

## Chapter 4 Development Principle 1

### A population able to sustain local services

Devonport currently has a population of approximately 7,000 people, living in 2605 homes. Much has changed since the area was the centre of a large self-governing County Borough of 84,000 people at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The geography has fundamentally shifted; even if much of the physical remnants of Devonport's original defensive urban structure remains intact. Taking Devonport forward through the Twenty First Century requires us to consider Devonport's position within the overall spatial hierarchy of the City, as it exists today with its population of 240,000 and as it is projected to grow in the years ahead. A thriving Devonport will be a place with strong functional relationships and linkages to the surrounding urban fabric and indeed to the wider sub-region for residents and businesses alike.

The Development Framework therefore faces outward to this surrounding context to ensure that the range of services and amenities that are proposed are appropriate to Devonport's position in the overall City hierarchy. The City of Plymouth Local Plan sees development of the Storage Enclave as establishing Devonport as a "District Centre" within the overall context of the City (Proposal 46). This implies an urban centre of significant scale, but one whose services are principally local in nature in order to promote sustainable movement patterns and preserve the viability of larger commercial centres elsewhere in the City. However, the potential exists to create tourist and recreational attractions that are of City-wide, regional and even national significance - a potential that needs to be exploited if Devonport's rich heritage and waterfront setting is to be brought to life (see Chapter 10.4).

In considering issues of population catchment, the principle of building sustainable neighbourhoods requires that the size and composition of Devonport's population is sufficient to sustain the range of services and amenities that are considered necessary to make the vision a reality and deliver the DRC outcomes.

There are three central tasks:

1. **To stabilise the population.** The DRC Baseline Survey records that some 19% of Devonport's population is transient. This has huge economic and social consequences and must be, for instance, a significant influence on the performance of schools. The Development Framework therefore advocates a step change in the environmental quality of the area, to create a safe and attractive place that everyone can be proud of. It also sets out a programme of creating a much more diverse mix of housing types and tenures to provide people with a choice of accommodation to suit changing needs, and provides the basis for a transformation in local education, healthcare, employment and training.
2. **To increase the size of the population and diversify its profile.** A landmark study by Breheny et al<sup>1</sup> looked at "levels of sustainability" and concluded that a place of 3,000 - 5,000 houses (Devonport has 2605) is able to support a secondary school and some jobs and amenities but would not be large enough to serve its population or to be considered self sufficient. The threshold of sustainability would only come with about 10,000 houses containing a population of 15-30,000 people.



The long term vision for Devonport - a much more integrated community

This emphasises the importance of placing Devonport within its wider context - to be clear that whereas care needs to be taken to ensure Devonport's 'District Centre' function does not undermine other local centres nearby, some of the services proposed - whether commercial, such as a new local supermarket or employment-related or community, such as the secondary school - will only survive by drawing in customers/users from the surrounding "Greater Devonport" area. This in turn informs us that all major facilities need to be easily accessible by sustainable modes of transport and that new commercial facilities should be placed where they can capture 'passing trade' (discussed in Chapter 7).

The need to sustain the range of services needed to fulfil DRC objectives requires an urban (rather than low density suburban) solution which concentrates higher density residential development near to public transport centres and close to local facilities, and introduces the more balanced mix of private and social housing needed to boost local spending power and support local services. Chapter 8 sets out the housing improvement strategy, which sees the amount of housing within Devonport rising from 2639 homes (in year 2000) to 3195 homes (in 2016). This sets out a programme for major upgrading of existing stock to benefit current residents (and their successors), but also proposes major new development to diversify the range of tenures, introduce a significant proportion of family houses and support a more balanced demographic profile.

3. **To introduce change in a balanced, incremental way.** In implementing the Development Framework, the community will experience significant levels of change. To ensure that this strengthens the community, the principle of continuity must be upheld - to respect existing community structures and relationships that individuals and groups of people have to each of the area's distinctive places and to ensure that change is introduced in an incremental way to minimise disruption to existing residents and businesses.

1. Breheny, Gent and Lock - *Alternative Development Patterns: New settlements*, Department of the Environment, 1994

## Priority Actions for Applying Principle 1

- *To adopt a development strategy that ensures individual projects are considered in relation to their wider catchment area and promotes the Storage Enclave as a new District Centre*
- *To concentrate on stabilising Devonport's population and over time seek an increased, more diverse population able to sustain a range of services and amenities*