

Chapter 6 Development Principle 3

Distinctive urban design and architecture

Much of Devonport's public realm is of poor quality - the streets, greens, public parks and gardens are all in need of investment, redesign and better maintenance. There are important public open spaces and recreational areas at Devonport Park, Brickfields and Mount Wise, but their peripheral location and lack of connectivity to the main residential areas contributes to their under-use and undermines their ability to contribute as much as they might to perceptions of environmental quality and the image of Devonport.

Many of Devonport's significant listed historical buildings lie vacant and under-utilised. More recent buildings have often been constructed to low design standards.

Many of the issues that local people have identified for attention relate to the physical condition of open spaces, buildings and the inadequacy of some of their uses, others are process-related issues concerned with management and maintenance.

A series of objectives have been set by the DRC for creating much more distinctive urban design and architecture and boosting the overall environmental quality of Devonport. This chapter seeks to lay the foundations for achieving these objectives - establishing the fundamental 'building blocks' of a more sustainable urban structure.

DRC Objectives:

- *Change the image of Devonport*
- *Buildings which promote continuity of street frontage that clearly define public frontages and private backs*
- *High quality architecture*
- *Developments that recognise the heritage and cultural assets of Devonport*
- *Legible environments*

Environmental issues to be tackled identified by local people (source: PCM Theme Day)

- *Local schools look shabby and uninviting*
- *Dog poo is a public nuisance and health risk*
- *Inadequate contractual arrangements for grounds maintenance and household repairs*
- *Play areas are unsafe*
- *Too many residents neglect the area around their property*
- *Management of the housing regeneration and decanting process for tenants has placed a number of families under stress and created barriers to full participation in the regeneration process*
- *Inadequate opportunities to monitor or influence housing quality standards*
- *Few residents are involved in self-management schemes and have little control over management issues*
- *No formal structure for residents to manage, supervise or monitor inter-agency work relating to housing*
- *Inconsistent tenancy management standards and targets*
- *Devonport looks shabby and run down*
- *Poorly co-ordinated service provision between different landlords creates issues relating to litter, bulky refuse collection and abandoned cars*
- *BME residents experience difficulties in accessing affordable housing*
- *Public toilets are locked*
- *Local landmarks have become run down and neglected*
- *Places of worship do not accommodate the needs of all different religions*



6.1 Structuring elements

Figure 18 indicates the 'structuring elements' that combine to form the basis of the proposed urban structure. Many of these relate to the historical pre-war layout described in Chapter 3.5. These can be summarised as:

- The Ferry Road / Park Avenue and Devonport Hill / Kings Road junctions as the **landscape gateways to Devonport** - the principal points of arrival.
- Three key **urban gateways to Devonport** - that mark the start of the built edge to the area, at:
 - Washbourne Close / Granby Way Residential Home, approaching from the north;
 - Keys Close / Leander Community Centre, approaching from the east;
 - Picquet Barracks / Cumberland Block, approaching from the south-east (City Centre);
- Four **primary focal spaces or places** are the main anchor points, namely:
 - Cumberland Gardens - Devonport's main 'arrival point' on the approach from the City Centre;
 - the ceremonial heart of Devonport around the Guildhall, Column and Oddfellow's Hall;
 - the Chapel Street / Fore Street junction, at present dominated by traffic and the corner of the MoD storage enclave, but which will assume new prominence when the wall comes down;
 - the market building and potential new market square, at present hidden from view but full of promise.
- Other key points need careful attention as **secondary focal spaces**, namely:
 - Morice Square, which is proposed to be reinstated as an attractively landscaped civic space;
 - In front of St Aubyn's Church, once the former Market Street leading up to this is re-established;
 - At the western end of Market Street, where this will turn a corner to connect with James Street;
 - Devonport Park Lodge.
- The principal **waterside destination** points, comprising:
 - Pottery Quay;
 - Torpoint Ferry terminal;
 - North Corner at the bottom of Cornwall Street;
 - Mutton Cove;
 - The Pools and potential new waterfront Adventure Centre.
- Often each of these spaces, places and destinations are anchored by primary **architectural landmarks**, which include:
 - the Guildhall, column and Oddfellows Hall;
 - Market building and clock tower;
 - Admiralty House;
 - Scott Memorial and Redoubt on the Mount Wise headland;
 - Ropery Spinning House, Ropemaker's House and Slipway Number 1 in the historic dockyard to the south;
 - The collection of historic dockyard to the north;
 - St Aubyn's Church and new landmark building at the western end of this axis;
 - Raglan Gatehouse.

These provide the main reference points for establishing the proposed urban structure.

- Principal **architectural / visual axis** are highlighted that provide strategic views to key landmark buildings:
 - to the market clock tower from Cumberland Gardens to the south-east and from Marlborough Street from the north;
 - to and from the historic dockyard along the proposed continuation of Fore Street;
 - to and from St Aubyn's Church;
 - to the Guildhall along Ker Street.
- The **frontages to primary routes**, which include
 - buildings along the Main Avenue (Fore Street - Park Avenue)
 - buildings along Chapel Street / Cumberland Road (should the A374 be diverted this will remain one of Devonport's main streets); and
 - the south-facing elevation of Pottery Quay, which should be designed to reflect its position as the gateway to the City from Cornwall.
- The **frontages to secondary routes**, which establishes the main route network structure, described in Chapter 5, and comprises:
 - Fore Street;
 - Marlborough Street;
 - Granby Way / Albany Street;
 - The old Tavistock Street (connecting Marlborough Street and market building);
 - James Street and its proposed continuation northward;
 - Ker Street;
 - Monument Street;
 - James Street (north) - connecting to the market building;
 - Prospect Row once the new link to George Street is established;
 - Richmond Walk.
- The breath-taking **expansive views** of The Tamar and Cornwall beyond from the Mount Wise headland and more restricted views of Stonehouse Pool, which should both be capitalised on.
- The **long views** of the waterfront that are so important to Devonport's identity, such as those:
 - from the Ker Street flats. Gaps in the built fabric should enable these views to be celebrated from the Guildhall area;
 - from Mutton Cove out across the water;
 - along Cornwall Street.
- the series of **green spaces** that form Devonport's Green Arc, described in Chapter 10. It is proposed that enhanced natural surveillance of these spaces is provided with new frontage onto New Passage Hill, East of Leander House and potentially with redevelopment of Raglan Barracks in the long term.

Together these structuring elements establish the main 'fixed points' for shaping the urban structure.



View of Market Clock Tower



Figure 18 Structuring elements

6.2 A fine urban grain

Figure 19 illustrates the pattern of development blocks or urban grain and the hierarchy of frontages (primary, secondary and tertiary) that results when these structuring elements are applied. This block structure establishes a flexible basis for a mix of uses to be accommodated and creates a walkable series of streets, squares and spaces that are easy to use, relate to and navigate.

Four issues are worth highlighting:

- the potential to introduce built frontage along the north side of Pottery Quay should be explored, which would further improve the potential attractiveness and enclosure of this area should the MoD agree to release this strip of land;
- the potential to introduce new frontage off New Passage Hill, which would provide a positive face to the park and capture views out to the water, providing the potential for a more secure space that is naturally surveilled and better connecting Pottery Quay with the rest of Devonport. Currently Riverside Business Park backs this area;
- the two areas of the historic dockyard come into the public realm, which would require the security fence to be relocated westward;

Priority Actions for Applying Principle 3

- *Promote high quality urban design and architecture, beginning with detailed Development Briefs for both MoD sites and potentially Design Codes for the whole area*
- to establish the basis for major potential development along Richmond Walk to capitalise on its waterfront setting.

Figure 20 provides an illustrative overview of how these urban



Figure 19 Proposed urban structure



Figure 20 Illustrative masterplan