

# Part 2

## Building Sustainable Neighbourhoods



*"The way our communities develop, economically, socially and environmentally, must respect the needs of future generations as well as succeeding now. This is the key to lasting, rather than temporary, solutions; to creating communities that can stand on their own feet and adapt to the changing demands of modern life. Places where people want to live and will continue to want to live." (ODPM, Sustainable Communities: Building for the future)*

The DRC is clear in its intention to establish the physical setting to build much more sustainable neighbourhoods. In simple terms this means creating an urban area that will stand the test of time. This will only happen if environmental standards are significantly raised so that Devonport becomes a place of real choice. The Development Framework therefore places great emphasis on the need for design quality. But of course it is about much more than bricks and mortar. The plan provides the physical framework for enhancing the quality of social and economic life for Devonport's citizens - both existing and incoming - so that Devonport becomes renowned as a place that is a joy to live in, to work in, and to visit.

The most fundamental requirement is for the Development Framework to be responsive to the needs of the community. The starting point for formulating an appropriate development strategy, which integrates environmental, social and economic sustainable development proposals, has therefore been to zero in on the issues that local people have said are the most pressing, and to identify a series of opportunities for turning this situation around. Throughout the report the rationale for recommending particular proposals is explained with reference to local community feedback.

# Chapter 3

## Vision, Principles and Development Strategy



### 3.1 The creation of thriving, vibrant community

The DRC vision for Devonport is "to create a thriving, vibrant place and community that raises aspirations, grasps opportunities and which has people queuing to join." This desire for Devonport to become a place of choice for residents, businesses and visitors alike, is one shared by many local people. Fundamentally they wish to see a regeneration programme succeed that addresses and overcomes socio-economic and physical problems to make real and lasting change.

The vision will be realised by a determined focus on integrating the five themes of the DRC Delivery Plan and specify projects that achieve objectives and target outcomes. These are summarised below:

With this focus, the Devonport Development Framework provides the basis for Devonport to become a national exemplar in community-led sustainable regeneration.



THEME	OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
	What we want to achieve	How this will be measured
1. Breaking the poverty cycle	Improving education for all	To improve performance at Key Stage 2, amongst Devonport schools, to a level above the national average
	Developing employment opportunities	To increase levels of working age residents in economic activity to a level above the Plymouth average
2. Building sustainable neighbourhoods	Improving the physical environment	To reduce the levels of turnovers and voids in the housing stock to a level below the Plymouth average
	Increasing local management	To put in place effective structures for community based neighbourhood management
3. Creating a healthy and safe environment	Target all sections of the community	To reduce the incidence of crime to a level below the Plymouth average
		To work toward the national targets in Our Healthier Nation to reduce the death rates amongst those under 75 years of age
		- from heart disease / stroke by more than 40% - from cancers by 20%
		To double levels of satisfaction of residents with sporting, recreational and cultural opportunities available
4. Community involvement - a new deal	paying particular attention to excluded and vulnerable groups	To increase to 90% the proportion of residents who feel they have the opportunity to influence decisions being made in the area
	working to overcome the discrimination which is suffered by members of minority groups	To engage all disadvantaged and minority groups in the NDC and other regeneration processes
5. Promoting Devonport's young people The key to the future		To put in place effective mechanisms to integrate young people with the wider community and engage them in the regeneration of Devonport

## 3.2 Development principles

There are nine key principles for building sustainable neighbourhoods:

1. **A population able to sustain local services** - making the best use of precious brownfield land, by building to a density sufficient to sustain mixed development which brings basic amenities within walking distance and supports public transport;
2. **A highly accessible movement framework** - based around an urban structure of interconnected streets, footpaths and cycleways and a high quality public transport network;
3. **Distinctive urban design and architecture** - that reflects Devonport's distinctive character and identity;
4. **A mix of well-integrated uses** - located within a structure of perimeter blocks that creates a vital and vibrant area and brings amenities, living and working areas close together;
5. **A range of high quality homes** - which encompasses both a range of tenures, residential and commercial, closely knitted to encourage social and economic cohesion and opportunity, and housing types to suit differing needs - provided to a high quality that creates far higher living standards and diversifies the socio-economic profile of the area;
6. **Maximising energy efficiency** - optimising the use of energy efficiency and renewable energy applications, water conservation and reuse;
7. **A healthy and safe environment** - providing high quality healthcare and an urban area that is secure by design that has a range of attractive sports, recreational and cultural attractions and which makes the most of Devonport's waterfront setting and rich heritage;
8. **Improving education for all** - providing a range of high quality facilities offering the potential for lifelong learning;
9. **Developing employment opportunities** - containing a diversity of jobs, linked to training and skills development.

The way that these principles are applied is of critical importance; truly sustainable neighbourhoods will only be created with the continuing input from the local community and stakeholder organisations in the planning, design and onward management of the area.

## 3.3 Strategic choices for moving forward

Early in the preparation of the Development Framework, the team sought to identify a range of strategic choices as to how these development principles could be applied. The 'Devonport Day - Have Your Say!' community event was instrumental in this process.

The existing 'Urban Village Framework Plan' (prepared in 2000) was presented as the baseline for thinking about the way forward. This was prepared prior to the MoD committing to vacate the Storage Enclave and Mount Wise sites.

Four different scenarios were described and illustrated, as shown in Figure 5, as to how development planning for the Devonport area could be taken forward:

- **Scenario 1 'Employment-led strategy'** prioritised the need for job creation through a variety of light industrial development. It included an urban business park in the Storage Enclave and a Marine Science Park at Mount Wise;
- **Scenario 2 'District Centre'** incorporated a large (70,000 sq ft) supermarket and a new health centre in a mixed-use Storage Enclave, and suggested housing and an hotel at Mount Wise;
- **Scenario 3 'District Centre Plus'** retained a large supermarket (50,000 sq ft) and health centre within the Storage Enclave, but added in a large new educational facility into the mix. To help offset the lack of residential development within the Storage Enclave, Mount Wise was earmarked for housing - except the cricket pitch, which was retained in public use.
- **Scenario 4 'Back to the Future'** sought to bring back the historic fine-grained mix within the Storage Enclave and incorporated a small (10,000 sq ft) supermarket and health centre. This scenario illustrated how a new educational facility could be accommodated at Mount Wise.





Scenario 1 Employment-led Strategy



Scenario 2 District Centre



Scenario 3 District Centre Plus



Scenario 4 Back to the Future

Figure 5 Strategic choices

### 3.4 The emergence of a preferred approach

The intention of this exercise was not to select a preferred option - indeed it was emphasised that each was not mutually exclusive. Rather, the aim was to engage the community in thinking about some of the strategic choices to be made and to begin to consider the deliverability implications.

Following analysis of community feedback and the views of a range of partner organisations a preferred strategy emerged that:

- sought to re-establish the historic urban structure for the area depicted in Scenario 4 'Back to the Future', centred on the concept of a mixed district centre on the Storage Enclave site;
- used the block structure and transport network that this scenario implied as the basis for beginning to define an overall land use pattern;
- Focused on three priorities for early action:
  1. improving healthcare by seeking to incorporate a new health centre (targeting DRC Key Outcome 6)
  2. improving education (lifelong learning), skills and access to employment via a variety of potential projects, which include consideration to an extended educational facility (targeting DRC Key Outcomes 1 and 2)
  3. improving quality of life and environment with a range of projects including measures to accelerate the housing redevelopment programme, together with public realm, sports and recreation improvements (targeting DRC Key Outcomes 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10)
- included further focused feasibility work into the potential for Mount Wise to be developed as a Marine Science Park, and further market testing and feasibility studies into the potential for Admiralty House to be converted to a hotel;
- rejected the mono-functional concepts of a business park for the storage enclave (Scenario 2) and exclusively residential neighbourhood for Mount Wise (Scenario 3) respectively as unable to deliver the DRC vision;
- supported the inclusion of retail development within the new central area as part of a mixed-use scheme to include a small-medium sized supermarket, small shops and potential marketplace, but rejected the inclusion of a large supermarket.

### 3.5 Devonport's traditional structure as the basis for a development strategy

The 'Back to the Future' concept did not seek to turn back the clock, but rather it was inspired by the integrated structure that existed prior to World War II (see Figure 6). This had a grid of streets arranged according to a clear hierarchy, with Fore Street as the town's bustling 'high street'. A lively mix of uses were contained within an urban structure of perimeter blocks. The historical fortifications that defined the town's perimeter, and parkland beyond, helped shape a settlement with a unique identity - distinct and yet integrated with the wider Plymouth

area that had come to grow beyond Devonport's boundaries. Whilst the overall plan had a clear logic, the challenge lay in reinterpreting this to provide the physical setting for high quality, modern living and working conditions.



Figure 6 Historic structure (1893)

To focus minds, this historical structure was super-imposed on the present day plan, to ask "what if we restored the heart?" (see Figure 7). Closer inspection of the plan's attributes showed:

1. the clear block structure to the north concealed the rear of Marlborough Street shops and introduced frontage development onto Morice Square;
2. the street network facilitated movement through Marlborough Street and provided a direct connection with the town centre in the Storage Enclave area;
3. Active frontage onto Granby Green;
4. Fore Street extended westward to the main entrance of the dockyard;
5. Chapel Street was lined with frontage development, and a route extended from St Aubyn's Church to the central area;
6. Cumberland Street was aligned with the Market clock tower when viewed from Cumberland Gardens;
7. A route to the rear of the Market building provided a link to the library, guildhall and column - the civic heart of Devonport;
8. Perimeter block development fronted the cricket pitch;
9. Cumberland Gardens formed a major gateway space;
10. the Storage Enclave area linked directly to the waterfront via James Street;
11. the open spaces beyond the town's perimeter formed a 'green arc';
12. Devonport's close relationship with the waterfront was evident - with direct links and an urban structure that would have provided views out to the Hamoaze.

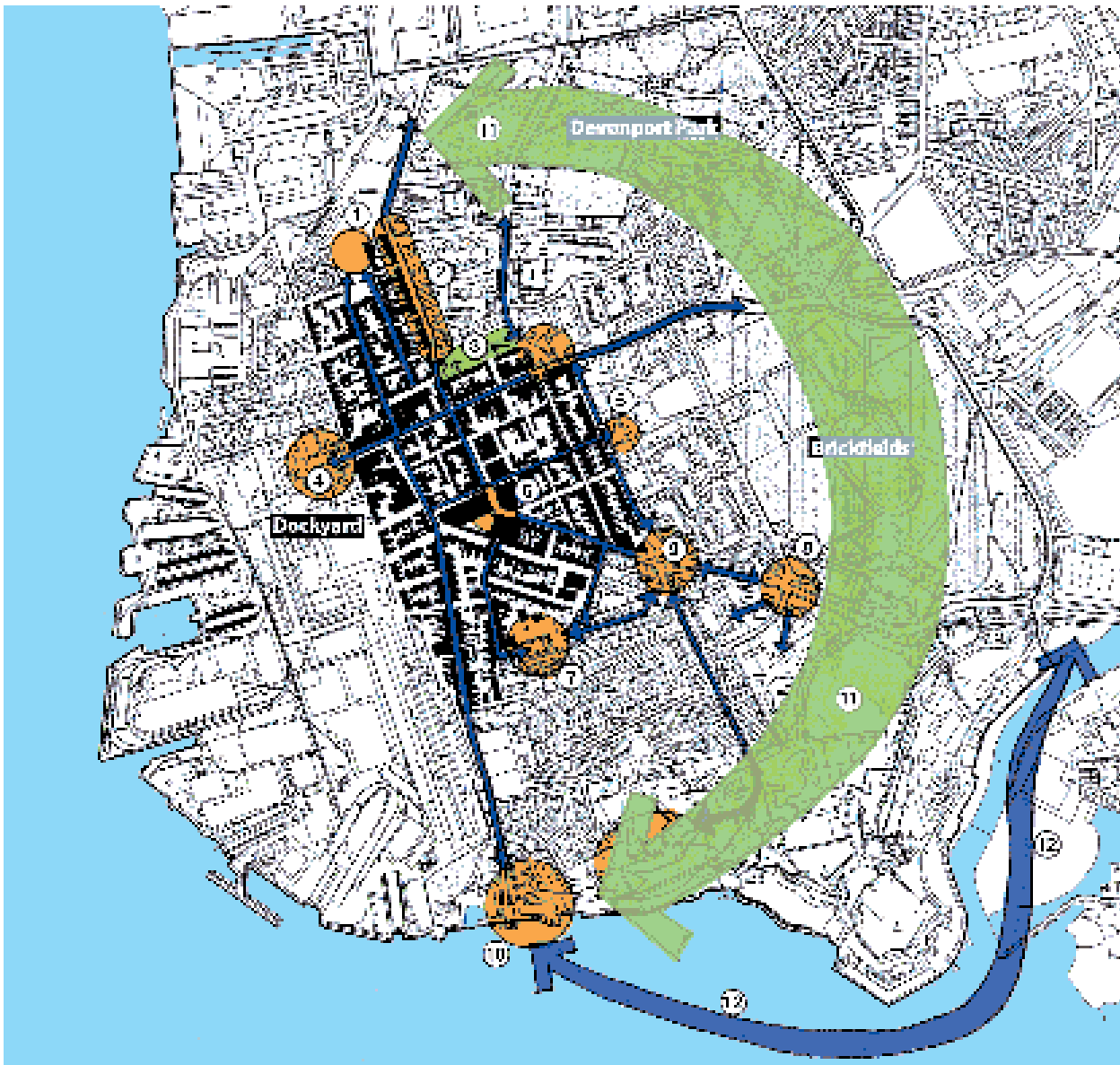


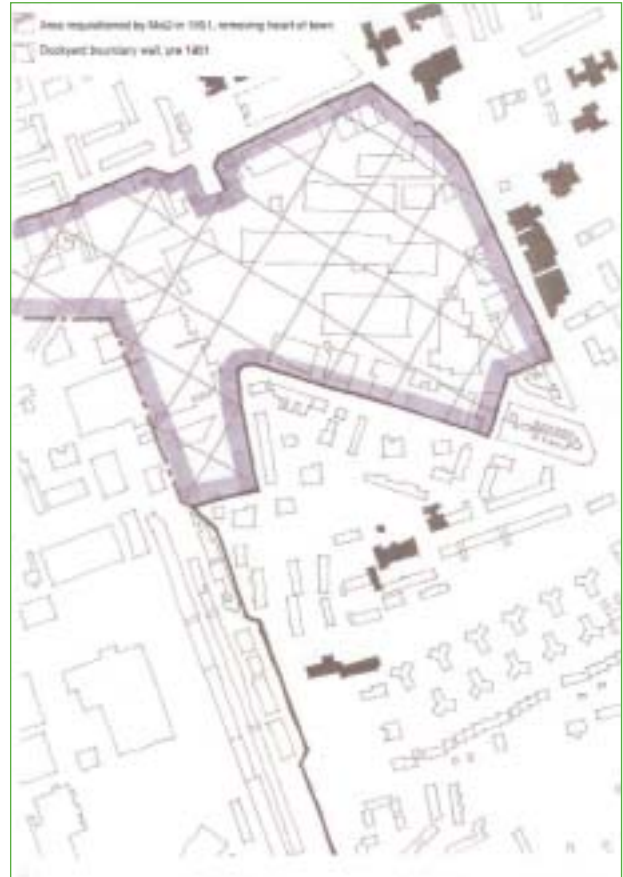
Figure 7 Restoring the heart - what if?

Figure 8 The Storage Enclave: Then and Now

Devonport Town Centre - Historic (1919)



Devonport Town Centre - Current



Urban Design Analysis of Historic Plan (1919)



Urban Design Analysis - Current Situation



This urban structure of linked streets, squares and landmark buildings, which provided the physical setting for an integrated community with a clear identity was contrasted with the present-day Storage Enclave area. Figure 8 highlights the community severance of postwar years following acquisition of the former town centre by the MoD and the years of fragmented public housing redevelopment that followed.

### 3.6 Core elements of the development strategy

Taking this historical structure as a cue for applying each of the development principles, the development strategy has been framed to comprise the following core physical elements (illustrated conceptually in Figure 9):

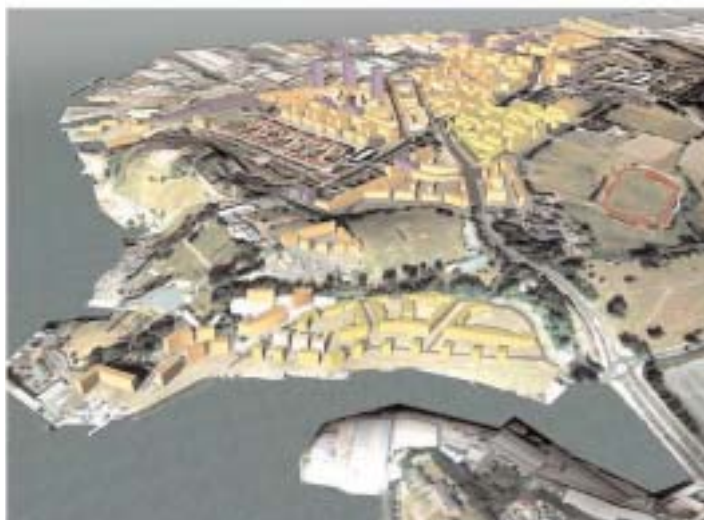
- A principal commercial focus centred on Fore Street / Chapel Street - the top of what was once the town's 'high street'. As explained later, with the A374 providing passing trade there is a compelling logic for this area to incorporate some of the main commercial facilities, as long as these can be fully integrated into the wider area such as Marlborough Street;

- For secondary commercial frontage to be clustered along the principal streets elsewhere within this central area;
- To establish a 'community hub' around the market building;
- To restore a civic focus around the Guildhall and column area;
- To restore five key spaces within the area
  - Granby Green
  - Morice Square
  - Cumberland Gardens
  - Guildhall
  - George Street / Mount Wise
- To optimise waterfront access and views throughout the area - appreciating the fact that the MoD is committed to releasing its listed buildings for the creation of a Dockyard Visitor Centre, whilst aspiring to realise the full development potential of the South Yard waterfront in the longer term;
- To reinforce with distinctive architecture, landscape or public art the 'gateways' to Devonport to the north, east and south respectively;



Figure 9 Concept plan

- To improve north-south and east-west links to facilitate a much more integrated and sustainable urban structure;
- To restore the historic street pattern within the central area, binding the community together;
- To integrate the historic naval base buildings by concerting them for a mix of uses and bringing them into the public realm;
- To establish Mount Wise, centred on Admiralty House, as a beacon of civic pride;
- To optimise the waterfront development potential at Pottery Quay, Cornwall Beach, Mutton Cove and along Richmond Walk;
- To re-route the A374 to enable the community to join together and overcome the severance posed by Chapel Street (explained in more detail later);
- To reduce through traffic on Chapel Street / Cumberland Road and restore lively street frontage;
- Recreate Morice Square as a high quality public open space;
- Enhance each of the area's principal historic buildings, converting them for a range of uses;
- Integrating and enhancing the series of 'Green Arc' open space;
- Exploring the potential to introduce a new water transport route.



### 3.7 A confident new vision

Figure 9 begins to illustrate the show much more integrated urban structure could be created over the longer term with concerted application for this development strategy. A series of high quality sustainable neighbourhoods connect with the wider Plymouth area beyond.

It looks to a future when Devonport will come to be home to an **attractive safe, healthy and confident community**. Schools and colleges will be proud of their success and young people will wish to stay and bring up their families. A range of stimulating jobs will link to training and skills development programmes that offer a choice of routes forward.

**The look and feel of the whole area will be radically transformed.** Change will be rooted in a celebration of Devonport's superb heritage and strong sense of identity. A diversity of housing types and tenures will create mixed neighbourhoods, where nobody feels excluded and people from different backgrounds live side-by-side. Listed buildings will be brought to life and parks and sports facilities given a major boost. Devonport will come to be seen as a place of real quality, intrigue and interest. Walking, cycling and catching the bus will be made comfortable and easy options as attractive streets and footpaths are designed to bind the community together. Cars and lorries will be made to move through the area in a respectful way.

**Hidden assets will be opened up** - with a new centre bursting with colour and animation growing out of what was the storage enclave. Devonport's waterfront beauty will be fully capitalised on and the historic dockyard made into a quite magical attraction, filling the area with renewed confidence and cementing Devonport as a place to visit time and again.

A **Green Arc** will wrap around the area, seamlessly linking a rejuvenated Devonport Park with a series of first class sports facilities in Brickfields and on to Mount Wise, where a new hub of activity centred on Admiralty House will come to establish this as a beacon of Devonport's regeneration.

This vision of a **continuous cycle of positive change** requires co-ordinated investment and innovative ways of working. A true sense of partnership, based on shared objectives and delivery programmes all channelled in the same direction is key. It is an ambitious plan, but one grounded in reality. With drive and determination we are confident that this exciting vision can be realised.

The following chapters put forward recommendations for how each of the development principles as 'layers' of the framework should be applied to achieve the DRC outcomes.



Figure 10 The long term vision: a thriving, vibrant community