education, culture and the environment. It will be served by a new public transport interchange on the city's proposed network of High Quality Public Transport routes.

5.60 The Council will also identify other significant opportunities, where sensitive development or environmental improvements could help support the enhancement of the park and linkages to surrounding areas.



Vision

5.61 The Council's vision for the Central Park Area Action Plan, illustrated conceptually on the vision diagram, is as follows:

Area Vision 7 - Central Park

To create an outstanding venue of regional and national significance for active recreation, health, art, education, culture and the environment, which will provide state of the art facilities for the people of Plymouth and the sub-region of Devon and Cornwall.

The Council's objectives to deliver this vision are:

1. To create a landmark regional Life Centre complex of high quality design and innovative technology.
2. To create a park with desirable, high quality, vibrant spaces that can be used by the whole Plymouth community whilst also safeguarding its value as an important wildlife corridor.
3. To create a safe and well-connected park with its surrounding neighbourhoods and the City Centre.
4. To provide high quality public and sustainable transport facilities serving the park and new facilities.
5. To improve and strengthen the relationship between the park and surrounding city in a sustainable manner.
6. To improve the range and quality of public facilities available to park users.

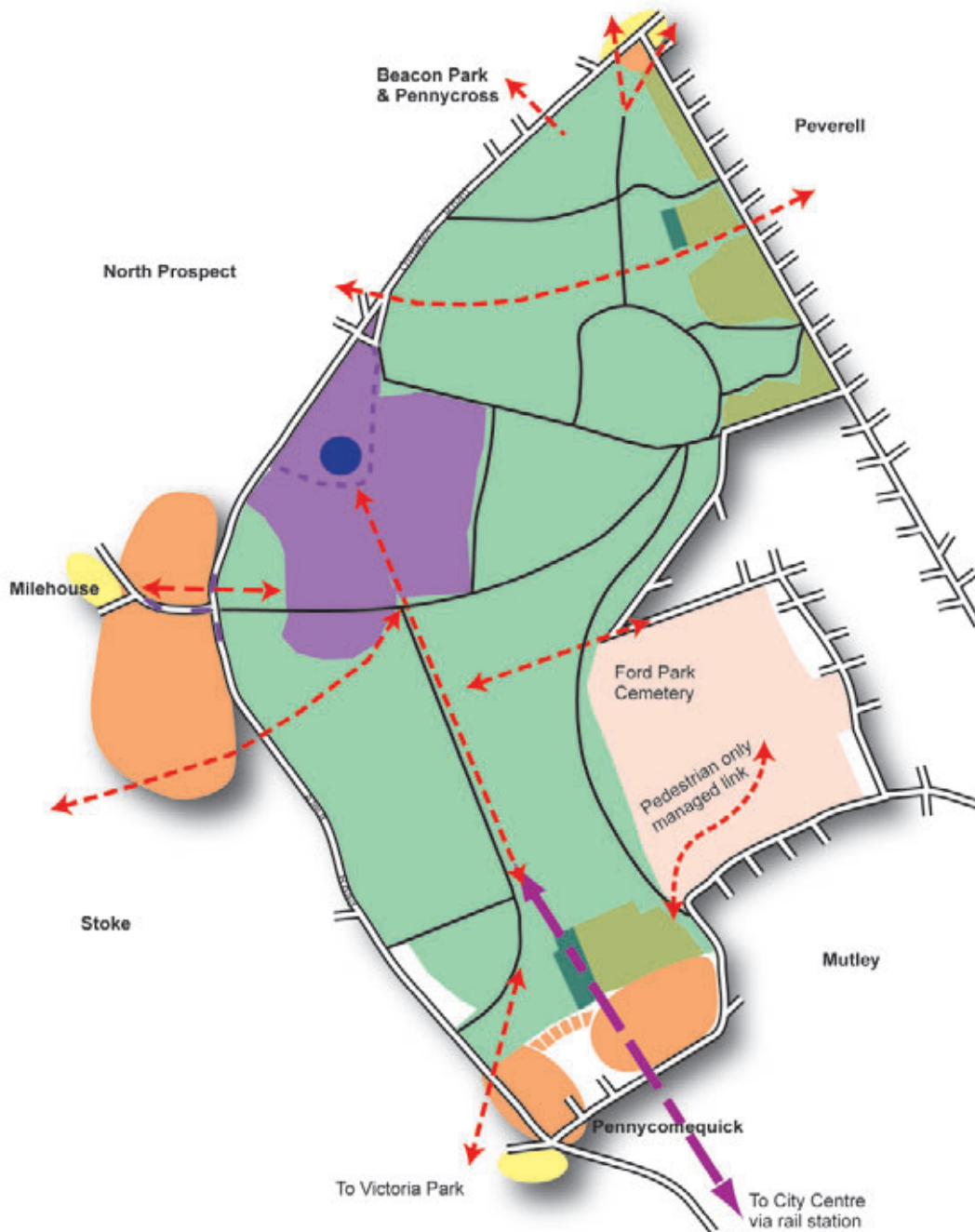
5.62 The AAP will amplify this vision through a series of policies and proposals. It will also set out in more detail the anticipated framework for delivery of the vision. The Life Centre and improvements to the park are likely to be delivered with a combination of Lottery bids, transport funding, and funding from enabling development and planning obligations. Other aspects of the vision will be delivered through private sector development. The emphasis will be on:

- The delivery of the Life Centre and park improvements through a combination of public funding (e.g. Lottery), local and regional transport funding, S106 contributions from enabling development and the positive management of the Council's land assets
- The delivery of other enabling development and improvements through the planning application process and S106 contributions and the positive management of the Council's land assets
- Securing leisure contributions from developments across the city where appropriate.

Key Sources:

- Plymouth Sustainable Neighbourhood Study (2005/06) – LDA Design
- Central Park Life Centre – outline business case (2005) – Capita Symonds
- Destination Central Park – executive summary (2004) – Nathaniel Litchfield
- Central Park An Historic Landscape Study (2002) – Alan Baxter Associates
- Central Park Action Plan (2001) – City Council
- Community Planning Study (2000) – City Council

Central Park Vision Diagram



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|---|---|---|---|
|  | "LIFE CENTRE", Citywide & Regional facility of sporting recreation & leisure |  | Improve connectivity |
|  | Potential enabling developments for Central Park improvements (residential-led mixed use redevelopment) |  | Wide pedestrian/cycle bridge link to the city |
|  | Retain & enhance existing allotments |  | Retain & enhance open space |
|  | Provide compensating allotment land |  | Protect & enhance Ford Park cemetery |
|  | Simplify and improve existing highway infrastructure |  | Existing park routes |
|  | Transport Interchange |  | Local centre |